

Last week Mark asked the question, “What are we to do with the resurrection?” and so we might continue this week by asking, “what do you do with the week after Easter?” Holy week was quite a week, with a number of wonderful services, but what do you do afterwards? But I think it is appropriate to consider how revolutionary this was for the disciples, in part because most of us struggle to appropriate it into our understanding. Why does Jesus’ victory over death, evil, and Satan matter to us this morning? If we’re honest, for many of us, as Tom Wright put it, we “lapse into a kind of collusion with entropy, acquiescing in the general belief that things may be getting worse but that there's nothing much we can do about them” ...In other words, things are not going that well and the world seems to be struggling to say the least, so I’m just going to do the best I can on my own...and this is exactly what the disciples struggled with after Jesus’ crucifixion, and something that we can easily give into as we look at the suffering and difficulty of the world around us...but he continues...

Instead of giving into this hopelessness we are called to something better... Our task in the present...is to live as resurrection people in between Easter and the final day, with our Christian life, corporate and individual, in both worship and mission, as a sign of the first and a foretaste of the second.” He’s quite simply saying that much of the Christian life is embracing and attesting to this resurrection life while acknowledging that there is something much better that is still to come. Jesus’ life giving death and resurrection enable us to see something of heaven as we follow after him, always holding fast to the hope that there is still a day to come where resurrection life will be all that we know-- Discipleship from this life to the next. And one of the great gifts of this resurrection life is peace, as we will observe today. Not like the world talks about peace, but real peace. Quite simply, as Jesus will show us, peace does not come from what you’re doing or where you’re located, nor does it come from your circumstances or political freedoms. Peace comes through the presence and power of Jesus as we actively hold onto him as his disciples—providing a peace that empowers us to experience his kingdom here on earth.

In John's gospel we read an account of the disciples after the crucifixion, waiting rather timidly in a room together, with the doors shut and locked, fearfully assembled and worried about the fact that the same people who had just killed their rabbi were likely going to come after them. The setting really is a helpful metaphor isn't it? They were shut in, paralyzed by fear and afraid to take a step outside their room for fear of what may come. We don't know how long they were in this room, but we get the sense that they did not have much intention of going out without a great sense of fear or concern. They were, to put it plainly, hiding in fear. And, like many of us, they are attempting to exert as much control over their lives by locking themselves away to provide a false sense of safety. But like that man in the movie Jurassic Park who is running from the T-Rex and locks himself in the Bathroom. It never ends well; fear finds a way in. And for those of us who use control--whether it's the people around us, our environment, or whatever you seek to control to manage your fears—it never works. In fact, that's at the heart

of Obsessive compulsive behaviors...Fear that leads to the need to control as much as you feel you can.

This is a feeling that most of us are familiar with--actually all of us--the anxiety of a potential fear where the prospect of something bad prevents us from experiencing joy in the day to day. In fact I read a report that was published yesterday by a major career website noted 44% of Americans were struggling with sleep on any given night on account of work/home related worries or anxiety. I found it rather humorous that right before I found out about the preaching lesson for today I had just gotten word that my car, after having been in the shop for a week, was in need of another week's work of repairs. And I had to laugh at the LORD's timing.

Our responses to fear and anxiety are about as varied as the ways we experience it. Drinking an extra glass or two, lots of TV, Pornography—yes this is a popular one especially for men, even daydreaming and checking out of reality for a bit. And there are even things that are pretty healthy, like exercise or for the ever-popular yoga—we all have things that seem to *mitigate* our struggle in the face of

our fears, but don't provide the peace that Jesus offers. This fear is present in other ways as well, most notably in our society's adoption of the vice of cynicism. Yes, cynicism. Oscar Wilde once defined a cynic as someone who knows the cost of everything but the value of nothing. At its heart, it's a desire to be protected from being taken advantage of, or manipulated in any way, or appearing foolish by believing or hoping in something good. And in pop-culture it's becoming more and more popular to appear jaded and aloof, as we see in the never-ending wave of American teen movies where the cynical protagonist needs to topple a system that has the whole world enslaved in some fashion. But there is no hope in the cynical mind, except that maybe things down the line will eventually get better. But this fear usually leads to anger and frustration, which, as some Muslim scholars conjecture, fuels the hopelessness and anger at the heart of so many young men in ISIS. Cynicism is merely a thin veil over the deep fears and insecurities we have that we are somehow alone; that this life is all that we have and there is nothing more—and it always produces anxiety and a joyless life. One author wrote: "At its very worst, cynicism can engender what Robert Frost

articulated in *The Death of the Hired Man*: the predicament of having “nothing to look backward to with pride / And nothing to look forward to with hope.””

And this is exactly what was taking place in this room—nothing to look back or forward to. They only know fear, a lack of joy, and a dull fog of cosmic loneliness. They had forgotten all that Jesus had told them, where he explicitly noted in chapter 14 that they should not be afraid when he goes away, because it meant that he had completed the task he had set out to do: the redemption of the whole world. And it is into this scene that Jesus steps into when he walks through the locked doors and greets them with a peace that they so desperately needed. “Peace be with you,” a common greeting, in a remarkably unrepeatable moment. Can you imagine what they were feeling?

And after he speaks peace over them he shows them what he means. Jesus isn’t offering a trite encouragement; he’s showing them the peace he is offering in the scars that he has from his crucifixion and death.

He's revealing that what they observed was not a dream; his death was real, and it means something for them. Paul expounds on this significance in Ephesians 2 when he writes in verse 14 and following, "For Jesus himself is our peace...that he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross... so that through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father... a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." Jesus has, through his death and resurrection, dealt with our great problem of evil and the consequences of our sin, providing a peace that means that the greatest force in the universe is now wildly on your side.

And for the disciples in that room the power of the resurrection is breaking the back of their fears, and raising in its place a deep and abiding peace. Their spines are stiffening, the blood in their hearts is pumping, and a peace unlike any they had ever known is settling over them like an impenetrable armor. This peace, as Jesus earlier noted, is not the peace that the world affords, no—it is much greater, richer. Rather than the absence of anything that might be difficult or stressful, this peace is instead the exercise of looking to the one holding fast to the

object of your peace. And the fruit of this is joy. The disciples were overjoyed as they looked upon their King and God.

Peace has come not in a concept, but in a person. When we gave birth to our first son, there were some complications in his birth that meant that a special doctor was called in to help deliver Cole. What was interesting about this doctor is that he was supremely confident. He walked into the room and told everyone what to do and they not only listened, but seemed to be remarkably comfortable with the fact that he was bossing them around. As it turns out, this Dr. was brilliant, and he masterfully delivered Cole and everyone was joyfully amazed, but not surprised. They knew who this Dr. was and had full confidence in him, which meant that they could do their jobs and at the same time rest easy. And I found out what everyone in the room already knew: with that good doctor, where he went, new life and peace seem to always follow.

And this true of Jesus: He proclaims peace again, saying, "Peace be upon you, as the father has sent me, so also I am sending you." Jesus is then calling them to respond to this peace. This is the kind of peace that

enables one to move forward even in the midst of hostile environments, where uncertainty and even danger may be lurking. It is the peace that comes from holding onto Christ and exercising our faith as we embrace him in the midst of life, the good and bad.

And finally breathed upon them the Holy Spirit, borrowing from the same language of the creation account in Genesis, where God breathed life into man to call him into existence, to care for the world. But man failed, and brought brokenness, sin, and estrangement to God. And now Jesus is breathing new life into the broken world. Through his death and resurrection a new kingdom is emerging, one that reflects his love and self-sacrifice.

One scholar notes of this: “We see this in the lives of those believers in the book of Acts: the method of the kingdom will match the message of the kingdom. The kingdom...goes out into the world vulnerable, suffering, praising, praying, misunderstood, misjudged, vindicated, celebrating: always – as Paul puts it in one of his letters – bearing in the

body the dying of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be displayed.” “

Quite simply the only way to know this peace is to embrace the Savior who accomplishes our peace, trusting that as we approach him he will always speak over us what he said to the disciples: Peace, peace I give to you; knowing that He will make good on his promise in the midst of your troubles.

What does this look like, carried out? There is a book called Shantung prison...Langdon Gilkey was a Harvard educated writer who was teaching English in Nanjing at the outbreak of the 2<sup>nd</sup> world War. He was taken to a prison camp where he and 1400 other American and British men, women, and children spent the duration of the war together. As an academic and skeptic, he was a humanist who, like many today, held to the hope that eventually through education and progress people might get better and observe less and less destruction/evil. And he noted that even in the camp the missionaries and academics and educated and ignorant alike, stole from one another and took to baser practices as they endured their time at the prison. But there was one in this prison that he

met that was remarkably different. Eric Liddel, the man who refused to run on Sunday as a matter of conviction, who would later win the 400 gold in the 1924 Olympics, was a missionary in china when He was taken to the internment camp. And Gilkey records that unlike anyone else at the camp, Eric seemed to have an indomitable joy and peace, a joy that was rooted in something great. He would spend nearly all of his time serving the people of the camp, providing model building and teaching for the children, sports games and recreation, to help keep the kids from becoming listless or hopeless. His life modeled the peace and grace that he himself embraced in his daily living. He was noted as saying, "You will know as much of God as you put into practice.

To know this God is to know peace. And the means by which we receive this is by holding onto him. And what is interesting is that the author, Dr. Gilkey, would eventually come to know the peace and joy that he observed in Eric Liddell. In order to know this resurrection peace you must not only live it, but also share it. And as you do, we slowly are participants in the kingdom of Christ here on earth.