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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
April 28, 2019  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Easter

Scripture Lessons: Acts 5:12,17-32, Revelation 1:4-18  
Hymns: 210; 188; 206; 207:4,6 (187)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: John 20:19-31

<sup>19</sup> Then, the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace *be* with you." <sup>20</sup> When He had said this, He showed them *His* hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." <sup>22</sup> And when He had said this, He breathed on *them*, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained."

<sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord."

So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup> And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" <sup>27</sup> Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My

hands; and reach your hand *here*, and put *it* into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

<sup>28</sup> And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed *are* those who have not seen and *yet* have believed.”

<sup>30</sup> And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our Crucified and Risen Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: How sure are you?

Doubt can be a pesky thing. You know, I have to double check if I switched off the garage light or remembered to lock the door at night. It bugs me if I'm not sure. That kind of doubt can be pesky indeed. But other kinds of doubt are much more serious, indeed doubt can be and often has been dangerous. Doubt and uncertainty can eat away at a person. It will eat away and destroy relationships. We have seen it happen in people's marriages, in business partnerships. It was doubt and uncertainty that lay at the heart of man's fall into sin, doubt about God's Word, doubt about God's good will toward man.

Then along came our Savior Jesus Christ fulfilling the words and promises of God, ALL the words and promises of God. Jesus as promised went to the cross to take our sins upon Himself, to endure the curse of the law in our place. He died upon the cross. And what happened within

the hearts of those who loved Him? Along with grief and sorrow came doubt and uncertainty. *“We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.”* (Luke 24:21) A couple of the disciples vocalized that doubt, the disappointment they felt in their Lord and Savior, the disappointment they felt because Jesus didn’t proceed with redemption in the manner they had envisioned rather than the way God had revealed for them in Holy Scripture. Even upon hearing the news of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, well, there was a great deal of doubt and uncertainty because resurrection ran against human experience.

In our text this morning we shall see how doubt and uncertainty are dispelled by a living Savior not only for the disciples of that day, but also for us today. Today we are presented with --

## **THEME: The Peace of a Risen Savior.**

We learn of

### **I. The Peace of Sins Forgiven.**

Our text opens with a report that reflects the state of mind of the disciples on the evening of Jesus’ resurrection. They were assembled in an inner room. That room was locked. It was locked because they were afraid. This does not reveal a peaceful state of mind. This reveals an agitated state of mind. Do you know how tense a roomful of people can be when they are afraid and agitated by all that has been happening, especially when no one fully understands what is happening? They had received the reports of the women. Peter and John had personally visited the tomb where Jesus’ body had been laid, and seeing the grave cloths and the empty tomb they believed the body was stolen rather than believing the resurrection. They were afraid and they were in a turmoil with all the different reports and rumors that were flying about. That’s not peace. That’s not peace.

Then Jesus suddenly appeared in the room, right in the middle of them, and says "**Peace be with you!**" First Jesus established that it was really Jesus that was standing among them. He showed them His hands and His feet, displaying the nail prints from His crucifixion. When the disciples saw these marks of the nails, they were convinced that this really was Jesus ALIVE again. Then the disciples were glad. Their sadness was turned to joy, and most certainly a good amount of excitement.

But that was only the beginning of what Jesus had to say. He repeats His initial greeting, "*Peace to you!*" Already then "*Shalom*" the Hebrew or Aramaic word for "peace" was used as a greeting. I suppose some might suggest that Jesus was just greeting them as He appeared in their midst. When is a greeting more than a greeting? When it contains a blessing from the Lord. We might say "see ya later" or simply "goodbye for now" when parting from friends or acquaintances, but there are times when it is better to say, "The Lord be with you," as we are parting, or a dear one is beginning a journey. It is more than a goodbye. It is blessing. Jesus' greeting was more than a greeting, it was a preamble to a very special blessing that lay the foundation for the ministry of the New Testament Church. Having extended to the disciples the blessing of His peace Jesus said: "*As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*" <sup>22</sup> *And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'* " (v.20-23) This is a key passage to what we call the Ministry of the Keys that authority Christ gave His church on earth to forgive the sins of penitent sinners, or to retain the sins of the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

This is huge! The power to forgive sins on Christ's behalf is the mission of the Church. This is what He tells the disciples He is sending them into the world to do. That this power was extended to the Church on the evening of the resurrection of our Lord is not coincidence. It is cause

and effect. Jesus rose from the dead. Forgiveness and justification is established by His resurrection **beyond doubt!** That is the first message Jesus connects to His resurrection, and it is the message that needs to take hold of our hearts. The Apostle Paul stated this same assurance with these words:

*“Righteousness shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup> who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 4:24-5:1)

Jesus communicated to His disciples and so also to us the peace secured for us by our Savior rising from the dead. It is the peace of sins forgiven. That is the peace we have to share. It is the peace we are to transmit to those who are sorry for their sins, to those who live under the curse of the law. It is the message of the resurrection of Jesus Christ to call sinners to repentance that they also might know that peace which passes all understanding. This peace is more than a wish or a greeting; it is a peace that was purchased with Christ’s blood, and proclaimed by God the Father through Jesus’ resurrection.

Oh, but that pesky human failing of doubt is not so easily set aside. And so our Lord Jesus would erase doubt from our hearts and minds that we might know peace. The peace of a Risen Savior is also --

## **II. The Peace of a Confident Faith.**

We all know about doubting Thomas. He unfortunately missed Jesus’ first appearance when the Lord came on Easter evening. Even though all the disciples shared their joy because of Jesus’ resurrection, Thomas remained in that turmoil of doubt, that turmoil that is in Thomas’ own words **“not believing!”** Thomas insisted: *“Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* (v.25) For a whole week while the rest of the

disciples rejoiced together in knowing that their Redeemer lives, Thomas was in the gloom that comes with uncertainty and doubt.

But then the Lord in His grace appeared a second time before the assembled disciples. Exactly a week later the disciples were gathered together and Jesus appeared and immediately Jesus in His loving care for Thomas addressed Thomas, speaking directly to Thomas' challenge regarding placing his fingers into the Lord's nail prints and his hand in Jesus' wounded side. Jesus said: "*Do not be unbelieving, but believing.*"<sup>28</sup> *And Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"* (v.27-28)

You could make the argument that it was "seeing is believing," but many had seen plenty during Jesus' ministry and still refused to believe. Jesus' called Thomas to faith in Him, to faith in Jesus' resurrection. Jesus also commented on Thomas' expressed need to see before believing and confessing that Jesus was both Lord and God!

Jesus continued, "*Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*" Now one might construe that as a word of commendation that Jesus is giving those who believe without first seeing our Risen Lord; sort of a pat on the back. Consider this once more, for while we are included among that number, it was not because we were less stubborn in our doubt and unbelief than Thomas that we came to know and believe that Jesus both died for us and rose again. It was the power of Jesus' call. Just as Jesus called Thomas to faith saying "*be not unbelieving but believing,*" so He has called us to faith. It is by the power of the word of the gospel, the gospel of a crucified and risen Savior that our hearts are moved by the Holy Spirit to know and believe that Jesus is both Lord and God!

The last two verses of our text seem like they are a conclusion to the whole gospel, but they are placed here by the Holy Spirit for us to know the same peace of a confident faith that Thomas enjoyed. This confident faith comes to us from a different approach but actually in the same way.

Don't be confused, we are indeed among those who have NOT seen and yet have believed. We are blessed that the Lord called us to faith in Jesus as our crucified and risen and ever living Lord. But it was done by the Spirit calling us to faith through the Word. Those last two verses of our text reveal for us the power and authority of the Word of God.

*"And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* (John 20:30-31)

The gospels don't record every sermon Jesus preached, or every miracle Jesus worked; it records what we need to know and believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing we may have life in His name. It is the Spirit working through the words that has granted us the blessing of a confident faith, and with that confident faith the blessing of His peace.

We have peace of conscience, peace of spirit and peace of mind because we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have the peace of sins forgiven and the peace of a confident faith that has sustained children of God throughout the ages. Job in his trial and countless thousands of others down the years to our day assert with us in confident faith: **"I know that my Redeemer Lives!"**  
**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.