

Peace be with you

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Second Sunday of Easter) is John 20:19-31. This text has three segments. The first is Jesus appearing to his disciples minus Thomas. The second records Jesus interaction with Thomas and third is about the purpose of this Book.

This lesson begins on the evening of Easter day with the disciples locked in a room in fear of the Jews. When Jesus appears to them, their initial reaction is greater fear still. But their fear begins to give way to the peace that Jesus brings them.

Instead of rebuking the disciples for their conduct on Good Friday, Jesus bestows his peace on them. The blessing of peace, which Jesus extends three times in this text, is never simply a pious wish. This is full Gospel. It is an absolution. The first thing He does is to forgive their sins and declare that all is well. In those words of peace alone, hearers have been given every blessing of a reconciled, all-powerful and all-loving God to his people.

What patient, seeking love of the Savior! He condescends to the disciples and Thomas' requirement for both visual and physical "proof" of his resurrection, adding the plea, "*Stop doubting and believe.*"

*"He showed them his hands and his side."* Salvation is an "in the dirt" affair. He became "sin who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) so that we might be saved. He got his hands dirty and bloody. Salvation is also an event in history. These are not metaphorical hands; these are the hands of Jesus, the one who was crucified, died, and was buried. The salvation of God has handprints and footprints in history so that "peace on earth, goodwill toward men" might be visible to all.

Jesus is always reaching out and teaching. For their own faith, as well as their future testimony, it was essential that the disciples positively identify him. The wounds of Jesus bring joy and assurance to us today. They are proof of Jesus' death and resurrection.

There are many great reversals in Scripture. In our text we have one of them. Jesus took men who had totally forsaken him in an act of cowardice and sets them apart and sends them out with authority of forgive or retain sins. Later on, he gives them the Great Commission.

By giving the Holy Spirit, Jesus was equipping the disciples for the ongoing work assigned to them, including especially the exercise of the Office of the Keys.

Speaking through John, God announces the Good News that Jesus is His Son and that by faith in His name, we have life and salvation—the core message of the entire Scripture.

Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for showing your mercy to us like you did to the disciples. Thank you for using us as frail human beings to continue your work here on earth. Help us to use your Word as we continue to believe. Amen.