

EASTER — Prince of PEACE

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John 20:19-31

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!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, “**Peace** be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “*Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.*”

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “**Peace** be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.*”

Thomas said to him, “**My Lord and my God!**”

Then Jesus told him, “*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.*”

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Jn 20:19–31.

Peace

We as humans tend to think that peace is only found in the absence of pain and problems. If that is the case, peace will be very hard to find.

The peace that Jesus is talking about is one that goes beyond circumstances and temporary breaks of pain and problems of life.

Following a Dead Messiah

Previous to this moment in John 20, the rabbi that the disciples followed was falsely arrested, accused, and tried — wrongfully convicted and flogged and crucified.

All of their hopes were dashed to pieces and the kingdom of God that Jesus had been talking about — it's all over. And the disciples are in fear.

And their fear is not just of the religious leaders killing them — they are in fear of standing before the judgment of God, who they will stand before and give an account of their lives.

They're in fear, knowing that they abandoned and disowned their Rabbi, their Messiah.

And death is required to atone for that kind of failure and sin.

And they probably feel like a sorry group of failures.

Peace Be With You

But all of a sudden, their Messiah shows up out of nowhere and proclaims peace over them. And this isn't just a quaint saying.

Jesus is connecting the dots for them: his death has atoned for failure and sin, and his resurrection proves to them that death doesn't have the final word. And so with that good news, they can have peace.

| Peace be with you.

The risen King Jesus wants to give them peace and a breath of re-creation. Just like how God breathed life into creation in the beginning, Jesus breathes life into the disciples so they can face the fear of death with peace.

This is the fulfillment of the promise that God will recreate humans from Ezekiel 36:26-27:

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

The New International Version (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Eze 36:26–27.

Jesus is countering the cultural narratives that say, “you need to fix yourself. You need to be better. Good luck if you can make it.”

Jesus offends us: “you’re not good enough and never will be, which is why I lived and died in your place so that you can come to life with me.”

A Different Kind of Peace

Jesus’ peace is one that is received, not worked for.

If you’re still working and fighting to find that peace that lasts for a day before life falls apart again, Jesus has good news for you. He is offering a peace that transcends all understanding; a peace that transformed disciples living in fear and failure and turns them each one of them who will boldly preach Jesus’ truth in the face of death.

What About People Who Doubt?

Jesus showed up just for Thomas so that he can offer that same peace to Thomas. And the evidence he showed for Thomas convinced him to go to his death for this story. And Jesus extended the blessing of belief to those who believe simply on the word of others that this story happened.

Jesus connects believing in life to the peace.

Belief allows us to live in peace despite death, and to live with a new heart and new spirit.

Thomas' response was to proclaim Jesus as King — My Lord and My God!"

And the invitation is for us to make Jesus our King as well so that we can be recreated and live in a peace that goes beyond all understanding.