



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for April 19, 2020
“According to Luke: Peace”
Speaker: Pastor Ashlee Adkins
Scripture: Luke 24:36-39

Alright. We have trekked through the Lenten season, grieved Good Friday, sat in and with Holy Saturday, and rejoiced with Easter Sunday! And now we have after Easter – now what? What do we do after Easter?

Jesus was very clear with his disciples what his resurrection meant for them – the repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to all nations – and you are witnesses of these things – and now here I am – resurrected. Now wait for the Spirit and then go. Go proclaim.

I love this scene though. The disciples were hidden away, fearful of a world without Jesus. And then Jesus appears in the upper room to the disciples, they are terrified, I wonder if they even heard the “peace be with you offering from Jesus?” And Jesus shows his hands and feet, the scars, to let them know it was really him. And then he was like – hey, you got something to eat – I’m starving!

Don’t get me wrong, there were theological implications of why he did this. He wanted to prove, in case the scars didn’t work, that he was fully human and needed sustenance. He was not a ghost. He also did it to allow some time for them to let it sink in that it was really, him, Jesus – the guy they had followed and loved. But I like to think he also wanted to eat with them again. Think about the last supper.

He eagerly desired to have Passover with them. And now, in the short time he had before leaving, he wanted to eat with his people. One last time, enjoy their company this way.

Not sure that’s how it happened. The scripture implies he ate and they watched but isn’t that a beautiful thing? He had come to commission them, to send them on their way – but first, he wanted to eat with them, he needed them to simmer down, to be allow their joy to overcome their fear! There’s a reason Christians have potlucks/meals all the time because that’s the way Jesus wants it!

We were meant for community – we were created for relationship. No rushing to get to the next thing, just presence with one another – nourishment of our bodies while we nourish our souls with each other’s company.

But Jesus had a purpose there among them. To send them. To affirm their worth. I think he was saying to them, yes – you may have been thinking to yourself, what was the point of all that we saw? Of all that we heard? All of it was for nothing! Jesus died.

The world was right. What do we do now? But the resurrection changed all that. Transformed their grief to joy. Their worry to faith. Their anger to passion. Their internal chaos to peace.

And speaking of peace:

In seminary, we always passed the Peace of Christ to one another after Chapel – and I miss doing that so much with my classmates and professors. And maybe at one time or another you have done that at a church you attended. So, right now, I want you to text three people offering them the Peace of Christ. We may not be in the same room, but we can still share in worship together. I don't care what time it is – and while you can share the peace with the family who are watching with you, I want you to intentionally share with three people not in your home! Time? Driving?

Ok – I love this. I hope to hear about this practice – I wanna know how people felt doing this and receiving this in this way. What's really fun, is for those who haven't watched this – hopefully it will entice them to check out our worship service!

Ok – so now, I want to dive into peace. Why peace? I had talked about their grief, anger, worry. But what about their regret? Those who were closest to Jesus, those who Jesus had called before his death and now after his death, left him during his death, while he was being crucified. Regret and shame had to be a strong force. Why was peace how Jesus greeted the disciples? Because peace was exactly what the disciples needed. Peace for their sin, their hurts, their disappointment, their fear, their anxiety. Peace that what they believed to be true was true. Jesus hadn't left them.

True peace comes only from God. And that's why Jesus offered it first to his disciples. He needed them to know that he loved them and forgave them and that he was still with them. And because that was true, they also needed to love and forgive themselves. I'm sure for those three days of wayfaring, they tried to make themselves feel better; they tried to comfort each other. But it was useless. No joy, no peace, was felt until Jesus was with them in that upper room. And the same goes for us – we won't experience that peace unless we step out of our own way and allow God to show us who we truly are. I believe peace is felt when we step through the darkness of ourselves into the light of God. Our perspective of ourselves is replaced with the lens through which God sees us. Jesus knew they would never go unless they felt that peace and God knows the same about us.

Let's talk about Rocky Balboa. The Philadelphia underdog boxer who takes on the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. Now we all know Rocky wasn't supposed to make it through the first round.

But he trains and gave us one of the motivational scenes to ever be made! But he also did something else. He found peace the night before the fight. He realized he wasn't going to win. But he knew no matter what happened, he was no longer who he was before.

He had discovered along the journey to that moment of peace who he was, who he really was. His perspective of himself had shifted. His lens had changed.

And that's what Easter does for us and that's what we do with after Easter. The story of Jesus's death and resurrection reconciles all we struggle with. Our lens of ourselves is forever clear that we are children of God. We will fail. We will struggle. The days that we are living through right now, though full of challenge, exhaustion, uncertainty, can be faced because we have the peace of Christ within us.

Let me speak some truth directly to you – You are loved. You can do this. We just remembered and celebrated the through the path of Jesus, the path that affirms for us each year that Jesus died, conquered death, and so we never have to fear again. You are free from the guilt, the shame, the fear. Set it free just as Jesus has. If you don't know how, we are here to help you, to pray with you, to support you on that journey to peace. Peace is with you because you know the ultimate peacemaker. And that peacemaker is within you through the Holy Spirit, it's already there! Allow that to be your truth in the midst of this chaos and uncertainty. Share this truth with others, proclaim it! Offer them the shalom that passes all understanding. And be confident that within you is the peace that you are a child of God – forgiven, free of sin, and deeply loved by the risen Savior.

Luke 24:36-49

36: While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

37: They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

38: He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?"

39: Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

40: And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41: While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

42: They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

43: and he took it and ate in their presence.

44: Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you – that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled."

45: Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures

46: and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

47: and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem,

48: You are witnesses of these things.

49: And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."