

Message for 19<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## The peace of God

*John 20:19-21*

*<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" <sup>20</sup> After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

*<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

I'm sure that there are many of us who would admit to have been just a little afraid and anxious over the last few tumultuous weeks. Grim images on our screens, strange new rules for living, and uncertain consequences ahead. It's been quite a confronting and challenging time.

In the same way, the arrest of Jesus, his crucifixion, burial and then disappearance of his body had been a confronting and challenging time for the disciples.

Verse 19 says that on Sunday evening the disciples meet behind locked doors *and were afraid*. Would the religious leaders come after them next? Perhaps even Herod or Pilate might want to 'clean up' these Jesus followers? What had 'gone wrong'? What was their next move? Where would they go?

Right now, we too, find ourselves behind locked doors afraid of what's outside and whose outside? And even when we venture out we are afraid of what lurks on any surface. We're afraid that our city might become like many others around the world, where bodies are being carried out to temporary morgues and buried in mass graves. We are afraid and uncertain of many things, just like the disciples.

But as the disciples gathered behind locked doors, afraid; suddenly Jesus was standing there with them..... This was no angel or vision, it wasn't a voice from heaven. No, it was Jesus, in person, standing right there with them. He was there, with them in their fear and in their grief and doubt, he was with them in their locked room. And his greeting was "Peace be with you".

Yes, oh yes peace, that's what they wanted, but how could Jesus be speaking of peace at a time like this? How could they hope to have peace in the midst of this situation? Powerful, ruthless Jewish leaders were after them, angry crowds were still baying for blood, and how were they to figure this out all on their own?

Peace, how could Jesus just turn up and say 'peace be with you'? Yet that's exactly what they needed.

Jesus had tried to prepare them for this time. He had explained that his peace was not peace that the world gives. (John 14:27) and he had told them not to let your hearts be troubled or be afraid, because in this world there would be trouble but to take heart that for he had overcome the world (John 16:33). But his words had not yet taken root in their hearts.

Paul tells us that Jesus is the Lord of Peace, that he gives it at all times and in every way (2Thess 3:16). He also said don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds

anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7 NLT) Impossible to define, **Jesus' peace is ours to have in spite of our circumstances.**

Do you need peace, peace instead of anxiety, peace from uncertainty, peace and not fear? Do you know that peace? If you need peace have you asked God to show it to you again? **Let God's word of peace take root in your heart in these uncertain and challenging times.**

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### **Acts 2:1-8**

*2 On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. <sup>4</sup> And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.*

### Transformed and empowered to proclaim the good news

More than a month after Jesus' resurrection, Acts 2 takes us to Jerusalem, during the Feast of Pentecost, a celebration of the summer harvest and 50 days after Passover. The disciples are gathered together, waiting as Jesus had told them to in the city. When suddenly there is a violent wind and what seemed to be tongues of fire resting on them.

Luke describes this dramatic event infused with power, happening to this group of disciples who probably felt anything but powerful. This was God's Spirit coming upon them as Jesus had promised and suddenly they were enabled and empowered to do things they weren't before. They began to speak in all sorts of different languages, which gave them the ability to proclaim the good news to the people gathered there in Jerusalem. Later we see Peter stand up before thousands, and clearly and persuasively, courageously and compassionately explain the good news of Jesus the Christ. Empowered and transformed by the pouring out of God's Holy Spirit, the gospel is preached to thousands by the most unlikely group of men.

We too, as God's people have the same powerful Spirit of God dwelling within us. We too have been enabled and empowered to speak out the good news of Jesus Christ. Do you believe that, have you experienced that?

Jesus' disciples were transformed from a group who were afraid, unsure, and seemingly ill equipped, to ambassadors of Christ, who had become bold and articulate communicators, sure and certain about their purpose and unafraid to step out into a new future as apostles of Jesus.

As children of God, we too have been given the same Holy Spirit that equips and enables us.

**The Holy Spirit gives us power to live for him, and the Holy Spirit gives us power to tell others about Jesus.**

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A transformed Peter, powerfully and effectively proclaims to the gospel message about Jesus Christ. Marvel, as we listen to what Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, says to the crowd.

Acts 2:22-33

<sup>22</sup> "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. <sup>25</sup> David said about him:

*"I saw the Lord always before me.*

*Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

<sup>26</sup> *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest in hope,*

<sup>27</sup> *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
you will not let your holy one see decay.*

<sup>28</sup> *You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'*

<sup>29</sup> "Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. <sup>30</sup> But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. <sup>31</sup> Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. <sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. <sup>33</sup> Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

### The Gospel Message

Unafraid of the consequences that such a declaration of the truth about Jesus might bring in the midst of a city full of Jewish men, Peter, powerfully speaks out the gospel message. Enabled and equipped by the Holy Spirit Peter sets before the crowd God's plan for Jesus and what his death and resurrection has accomplished. He says ....

*"God publicly endorsed Jesus the Nazarene by doing powerful miracles, wonders, and signs through him, as you well know. <sup>23</sup> But God knew what would happen, and his prearranged plan was carried out when Jesus was betrayed. With the help of lawless Gentiles, you nailed him to a cross and killed him. <sup>24</sup> But God released him from the horrors of death and raised him back to life....."*

<sup>32</sup> *"God raised Jesus from the dead, and we are all witnesses of this. <sup>33</sup> Now he is exalted to the place of highest honour in heaven, at God's right hand. Acts 2:22-24, 32 NLT*

Luke says those listening were cut to the heart and cried out to Peter, "Brothers what shall we do"?

Are you also affected by Peter's words?

Today, a week after Easter Sunday, the celebration Jesus death and resurrection, **are you too cut to the heart like Peter's listeners?**

If you have been convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit of your need of Christ, then turn around, change direction, and receive forgiveness. Come to Jesus and take up the gift of salvation that he freely offers you. For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

If this good news about what Jesus offers you has shaken you today, then call us and talk to us, let us pray with you.

Or perhaps, as a believer, you are reminded afresh of the joy and hope you have in Jesus and are encouraged.

Peter quotes from one of David's psalms: he says

*'I see that the Lord is always with me.*

*I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.*

<sup>26</sup>*No wonder my heart is glad,*

*and my tongue shouts his praises!*

*My body rests in hope...*

*You have shown me the way of life, and you fill me with the joy of your presence.*

Are these not words of comfort from our Lord? These words David wrote inspired by God's Spirit comforted him, and they offered comfort to the crowd as Peter quoted them, but they also comfort us. Just when we are afraid, when we are alone, when it feels like hope has gone, we are reminded and promised that that is not how it is. We are not alone, for God is always with us, he is right beside us and we are filled with the joy of his presence. So we will not be shaken, not by fear or illness or trial of any kind. For even in these times, we can know that God is working and be glad and sing his praises. **For our hope is in him.**

The frightened disciples put their hope in the Risen Lord Jesus. We put our hope in the Risen Lord Jesus. We are not alone for God's spirit dwells with us, comforting us in our trials, empowering us to live lives that please him, and equipping us to witness to the new life we having in Jesus.

So friends...

<sup>3-5</sup> "What a God we have! And how fortunate we are to have him, this Father of our Master Jesus! Because Jesus was raised from the dead, we've been given a brand-new life and have everything to live for, including a future in heaven—and the future starts now! God is keeping careful watch over us and the future. The Day is coming when you'll have it all—life healed and whole". 1 Peter 1:-5Msg

**Amen**