

Bring Peace Behind Locked Doors

John 20:19-31

Peace be with you.

One of my favourite memories of worship together as the people of God at St Paul's, Box Hill is the enthusiastic way people pass the peace. We've missed that I think. But we've also become creative in the ways we've shared the peace during streamed online worship. Some people share the words by text or phone or some other messaging device during worship. I have to say I love receiving a "Peace be with you" text on a Sunday morning or any time people are worshipping online. It was a particular joy on Easter Sunday to receive someone coming to me in these days of isolation and saying, "Peace be with you." The words do what they say... bring peace.

On the first day of resurrection, the very first Easter, Jesus himself comes to bring peace. He comes to the disciples together, behind locked doors. Isolated! Sound familiar? In this case, doors were locked for fear of the Jewish leaders.

Here we are, one week on from Easter Sunday, and we too probably are feeling the effects of isolation and maybe, with that, even fear. Fear of isolation. Fear of the unknown. Fear for our well-being and that of the people we love.

Fear of what the future holds. As I write this, I hear some of the things being said by political, medical, and community leaders that things are looking better for Australia... But at the same time, the Federal Health Minister said, "The virus doesn't take a holiday." So uncertainty, struggle, challenge, and dare I say it, fear hasn't left us. It's a vital time for us as God's church, as a resurrection life community, as we worship small, to care for all. Now is the time to be alert as to how we are to receive Christ and his peace; and how we are called to bring Christ and his peace to others.

COVID-19 has made us more aware of reaching out to one another. But you know that there are people, maybe in your community, perhaps in your street, in your family, in your church, who know the struggle with feeling trapped in fear everyday? And perhaps this is the time to reset our radar to such everyday reality. A dear friend of mine who leads an organisation working everyday with people who struggle for the basics of life wrote this last week:

"[I am a] little grumpy with Powerful Privileged Media personalities today... Talking about how this pandemic has provided an opportunity to RESET!

Only people of privilege get to have that conversation!

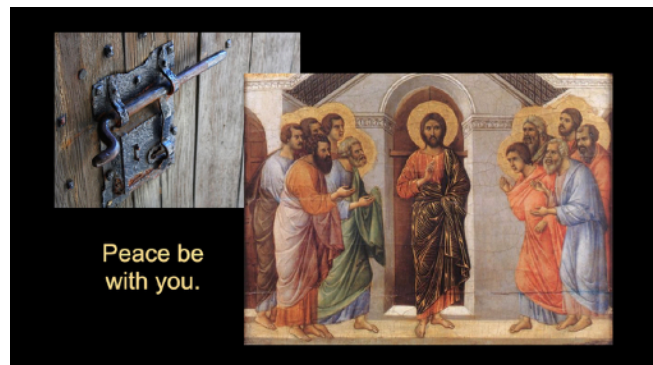
Those that get to keep their jobs.

Those that get to be safe in their homes.

Those what get to eat every day.

Those that get to sleep in safety.

How about we ask those that don't get the above if this is an opportunity to RESET!"



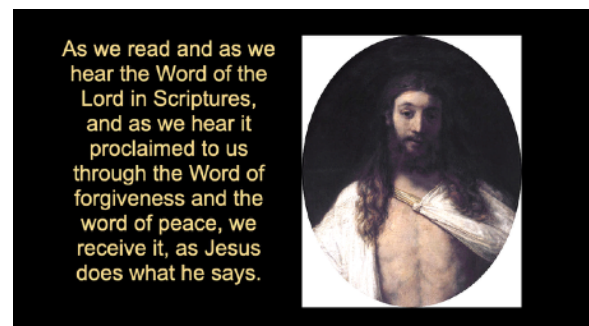
Well, maybe we are privileged enough to reset our focus to people who face this everyday.

Maybe focusing on people whom we may not regularly see, or who may not be in our thoughts every day: people like refugees, people for whom their home is not safe because of violence and abuse. People who are unheard, people who are lonely, people who are discriminated against, those who are depressed or even just new to a community. There are so many who, every day, face different forms of uncertainty, different forms of struggle, different forms of abuse, different forms of fear.

The risen Lord Jesus comes to disciples locked behind closed doors living in fear. He comes to you and to me. He comes to us and for us... and he comes to send and lead us.

How? There are three ways.

1. John tells us that Jesus comes to find the disciples and when he miraculously comes into the room he speaks a Word of **peace**. Jesus continues to come to you and to me in that same Word and in that same action. As we read and as we hear the Word of the Lord in Scriptures, and as we hear it proclaimed to us through the Word of forgiveness and the word of peace, we receive it as Jesus now does what he says. Jesus is the Word of life... the living Word. Let us hear him speak his Word of peace to us in the Word from the cross, "Father, forgive them", and in the word of absolution, "You are forgiven".



2. And then dear friends, take this word with you wherever and to whomever you go — by telephone, on line, in writing in a card, in person — be ready to speak the Word of God in the word of peace. "Make me a channel of your peace." This is a time where we at St Paul's are learning to worship small and care for all. To be alert and to care for all in bringing Jesus' peace to others in need. Be alert, my dear friends, for where Jesus is calling you in your life to contact someone — and please let me know if people need further help. Pray to the risen Lord Jesus, "Make me a channel of your peace", and be alert to family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and beyond. Bring the peace of the Lord in your listening, in your helping, in your praying, in your seeking to help others together as community as God calls us to lift our eyes beyond our own fears (for example, think of those served by ALWS: see www.alws.org.au/; and as National Reconciliation Week approaches for Australia in late May with the theme "in this together": see <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week/>).

3. And finally, be patient and be lovingly persistent, just like Jesus who went to the cross for us and for everyone. Jesus didn't give up for you or me, and he doesn't give up on us. After his resurrection, he comes a second time, a week later to Thomas who doubts, who would not believe the testimony of the other disciples. Jesus comes to Thomas, not to berate him, but again he brings peace. And finally, Thomas believes and confesses, "My Lord and my God." In the same way, Jesus is patient with me and patient with you. He brings us peace. And he equips and sends us to do the same. What a gift and calling we have, to share peace. Peace be with you. Amen.



And the peace of God which passes all human understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Video of the service including the above sermon:
<https://youtu.be/ixtnqB9mvAl>