

April 3, 2005  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter  
Isaiah 49:1-6  
Pastor Ott

### **Peace Be With You**

What is it that gives you a less than peaceful feeling in the pit of your stomach? If you ask our 8<sup>th</sup> graders, I suppose they would tell you it was what, about three weeks ago when they had to sit up here in the front of church and answer some questions I asked them. Maybe you have a less than peaceful feeling in the pit of your stomach when you are at the doctor's office and he comes in and he says, "I'm sorry. There isn't anything more that we can do." Maybe you have a less than peaceful feeling in the pit of your stomach as you go to your side of the house and your spouse goes to their side of the house after you have had a disagreement about something. There are a lot of things in life that are going to lead us to have less than peaceful feelings in our hearts and minds.

This morning we meet a group of people who were together in an upper room with the doors locked because they had a less than peaceful feeling in the pit of their stomachs. Their Lord, their master, their teacher, whom they had followed for three years a couple of days earlier had been arrested, tried, crucified, and buried. They were worried now that the mob might turn to them next. They had heard some reports that really caused them to wonder. A couple of them had ran out and seen the empty tomb but we are told they still didn't know exactly what to make of it all. They didn't understand yet from scripture, as Peter did in our first reading on Pentecost, that all of these things had to happen. There was uncertainty. There was anxiety. There was fear. There was worry. There was an absence of peace. In that situation, the Lord came to his disciples. And when you and I are in that situation, the Lord wants to speak these same words to us. He longs to speak to us what he said to those disciples—PEACE BE WITH YOU.

This peace that God wants to be with us is a peace that is unlike any other because it is a peace that is received in the resurrection. But then we are also reminded this morning that it is a peace that is proclaimed by the pardon.

PEACE BE WITH YOU—a common greeting. They had used it all their lives. But on this day, at that point in time, it had a whole new meaning. Peace be with you—and as the jaws hang open and as they see Jesus standing there, up come the hands and he shows them the nail marks. He does whatever he has to do to reveal his side where the spear had pierced his heart. He shows them that death did not hold him. The grave didn't contain him—just as he had told them. The peace that he had been talking about his whole ministry that they didn't always quite get, he now showed them the visible proof in front of them. Peace that removes fear. Peace that removes anxiety, because this is peace that comes about between mankind and God.

By nature you and I, as we heard in our baptismal service this morning, are born with a less than peaceful feeling between us and God. We are sinners. We are dead in our transgressions and sin. We can't approach God. We are enemies of God. We are spiritually blind to the truth of God. There is not peace between us and God. But

because Jesus lived in our place, died in our place and then rose again, you and I can know with certainty that there is now peace between us and God. We who are baptized into Christ's resurrection are baptized into the work that paid for every last one of our sins. That means peace for all the different things we face in our life. Peace when we are anxious and worried, because we don't know what the future is going to bring. Peace when we sit beside a loved one who is lying in a hospital bed and the outlook doesn't look good. Peace because our God has told us that he who loved us enough to die for our sins loves us enough to be with us and strengthen us and sustain us until he brings us safely to our heavenly home.

PEACE BE WITH YOU—this isn't a cliché. The words that Christ speaks are the power that gives this very peace he speaks of. This is the peace that we often talk about that passes all understanding. A peace that we can't comprehend but we believe because God has given us the gift of faith—this gift that he even gives to infants—the gift that brings peace.

This morning our God reminds us of an incredible truth that maybe at times we forget. Yes, we rejoice and we revel in the knowledge that our sins are forgiven. It's what brings us here this morning—to know and to rejoice that God and I are at one again and that he has taken away my sins. That we understand. But do you also understand what the Lord said to us when he looked each one of us in the eye this morning that belong to him through faith? He reminded us that this peace he gives to us is peace that he wants proclaimed by the pardon that is ours. The peace is intimately tied to the forgiveness of sins. Jesus stresses that with the next thing that we are told by John that he said to his disciples. He said a second time, *"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 his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."* This powerful peace that God has given to us, he also entrusts that power to us to proclaim to others in what we learned in our catechisms as the Ministry of the Keys, the Loosing Key to unlock the door to heaven to say to someone, "You are forgiven". Or the Binding Key to say to someone, "You are not forgiven," or literally, "Your sin is clinging to you, your sin is retained to you, it is bound to you." This isn't just given to Called Workers. This is given to every Christian—to every Christian—to every one of you God has given this power and authority.

I administer the Keys on behalf of the congregation as I did this morning in the baptismal service in the confession of sins when I absolved the congregation and announced your sins are forgiven. But this is yours to use in your daily life. Those less than peaceful times when you have had an argument with a friend, a spouse, a relative, a coworker, or whatever the case may be. Have you ever found yourself either talking to someone who has just went through it or when you have just went through it and someone says to you, "Yeah, but they are a jerk. They deserved everything you said to them, everything you did to them." Maybe you hear that and you are struggling with the knowledge that what you did was wrong. "I spoke in anger. I said words that hurt that person. Yeah, I know they hurt me, but I did something wrong. I sinned against God." And now to fix that peace, that hurt that's in our hearts, have you ever said to someone, "Yeah, but they had it coming." Has anyone ever said that to you? When that happens, this power that God has entrusted to us and has placed in our hands, we have left it on

the shelf. We have failed to use the most powerful thing in the world which is God's word—the law and the gospel.

The most powerful thing in the world is that gospel which we can say to someone when they are troubled by their sin. Not to say, "Oh yeah, they had it coming." Or "He was a jerk" or "They were a jerk" or whatever excuses we might make for our own sins. But you and I, every one of us, has the authority to say to someone, "Yes, you have sinned, but turn to Christ because in Christ that sin has been removed. In Christ you are forgiven. In Christ you are one with God. God still loves you and has taken away this sin. You are his own dear child." These might be some new phrases we need to work into our conversations when people are hurting, when people are struggling, when people are looking for hope—you and I have the power to proclaim this peace. We don't have to wait until they come to a church on a Sunday morning to hear it. God put it into your heart and you can share it with them.

Certainly we can't go off on our own—we have to use God's word. If God calls something sin, we must call it sin. It doesn't matter what excuses we come up with. If God has called it sin, it is sin. If a person denies their sin or makes excuses for their sins, then we can't assure them of that forgiveness. But to those who are hurting and troubled, who are uncertain and are carrying around that weight of guilt in their daily life, you and I have got the pry bar that gets it off their shoulders. It's the gospel. This is the peace that passes all understanding that we get to speak faithfully and frequently.