

Easter 2 C 2022  
John 20:19-30  
**Locked Doors**

I have always thought that if we are to make sense out of the gospel, especially the post-resurrection stories, we have to be able to enter them ourselves. The risen Jesus addressing the disciples in Galilee, the walk to Emmaus, the disciples taking hold of his feet, none of it will make any sense outside our ability to place ourselves inside the stories themselves. As deeply as we want to know what truth is, with our distrust of what we cannot quantify and the terrible expediency that has governed the end of Jesus earthly ministry, we have to be able to see these stories, with their entirely internal logic and distinctly human personalities, on their own terms. The commissioning of the disciples, the blindness of Mary to one she believes is the gardener, all of it has to be viewed from the inside if we are to make any sense of the deep paradoxes of our post resurrection lives.

Today we are literally inside, holed up with the disciples in the upper room, where they have collected on the evening of that first day. The fear is palpable; it pervades the room, its closeness, the hushed breathing of those who believe that they will be next on the list that the authorities have no doubt assembled. The doors are locked from the inside, and the disciples will have been listening for footfalls on the stairs. If you are like me that is how our lives have felt lately, with wars and rumors of wars, a media generating speculating about short and long-term effects of what is happening in our world. The world that Jesus is trying to dispel thrives on this uncertainty, which is why he stands among them today

So when Jesus comes, stands among them and says, "Peace be with you", all of the resurrection paradoxes begin to appear with him. The house where they are staying is, after all, their own tomb, sealed by heartbreak and fear. If we look into their eyes, as we can with each other, we can see a still deeper entombment. Whatever names we assign it, abandonment, despair, it is the acknowledgement of the most profound failure of their lives, the death of one who had embodied hope for them. But the irony is that Jesus is outside his own tomb; as he stands among them, the offer is of peace, not the peace of the ruling authorities that organized his death, but a deeper peace that cannot be seen but only felt from the inside-out, the peace of recognition in appearance and promise. The Holy Spirit he breathes on them becomes a way of unlocking other tombs, of release from kingdoms based on threat and violence.

So when Thomas, in all his humanity, appears and asks for proof prior to belief, we know what he is talking about. He is, after all, only asking for what the other disciples received on the day of the resurrection. Once he is given what was so freely offered the other disciples, his response is the most profound confession of faith in the entire gospel, "My Lord and my God!" It is the internal understanding of peace that cannot be seen, only experienced from the inside before it can be offered to the world.

All of the doors to our hearts lock from the inside. Whatever names we give those closed doors, whether they are sorrow or loss, anger or fear, they keep us from the peace Jesus is offering all of us this morning. It is why, for Jesus, peace is a verb, just as belief is. Peace is something

that is constantly taking shape, spread from us who are gathered together in this room to those outside it in an effort to show that the world's uncertainties don't have the last word. Peace is what we are proclaiming when we feed the hungry and bind-up their wounds, find people somewhere to stay apart from the concrete. The enemy of that peace is always fear, which is a familiar alternative to the peace that Jesus is offering the disciples this morning. They are places where locked doors are everywhere and behind them is a fear like the one we feel in the disciples this morning, a fear of the contingency of our lives, a feeling of precariousness that Jesus is trying to break in his disciples with the gift of peace and the breath of the Holy Spirit. Like Jesus himself, that breath cannot be contained behind locked doors. It is meant to be released to the world and once we begin to find our way beyond our tombs, we can feel its work on our lives.

So where, in this post-resurrection season, are our locked doors? Maybe they are in the wounds we bear, the sense of failure in believing in an enterprise that threatens all we are, all we believe. But what we are offered this morning is something that cannot be confined by fear, sorrow or the despair, the things that always threaten to bolt our worlds closed. The peace and life of the resurrection enable us to meet any circumstances, no matter how grim they appear. The good news today is the appearance of the unexpected, uninvited, even the unwanted Jesus, breathing new life into us, the guest who does not open the door for us but gives us a way to find our own way beyond our locked doors and the courage to step beyond our own tombs.