

1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

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Jesus' disciples are familiar with fear. Throughout the gospel of John, we hear that Jesus' followers are filled with fear, especially of the Jewish authorities. To proclaim Jesus as messiah is to face expulsion from the synagogue and separation from family and friends. Following Jesus comes with fear and risk. This fear is compounded at Jesus' death. He tries to prepare his disciples for his death and resurrection, but they are unable to comprehend these predictions.

After Jesus' death, the disciples' fears are intensified by grief. They had hoped for Jesus to rebuild Israel into a great nation and end Roman occupation. They also had hoped to be at his side when he did it. But now their leader and friend, as well as their status and hopes for the future, are all lost. They are unsure of their standing in the Jewish community and unable to trust in the news of Jesus' resurrection. Consequently, the disciples have no idea what to do next.

Into this situation of fear and uncertainty, Jesus shows up, gifting the disciples with his peace and the Holy Spirit. Both gifts empower the disciples to show up in the world in a different way: they are to be peace, live peace, give peace and if they live in the Spirit of Jesus, they are to forgive and therefore proclaim resurrection to others and, consequently, allow others to experience Jesus as their peace.

Jesus shows up but not as a ghost, for a ghost does not offer the disciples the opportunity to consider his visible wounds nor to touch them. It is necessary for the disciples to contemplate the real Jesus marked by the wounds of his compassionate, steadfast, and transforming love. The wounds remind them that he didn't love them by

words alone: he gave it all until the end. A Jesus without wounds is not the real thing. He suffered, experienced hardship, was rejected, ignored, betrayed, reneged and yet he kept steadily, faithfully in love.

When he sends the disciples (us), he sends them the same way he was sent by the Father: with clarity of purpose, with unrelenting and unconditional love, and with longing to gather all onto God's bosom. This requires the same kind of radical sacrificial commitment from the disciples: they will be recognized by the way they love one another, the least in their midst, and their enemies. They will be recognized by the wounds they'll display in turn; they will be to others the peace Jesus has been and is to them; they, though wounded, will heal many. They will become people in whom others can see new life.

This is the outcome of Jesus' Resurrection and the evidence of our resurrection. This is the blessing of the Resurrection: "a new birth into a living hope... and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [us], who are being protected by the power of God through faith...In this [we] rejoice" (1 Peter 1:4-6)

Thomas requested to see proofs that his friends were not victims of a collective hallucination but talking of the real Jesus, wounds and all. Jesus requested that he, Thomas, took the necessary step of faith and from being a disciple he transitioned into a believer. Jesus then declared blessed all those who go out on a limb and demonstrate trust in Jesus even though they have not seen him, that is all of us. (John 20:29)

May our faith increase steadily and "through believing [we] may have life in his name." Amen.