

Quasimodo Geniti

7 April, Anno Domini 2024

St. John 20:19-31

Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Saints of God,

The world today is overflowing with anxiousness. Everyone is on edge. Every difficulty or inconvenience is slathered in the most dramatic terms. Every conversation is freighted with every ounce of emotion that we can load up. Every disagreement is immediately assumed to be a personal assault. Everything is “the worst”. Everything is terrible. The world is on fire. Your life is on fire. The kids, the house, the cars, the job, the economy, the government, the trips, the parties, the games.

“Peace be to you.” This is what Jesus says to you. “Peace be to you.” If we could only take these words to heart. If we would only believe them with every fiber of our being and make them our daily mantra. The problem is that we don’t. We doubt them. We refuse to believe them. Or we simply won’t listen to them. All your anxiety and worry and desperate need to take control is rooted in your hesitancy and even refusal to believe these simple words from your Savior - “Peace be to you.”

Now, to be sure, the disciples were under a tremendous amount of strain that Easter evening. They saw what happened to Jesus and they were next. The doors were locked and they fully expected death to come knocking. Instead, there was Jesus in their midst...alive! And maybe that sounds great until you realize that perhaps Jesus was the very last person they wanted to see. The wrath of the Jews suddenly didn’t seem so bad next to the possible wrath of God! They had fled from their Lord like cowards in His darkest hour. And now, the one who had been crucified, the One who had every reason to not only hate them but cast them all immediately into the fiery condemnation of hell was standing in front of them.

Was this it? Were they about to be consumed by God's wrath?

“Peace be to you.” Of all the things Jesus could have said, that was the most important. “Peace be to you.” Peace is what the disciples needed more than anything else. Nothing else mattered except the peace of knowing that their unfaithfulness was forgiven. The peace of His pierced hands and feet. It was definitely Jesus, the One who was dead. And that can actually only mean one thing - the sacrifice was accepted and sin, their sin, was atoned for. God had forgiven their cowardice and selfishness and betrayal, their love of their lives in this world. Their consciences could be at peace because God is not their enemy. He was standing right in front of them declaring to them the peace of His sacrifice and resurrection. And to this day, those men rest in the peace and presence of Christ.

“Peace be to you.” Those words are for you. This is the apostolic preaching that is recorded for you in Holy Scripture and which the called ministers of Christ continue to proclaim to you today by Jesus' divine command. God isn't just being polite. He's telling you that your warfare is ended. He's telling you that everything that has you tied up in knots, terrified, and anxious has no power over you and cannot steal you away from the love of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is telling you that your sins, however dark, however long they have troubled you, are no longer seen by God because your Redeemer's Blood has covered them, atoned for them.

And here, into your midst, your gracious, crucified, and risen Lord has come to breathe that peace into you. That breath is the Easter acclamation - He is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia! Beloved of God, this incredible good news is meant for you. Jesus wants you to hear it and to take peace and joy and comfort in it. He wants you to rejoice even in the face of death because He is alive and that will never change. The forgiveness He won for you will never be taken away. The victory He won over the world and its demon lord is an eternal victory. Jesus lives, right now and forever! The death of eternal judgment has been died once by Jesus for all people. Jesus shows us, through His pierced and living body, that God is the

friend, not the enemy, of sinners. There is no reason for you to cower in fear behind locked doors, hiding from the cross, the vanquished world, your sin, or God. Jesus is alive. Peace be to you.

The reality is that all of your anxiety and worry and fear and anger are fruits of the unbelief that still seeks to rule you. To hang on to and indulge these things is worse than unbelief. It is disbelief. It is to know the truth, the good news of God's victory for you and yet to live as though Jesus is dead and His body long ago rotted away in the tomb, as though you never heard the Gospel. It is this disbelief that fuels our attempts to justify our faux outrage, to cling to our guilt, to hang on to our petty squabbles and in-fighting.

Repent. Lay your outrage, guilt, and squabbles in the grave and leave them there. Jesus is alive. Sin and death have been destroyed. Your sins, your neighbor's sins, the sins of your brothers and sisters in Christ. All is forgiven by Jesus. Whatever causes you worry and stress are the games that Satan plays in order to convince you that Jesus' resurrection isn't all it's cracked up to be and hasn't really done you any good. That's why Satan pours on the affliction. It's why he does everything he can to rile up your emotions and burden your conscience. The devil loves to see you twisted around like a pretzel, distressed and apprehensive, trembling at the sound of every rustling leaf as though God's wrath still hangs over you. Satan hates peace and will do whatever he can to make sure that you don't enjoy a single drop of it.

But peace is exactly what Jesus died to win for you. To be sure, the peace that Jesus brings is not the kind of outward peace that perhaps you think you need. The wrath of the Jews was still burning hot. All of the apostles would suffer deep persecution. All but one of them, St. John, would be martyred. I don't know if any of you here today are suffering for the Name of Jesus. Perhaps you are. But I do know for a fact that many of you, and probably all of you, are suffering deep afflictions - your homes are being torn apart by bitterness; your bodies are wracked with pain; your minds are drowning in worry, doubt, dread, fear, depression; the cloud of death seems to surround you everywhere you turn; your conscience is

weighed down to the depths of hell with the lurking guilt of your sins; you look out at the world and see shootings and tragic accidents, politicians all rushing to stoop lower than one another and pander to the worst of humanity just to get a vote, a society plunging headlong into all kinds of perversity and wickedness. Need I mention more?

Peace be to you. Hear and believe Jesus, freshly risen from the dead. He has crushed Satan's ugly head and robbed death of all its sting. Peace be to you. Real eternal peace. This peace is a peace that defies all logic and understanding. It is a peace that can lift the heads of the most downtrodden and despairing. It is a peace that can bring us from the depths of Sheol to the heights of heaven. Jesus wants you, each and every one of you gathered here today, to have this peace. That is why He sends His messengers to proclaim it to you, so that you may have peace even as the raging chaos of this dying world swirls around you. Because Jesus, the Son of God who was crucified, who shed His precious and innocent Blood on the cross to make complete satisfaction for the sin of the world, for YOUR sin, is alive this very day and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, everything that you fear will harm you is nothing. Even if you are blessed to join the noble army of martyrs and spill your blood as a confession of your hope in Christ, you do not need to fear. Jesus lives. You live and you will live in the peace and joy of Christ forever. There, what seems so important and impossible and overwhelming now, will be clearly seen as nothing.

God the Lord is your friend and Father. He has overcome the world and by your Baptism into Christ, that victory is yours. When all of your confidence lies in the resurrected Jesus, who has overcome the last and greatest enemy, eternal death, you will know the same joy that filled the disciples hearts when they realized not only that it was Jesus standing in front of them, but that in Him their sins were forgiven and that He had come to bring them everlasting peace. You will have the same strength to withstand your enemies and rejoice in your suffering. No cross will frighten you or cause you question God's forgiveness.

You don't see Jesus' pierced hands and feet and side. You don't get to shove your

fingers into His holy wounds. You don't need to. You have the first-hand witness of those who could and maybe even did that day. You have the promise of the risen Christ which remains to this day, a promise that He seals to you by giving you as true food the Body and Blood that were sacrificed to make peace between you and God. Blessed are you who have not seen and yet have believed. The Lord is no liar. He will not deceive you or offer to you a false or even a cheap, temporary peace. Jesus always comes to give you real, eternal peace that no sin or death can take away from you. He doesn't want you to be troubled or anxious about anything and His death and resurrection have ensured that you absolutely do not need to be. Truly. All your worries and grudges and anxieties are wasted. Do not make God to be a liar by hanging on to them as though they can protect or save you. You are absolutely free, even commanded by Christ Jesus to let them go. The peace you long for is in the full and free forgiveness of Jesus which He offers to all who will receive it in true faith.

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

In the Name of +Jesus.

Pastor Ulmer

(We stand.) The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord.