

## Peace Be With Us

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*Texts: John 20: 19-31*

Good Morning First Church! It is so nice to be here again sharing our Easter tide season. Please pray with me.

God may your wisdom be in my heart and in the meditations of my soul, may they be truthful to you and your love for this world.

What does it mean to have peace with us? What does it mean to be a witness of resurrection, after seeing crucifixion? First Church, the struggle is REAL. We stand here today, on our Sunday after resurrection Sunday, where we have received the good news that there is life in and after us, and there is space within our bodies for peace to be there too.

Holy week shows us how deeply interconnected we are to the cycle of life and therefore to one another. It was three Sundays ago that we were walking through those doors with our palms proclaiming Hosanna Hosanna! As Rev. Lexi so beautifully said in her sermon, Please Save us, please save us. Well, here we are, and the passage in John tells us, he saved us, by his suffering, he saved us.

But-why does the air seem to still be dry? Why have there been more mass shootings than days in this year? Why do we sometimes feel like something is missing?

After resurrection, we are called to be witnesses of not just Jesus's resurrection, but all that led him to be nailed on that cross. The good and the bad come together.

The beauty of resurrection does not only stand on the open tomb but it stands on the communion table, the washing of our feet, the betrayal, and unjust trials, and the cries of a mother who just buried her son.

Going back to our story, now I have to say, this passage was hard, it had so many elements and Easter eggs. But most of all it is because I got “the boys” the disciples. Here they were, their first time together after being scattered after Jesus’ death, they were in the midst of their fear of death for themselves even though they had just received the good news from Mary Magdalene that in fact Jesus had resurrected. Yet-here they were with the door shut. Why did they not believe Mary Magdalene? A question that we will go back to later on.

You see, in this passage, what I see is Jesus teaching his witnesses how to breathe among the anxieties and joys of a resurrected hope. We are looking at the hope of resurrection yet-, the marks of death and pain are still present. Jesus reminds us that recognizing resurrection is knowing that death had to happen first as Rev. Dan pointed out last Sunday. And in this passage, we see that we need holy breath to take all of that in.

And then there was Thomas.

There is always that one person who is late, or not there and wants a quick catch up once they get there.

Talk about fear of missing out and trust issues.

Well Thomas was in for the news of his lifetime.

It is easy to look at Thomas and not want to compare ourselves with him. But let me tell you a little bit about Thomas whereabouts before this moment. Biblical scholars describe Thomas as one of the disciples that was there when Lazarus was raised from the dead. Yet,

he was not there when Jesus showed his wounds and shared His peace. Making him even more anxious of the news of their teacher's resurrection, even though he had seen Lazarus rise.

Reading Thomas's reaction did not seem estranged for me, neither was the way that the disciples were reacting to the unlistened truth that Mary Magdalene had shared to them. Because when I read the last verses on this passage:

"Blessed are those who believe without seeing"

I know I am not saved by Jesus's lesson of trust and mistrust.

We may think that we are saved because we believe without seeing Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection.

But I will invite us this morning to see this passage not as outsiders who are quick to judge the disciple's reaction.

But it makes me wonder in our day to day,

It is easy to be like Thomas

What are we needing to see in order to believe?

I see our world divided on this same issue of trust and truth.

Where the Mary Magdalene's among us are constantly being talked over and shut down and we are needing violent images in the news to show us how truly divided we are.

Yet- that often seems not enough.

We are constantly looking for wounds and pierced sides in order to believe and ask for mercy.

Jesus saved us, he gave us the bread of life, the cup of joy, and he showed us how to breathe and receive the Holy spirit for guidance and

discernment. Let us receive this fullness in order to believe that we are one-and that we can find the hope of resurrection not just in the wounds but as Mary Magdalene found the hope of resurrection in hearing her name being called into love and into new life to be a witness.

And it is not easy to be a witness. I know we often talk about being a witness to the good news of resurrection but we rush the part of what it means to be a witness to death and injustice before that. I do not want to encourage us to rush our emotions and how we process them. In fact, let us slow down right now and think about the weight of being a witness over the past months.

Being a witness is not always conformable, it is not always joyful, it carries grief, it carries the need of love, a hug, a word. Thomas needed to cope with his grief after being scattered and away from his group of friends in a hard time of his life. It was in the regathering in the same room where they once got their vulnerable selves' feet washed and partaken in a shared meal that he was able to not just remember who Jesus is but also remember who he was as well in the appearance and appearance of Jesus in his life.

I believe that the power of peace is setting our hearts in tune to receive truth and accountability. We often mistake peace with serenity or to be still. Which is not to say it can't be that, however, I invite us to see peace as it may be seen in this passage, and that is the ability to be open and listen.

Over our Lent season, we have been dealing and having conversations around what does it mean to have truth that set us free? We have been surrounded by paintings of truth-tellers whose lives were a reflection of being witnesses of injustice and having a

deep desire to make truth an action and not just a moral internal process. The liberation the disciples found in seeing the truth in Jesus' presence is what made them no longer feel abandoned. Peace is not weak friends, peace is a strength that can reckon a room full of guilt, fear, and injustice and break it open to receive each other at the door and reunite what was once scattered.

First Church, may God show us every day that we already have what we need, right here in order to believe that there is new life. In the same breath may we also believe that we have what we need to reckon with our past and our truth in order to see that injustice is real without necessarily needing to see a broken body in the news. May we be bold enough to let our faith transform us by trusting not just ourselves but each other.

The disciples could have saved themselves the taxing anxiety of fear if they would have trusted the words Mary Magdalene delivered to them. May we have a life here, today, holding to the hope of resurrection yet- embracing the cycle of life we all are part of, the beauty of it all- we can do so together, trusting that we will hold each other accountable.

The last verse in our reading today says: Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.

We may not know the other signs, but we have seen enough these past months and years to know that we need to hold on to that hope of resurrection and embrace all the ups and downs within it. Not rushing our grief, not rushing our needs, but trusting each other to move in the right direction towards healing for our past crucifixions. May we believe in Jesus and what he stands for.

First Church, may peace be with us.

