

April 12, 2015
John 20:19-31

Easter 2B
Locked Doors and Locked Hearts

Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Alleluia! Christ is Risen! **He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!**

There was a time when a person could leave the doors of their homes unlocked all the time, not just when you were home and awake. There was also a time when you could leave your car doors unlocked at the shopping center. Not anymore, those days are past. Why do you lock your doors? Is it to keep your personal belongings safe, the members of your family safe at night? Perhaps it eases your mind. Perhaps it brings a sense of security.

Several years ago when I was at my first parish, it was the Monday after our annual outdoor service and Sunday School Rally Day, I was getting ready in the morning when the pre-school teacher called me and reported seeing something suspicious, so I hurried getting ready and flew out the door with breakfast in my hand. I arrived at the church to see doors with pry bar marks on them as well as a window that was unlocked and removed by the thieves. This freaked me out a bit, after that point whenever I was alone in the church building I kept the doors locked. There are times even now that I have flashbacks. I've heard of other stories of people breaking into their homes, workplaces and that breaks the sense of security.

As we look at our text for this morning, this eighth day, the disciples are gathered in a room, with the doors locked because of fear of the Jews. They have locked out the Jews, the ones who Crucified the Lord the Glory. Being afraid, they have locked the doors, so that the Jews don't come and arrest them and possibly even try and put them to death as well.

Perhaps the disciples are locked in the room because they are still overcome with grief. Perhaps they haven't fully realized that Jesus is actually alive. Perhaps they are huddled together and have also locked their hearts. Mary had told them earlier on that first Easter morning that she had seen the Lord.

Now they are all together that first Easter evening with the doors being locked and Jesus comes and stands amidst them and says, "*Peace be with you.*" Jesus not only proclaims peace, but He is the one that grants peace, perfect peace.

Thomas was not with the disciples on that first Easter Evening. He seems to have locked his heart from the truth. He is living in unbelief. Since the disciples minus Thomas saw Jesus a week earlier and Jesus said to them, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you," they are bearing witness to Thomas that Jesus is alive. Thomas shows clearly his locked heart, his unbelieving heart. He shows clearly his skeptical mind, when he says, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of

the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

Thomas is suffering from unbelief. Now we may not be in full fledged unbelief, but there are times we lock our hearts from God’s peace and against relationship with Him and others. What is causing you to huddle, to shut the doors against your enemies, whether that be viruses, neighbors, fellow employees, family members, or even God Himself? Perhaps you are like Thomas and have a skeptic mind, where you need to see something to believe it. Perhaps it’s not that at all. Perhaps you have locked the door of your heart from your spouse, your children, your neighbors, and others, because you are struggling with a secret sin. Perhaps you are struggling from a past sin that no one knows about, but continues to weigh you down. Perhaps you are hurting because a disease has plagued you or someone in your family. Perhaps it’s a relationship that has been severed by someone else. We build onto those barriers. We continue to build up walls and lock doors. Our sins prevent us from having a meaningful relationship with God and others. We continue to move towards unbelief as we hold onto those sins and refuse to repent of them.

Our world today is telling us so many things today that seem to be contradictory. What we read and see and hear in the media is one of the devil’s ways at dishing out his lies, his deceptions, and a way to cause us to fall into skepticism and unbelief. Whether it be the growing lack of religious freedom in America, or the arguments about the authority of Scripture or even the argument that all religions are created equal in the eyes of God. So many things, besides your own personal doubts, skepticism and sins, the devil uses to bring you towards unbelief.

What is Satan enticing you to use for your sense of security when things are rough and your skepticism takes you away from Jesus? For some people it’s alcohol and drugs. For others it’s sex and pornography. For others it’s other addictions. Do you go to your family and friends for security? Perhaps you find security with money and your job. The list is long and frightening. It’s also a list that Satan can use to bring you to unbelief and not believing where true peace and security comes from.

Satan had Thomas, for a short time, and He breaks through the barrier for the disciples in the first part of our text, and also in the second part of our text when Thomas was with the disciples.

Just like Jesus did a week earlier, He does again while the disciples, including Thomas, were inside the locked room. Jesus comes and stands amongst them and says, “Peace be with you.” Jesus brings peace, peace to His disciples again, and peace to Thomas. He turns and looks to Thomas knowing Thomas’ unbelief and says to him, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” Thomas upon seeing and touching the Lord says, “My Lord and My God.”

Jesus has broken the barrier that Thomas had physically around him and the spiritual barrier that was built around Thomas' heart. Jesus Christ invaded Thomas' life in a miraculous way and brings Thomas back into the fold.

My dear family of God, Jesus Christ does the same thing for you and me. He breaks down every kind of barrier that is set up to impede us from believing in Jesus. We learn in Romans 8 that nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Jesus breaks down barriers even as He suffers, dies, and rises again for you and me. As He was on the cross He said, "It is Finished." Sin was finished on the cross, sin was dismantled, sin has no more power. As Christ walks out of the tomb, death has met defeat. Death will no longer be our destination, we will live in resurrected glory with our Risen Lord.

As Christ breaks down barriers, even when the doors are locked, He provides you with Peace, perfect peace that only He can provide. This peace comes to you in the form of Absolution, in the form of forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins sets aside the barrier that has blocked us from trusting and believe in the Triune God. As Jesus Christ grants us forgiveness and as we hear it verbally spoken to us in the Divine Service and physically receive it when we eat of the body and drink of the blood, we are free to live as real human beings again, free from trusting in insufficient sources of security, free for the mission on which He sends.

When Jesus spoke to the disciples, both times He says, "Peace be with you." Both times, Jesus gives peace and breaks down a barrier. When Jesus appeared alive on that first Easter evening He gave the disciples a task. He sent them, Jesus said to them, "As the Father has send me, even so I am sending you." Jesus Christ sent the disciples, because they have received peace. Thomas was also sent I believe by just hearing the words "Peace be with you," and also again when the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost.

As Jesus lives for you and breaks down barriers locked doors and locked hearts, hearts locked by unbelief, He also provides you with signs that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

As He provides you with His very own Word to believe and trust in, He provides you with forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. The greatest gifts come to you in the greatest gift ever given, Jesus Christ, crucified, died, buried...and RISEN AGAIN FOR YOU!

As He Lives He Sends you, because He has broken down the barriers of your life. He has forgiven you of your sins. He helps you in your relationship, He provides ultimate healing of every physical and spiritual disease. He provides safety and security in His loving Care. As He does all this for you, He sends you out bringing the breath of New Life in the Holy Spirit to those around you by forgiving them, when they need forgiveness and by sharing with them the promises of New Life in Christ. New Life in

Christ that only comes to you, comes to them, because Jesus Christ walks out of the tomb, and continues to invade the lives of his people in miraculous ways.

Now it may not be like when He appeared in a locked room and spoke "Peace" to his disciples. He continues to invade your life through His very word of Peace in the Holy Scriptures. He continues to invade your life in miraculous ways through Baptism and the Lord's Supper, His means of Grace, the exact places where you receive all those good gifts. It's in these places that He empowers you share Christ's Resurrected Hope with all those around you. As you continue to be fed, nurtured, and given peace during this Easter season, know that Jesus is alive, and lives for you to grant you perfect peace.

In Jesus Name! Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Living Lord and Savior. Amen.