

John 20:19-23

It appears as though we have come full circle. By “we,” I mean the church. Where is Jesus’ church on the day of Easter? Our text tells us. “*The doors being locked where the disciples were for fear...*” The church is behind locked doors. No one can come in, and no one dare go out.

We have come full circle, for this is where we find the church today. Our doors are locked. The church building sits empty. Within our homes, which are now “house churches,” we do not let others in, nor do we go out.

And the motivation is the same. On Easter it was out of fear. “*Fear of the Jews,*” we’re told. For us it is out of fear. Fear of the deadly virus. Not that we are afraid. We believe that *our times are in God’s hands*. But fear in the sense that we are cautious, protecting ourselves and our families. This is a healthy fear. Just as we would take steps to avoid a rattlesnake in our path, so we take steps to avoid this virus.

Jesus takes no such steps, except to be where His disciples have gathered. No physical barrier can keep Him away. The locked doors mean nothing to Him. He appears and stands among them. And the disciples are glad to see the Lord.

Are we also glad today? We are surely thinking that we will be glad when we can unlock our doors and gather together in God’s house. It is good and healthy to feel this way, for we are saying with the psalmist, “*I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord.’*” And we pray that this day will come soon. But can we be glad today as we gather by ourselves, or with our families, in our “house churches?” Absolutely yes! For the same risen Lord Jesus who came to be with His disciples on Easter comes to be where we are today.

How do we know this? By the word and sign He gives. Jesus came on Easter to speak the word of peace to His disciples and to show them His hands and His side. They needed this word and sign because they were locked in, not only by physical doors, but also by the spiritual doors of guilt and shame. They had gone their own way, leaving their Lord behind. They all fled in Gethsemane. They all broke their promise of commitment.

If we search our own hearts, we will find that we are not much different from the disciples on Easter. We also make it our habit each day of going our own sinful way. Holy Scripture declares this as truth, and unless we are blind to our own faults, we confess, “Yes, this is true of me, a poor, miserable sinner.”

But when it comes to our Lord, no spiritual barrier can keep Him away. The first word from His mouth on Easter evening is the word that crosses over the barrier of sin. “*Peace,*” He says to them, “*Peace to you.*”

This same word is given to you today. Wherever you are, whoever you are, Jesus speaks the word of peace to you. He declares that God is not angry at you. He is at peace with you. Dear fellow sinner, Jesus’ word of peace to you tells you that God forgives you.

This is a powerful word, for it does what it says. You are forgiven of all your sins because the word of peace Jesus speaks conveys God's peace to you. It gives you the forgiveness Jesus won on the cross for you.

This is no bare word. On Easter Jesus attaches this word of peace to His holy wounds. Thus, He shows them His hands and His side.

You see these same holy wounds in your baptism, for you are baptized in the blood of Christ. You are washed, cleansed of your sin in His precious blood.

As we study the Scriptures, we learn that God does not sit still, but that He is always moving. And this movement is one of grace. From Eden, where He moved to seek Adam and Eve behind the barrier of sin and death they had erected, to Easter evening where He came to be with His disciples, to us wherever we are hiding, and for whatever reason, God moves toward His sinful people in love and mercy.

To be where God is not, is hell. On Easter Jesus will not leave His disciples in a kind of living hell. He comes with the word of peace. He comes to forgive them.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. He simply will not leave you to your fears and your guilt. He breaks through every barrier. The fact that you, today, are hearing His word of peace is evidence that He is with you now to uphold you, to comfort you, to forgive you. And like the disciples on Easter, Jesus also makes you glad. Amen.