

“City of Peace”

John 20: 19-23

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October 1 and 2, 2011

[Prayer]

In John 20:19 it's Easter, but the disciples don't know it. Peter and John had been to the tomb and found it empty but according to John the disciples still didn't understand the scriptures.

Mary told them a crazy experience and John writes that he believed, but the disciples...the 12, now the 11...didn't truly believe.

Its Easter...but they don't know it...so verse 19:

On the evening of that day (Easter)

The first day of the week (Sunday)

The doors being locked where the disciples were for fear...fear of the Jews...that's quite a picture

The disciples...probably the 12 minus Judas and Thomas (who shows up a week late).

The 12...like 12 tribes...the new Israel...the church together in a room in Jerusalem and they are the New Jerusalem.

The church locked in a room, as the sun goes down...

locked down in fear...on Easter, in fear of the Jews

In John “the Jews” is not just a nationality...it's justifying your self according to the Law in the power of the flesh. (I think most American Christians are really more Jewish or Muslim in this regard...than Christian.)

“Fear of the Jews”...and check this out...they were Jews.

They had taken from the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

They had tried to fulfill the Law and now they hide their hearts...
imprisoned in fear.

They are a picture of us...we're the church, we're the Israel of God...we're the Bride of Christ...who is the New Jerusalem.

But we close our hearts...imprisoned in darkness, shame and fear.

It's Easter...but they don't know it...

On Friday Jesus had been crucified on a tree in a garden...Satan ravaged Him and He descended into Hell. John tells us in 1John5:19 the: “whole world lies in the power of the Evil one.”

Well, the disciples are locked down in fear and shame and they remind me of us...and that reminds me of a movie, *Devil 1*. If you see one horror movie you ought to see that one.

[Movie clip]

A group of people get stuck in an elevator with the Devil...or at least that's what Ramirez, the guard, tells the detective...for you see, not only is the elevator stuck, but every time the lights go out...someone dies in the elevator. Each person is suspect; for each person is harboring a secret. Each person is imprisoned in fear. The guard and detective can see into the elevator with the security camera except of course when the lights go out and people die. Ramirez the guard says, "It's the Devil." Bowden says it's "us."

[Movie clip 2]

Devil or us? ...Maybe it's both...well people "keep dyin'" in the elevator. And, maybe you've noticed...we're stuck on this planet and people die every day and maybe you've noticed...that we all lie to ourselves and live in fear. It's not just the people in the elevator.

[Movie clip 3]

..."Hell" and from the start of the story...We know He's still stuck there. He's trapped in resentment toward the unknown man who killed his wife and son. His sponsor with AA told him, "You need to forgive."

Well anyway, the disciples are locked in a dark room in fear. Jesus has just been crucified...and the whole world lies in the power of the Evil one...And it's Easter...but the disciples don't know that yet.

John 20:19-21

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace..."

Now "peace" was a common greeting like "Hey guys"...but it was also much more and as we'll see Jesus repeats it here and in the next paragraph as well. In Hebrew it's the word "Shalom." It means "everything as it should be"...(like on the 7th day of creation)...Jeru-salem means "city of peace"...Jesus is Prince of Peace. Jesus walks through locked doors and says, "Hey guys – Peace."

...with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.

"Peace"...Think about that...
Even now it seems crazy.

People often wonder what the point of the sermon is. Here it is: You are like stuck on an elevator with the Devil and everyone is dying and Jesus says to you, "Have peace."

"Peace"...Why would they have peace?
They're already stressed...

Now, Jesus walks through the wall, hands the ministry over to them and shows them His wounds...That ought to stress them even more. Think about it...

Peace?

1. They have no control

...but God is in control

1. They have no control. (In that day especially, stone walls and locked doors were control...every major city was a walled city; stone walls and locked doors.)

They were locked in and Jesus walks through the wall...

He doesn't use the door...He is the door and check this out:

He's not less real...

He's more real than reality.

He's not a metaphor. If any thing's a metaphor...creation is a metaphor.

He's the Word...but the Word is more solid than all creation.

So all ???, the disciples realize all their control is an illusion.

And the world is upside down...

What's solid is empty...what's empty is solid.

The first are last...and the last are first.

All at once they realize...control is just an illusion

...and privacy is a myth they tell themselves.

The day you realize that...you will feel profoundly violated, or perhaps, if you know him, you will feel thoroughly loved...Jesus says, "Peace."

They have no control and...

2. They have thoroughly failed!

Peace?

1. They have no control

2. They have utterly failed

...but God is in control

...but God has not failed

Just 3 nights earlier they had been arguing about who was first. Even as Jesus broke the bread and poured the wine each of them vowed to offer their life for Jesus...Yet all abandoned Jesus as He offered His life for them.

And it's not just them, it's us: Psalm 51:2

After seducing Bathsheba and murdering her husband, King David writes, "Oh God, against you and you alone have I sinned.

You see, if you take from another person, you take from taker...

You take from a thief

You take from someone who's already taken fruit from the tree.

But Jesus is the fruit on the tree...that is taken

He is the Life.

He is the Good.

All sin is against Him.

Our sin is the cause of His wounds and now they see those wounds. The day you see them...you will feel profoundly ashamed or perhaps, if you know Him, profoundly forgiven.

Jesus says..."Have Peace."... "Have Peace?"

1. They have no control
2. They have been utter failures
3. They are entirely insufficient and for what He's gonna ask them to do.

Peace?

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. They have no control | ...but God is in control |
| 2. They have utterly failed | ...but God has not failed |
| 3. They are entirely insufficient | ...but God is sufficient |

God is Grace, God is Jesus and God is in Control

Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, I'm sending you."

1John 3:8 – *As the Father sent me. I'm sending you.*

John 4:42 – *He's the savior of the world.*

Saving the world or destroying the work of the Devil...it is a lot of responsibility.

These guys should be the world's greatest stress monkeys. You know I've discussed that most American Christians seem to think: God wants to save...but He really can't save, and so He needs us to convince folks to choose to be saved.

OR

He'll have to torture them endlessly after they die...So, in effect He's not the savior...we're the savior saving people for Him, for He loves them...but will have to torture them endlessly without our help and our ministries and our tithing programs.

Well saving people for God and from God all at the same time...
Because you are the savior is pretty stressful!¹

"As the Father sent me...so send I you."

The day you hear that you will be totally consumed with anxiety or perhaps, if you know Him...gratitude and peace. Jesus says, "Have peace." Then He shows them His wounds...saying, "So send I you."

Do you realize that every one of his disciples...will be crucified, hung, beheaded, skewered, or beaten to death...except John tortured but finally exiled to the Island prison of Patmos – "So, I send you."

This will hurt...Do you think something's wrong when life hurts and you are rejected? Jesus shows them his scars and proclaims, "Peace"...

He's proclaiming peace to Jerusalem...
700 years before, Isaiah prophesized:

Comfort, comfort ye, my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem. (Isaiah 40:1)

On the island at Patmos, in the Revelation, John saw that the 12 are Jerusalem.

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand...double for all her sins.

Isaiah 61:7 – Isaiah explains God doesn't just redeem Jerusalem's sins, He uses her sins, to give her double what she lost.

Isaiah 60: 10 and 11 – He says, *"In wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut."*

So, Jesus...Prince of Peace...speaks "peace" to Jerusalem (City of Peace).
Those 10 disciples locked in the dark, with the door shut, in fear...on Easter.
"Have Peace."

John 20:22

"And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit."

Now preachers and theologians get all stressed about this 'cause they say, "Hey the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost in 40 days and that's true but you know...we don't even have a soul except..."

Remember that God breathed His spirit in to you on the 6th day of Creation and you became a living being.
Remember Jesus delivered up His spirit on the 6th day of the week As He hung on the tree in the garden.
Remember what Paul taught...no one can confess "Jesus is Lord" Or cry "Abba Father" except by the power of that Spirit.

Now they will be baptized (that is immersed) in that Spirit on Pentecost...speak in other tongues. That also happens. But if you think the Holy Spirit is just about speaking in tongues and neat tricks...then you really are confused.

What is Spirit? Well, I think my spirit is who "I" am...really..."I" am my spirit...It is "I" that observes "me." It is "I" that makes choices and creates "me."

Now listen to St. Paul:

"It is no longer 'I' that live, but Christ who lives in 'me'"

His Spirit in me...A new me...A faith full "me."
His Spirit in me choosing...choosing what?

Now John 20:23

²If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven:

If you forgive the sins of anyone....
Isn't that a bizarre statement?

Who are you or I to forgive sins?...I mean if I walk up and proclaim..."Behold all your debts are forgiven."

You'd think:

"Nice idea, but...

My mortgage broker, my banker and the Visa corporation
might beg to differ. You see, I owe them and not you.
They actually own my house, my car and well, they
kinda own me."

...But do they? If God is the creator of everything...
How could anyone claim ownership of anything?

According to scripture...anything you think you've earned and thus think you own
is something that you've stolen...from God.

Well anyway...

When David writes "Against you and you alone have I sinned."

He actually means it.

He didn't steal Bathsheba from Uriah

for Bathsheba never actually belonged to Uriah and...

He didn't steal Life from Uriah

for Uriah's life never actually belonged to Uriah

He stole from god. We all have and we all do and what we steal is
ourselves and that's called pride.

We take credit for our own creation, ...our choice...which makes it bad
choice...which is sin...Actually: ORIGINAL SIN...We make ourselves the Judge..

Taking knowledge of Good and Evil on the tree to judge ourselves
and judge Good.

Trying to make our Life, by taking His life, on the tree.

We crucify Christ on the tree

ORIGINAL SIN..."The Sin of the World"

...But John's gospel started with this statement:

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Maybe He can really take it away...

"For against Him and Him only, have we sinned."

We have each stolen our life from God...

Yet on the Cross, God gave His life to us...as Jesus cried, "Father forgive them" and "It is finished."

So...how can I forgive sins if all sin is against Jesus???

Well only if Jesus is the one forgiving sins.

But how can I forgive sin if they have already been forgiven at the Cross?

...Well Peter Hiett can't forgive sin and cancel all debts.

And, yet Peter Hiett gets to announce..."All debts are forgiven."

WOW that's a privilege...that's GOOD NEWS...GOSPEL.

[Unless you think a bunch of folks are indebted to you OR unless you think you paid your way.]

Jesus says, *"If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven [past tense, it happened at the Cross]; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."*

"Withheld"...from them and perhaps withheld from you. Jesus said if we don't forgive...we aren't forgiven.

And yet how can that be IF forgiveness happened at the cross?

Where the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world and cried, "It is finished?"

Markus Barth (Karl Barth's son) used to tell a story to his seminary students. It went something like this:

A group of thieves robbed a bank somewhere in Florida. Running from the police...they abandoned the gold for it was too much to bear. They escaped to the Everglades, where they hid in fear. Meanwhile there was a trial:

The Judge found them guilty, but commuted the sentence and offered a full pardon...that was his judgment: Grace

They sent messengers to find the men and deliver the word from the Judge..."You are free."

Yet every time the messenger got close, the thieves heard the blood hounds bark and hid further and deeper in the swamp.

And then Markus Barth would ask his class:

“Were these men Free????”

“Were they Forgiven???”

These men are us...but we didn't just steal gold...

We stole our lives and thus took Christ's life...He's the judge

And the judge issued judgment...

We took His life and yet He gave His life...His judgment is Grace.

And now He sends word: “I have born your griefs and carried your sorrows...the Lord has laid on me the iniquity of all.”

But every time He gets close...we hide in the trees...LOST.

Jesus came “to seek and to save the lost”...the *apoloos*..translated, the perished, the destroyed.

I see no evidence in scripture that he ever stops...in scripture

He even descends into Hell

into every dark little prison of shame and fear.

Where He reveals His wounds and romances “the lost”

to surrender their lives to the Truth and He is the Truth

to surrender their sin to the Light and He is the Light

to surrender their fear to Love...the mere idea of Love...the sacrifice of self for another.

He romances the LOST to surrender their self...that which was stolen.

And even though we hide ourselves in the swamp...

He's the Lord of the swamp and even the critters in the swamp

You know He came “to destroy the works of the Devil” and He even uses the Devil to do so. Paul even told the church in Corinth, “to deliver a man up to the Devil” “for the destruction of the flesh” (that prison of fear and lies)—the destruction of the flesh that he might be saved on the day of the Lord, that he might surrender his prison of pride and believe the Word of Grace.

See? The man's sins had been taken away but you can't believe that you're forgiven until you admit that you have sinned. You can't have faith in grace until you sacrifice the self you think you have created. That self is the prison and grace is on entire New Creation.

If you want what you deserve...you are forever trapped in nowhere and nothing.

But if you surrender to grace...all things are yours,

For all things are grace and you are free.

[Devil clip 4]

When we confess ourselves...our sin...the Devil loses his game...the Devil is “the accuser,” and yet our sins have been taken away.

See? It's only faithlessness and fear that hold us in prison. And it's only faith in grace (and God is grace) that sets us free. So when we confess that we don't deserve life we can finally receive life for what it is: a gift

Jesus is “the Life” and everything that's anything is a gift.

Everything that's anything is Grace.

If God is the Creator, it's the most obvious proposition in the universe

God is Love and...

All reality comes by Grace and...

We are created by Grace.

But if we think we create ourselves...we desecrate ourselves...lying to ourselves and thus trapping ourselves in condemnation and death.

All around us is Grace...

All around us is Easter...

But we don't know it for we're trapped by fear.

Well at least we gather together...we gather together like those disciples 2,000 years ago.

1. Afraid of losing control...
2. Terrified we've already failed...
3. Afraid that we're insufficient.

We gather together in Fear on the 1st day of each week.

We hear the Word “Have Peace” and Jesus shows us His wounds:
“Body broken and Blood shed”

That would be utterly terrifying EXCEPT...It's Him...Jesus
And we're getting to know Him.

So,

1. We have no control...But God's in control
2. We have failed...But God has not failed
In fact, our failure reveals His Grace and He is Grace and now we know Him.
3. We are insufficient...But God is entirely sufficient

In fact God has already won: “It is finished.”

We took His life and yet He gave His life...*Fore-gave* His life

So,

At the Cross our sin was taken away and at the Cross Christ gives us His Spirit...the will to choose Grace and the will to return that which was stolen ourselves...our dead selves.

At the Cross, He draws all people to Himself.

Jesus says, "Peace"...God is in control

God is Jesus...look God is Grace

Jesus says "Peace" As the Father has sent me.

(And the Greek tense implies that he's still sent)

"As the Father has sent me...so send I you."

On the Island of Patmos, in the vision we now call the Revelation, John sees "the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven." It was like the Old Jerusalem and yet is entirely new. See? It's not made by human hands...its 100% Grace and it has 12 foundations and 12 gates.

John saw it coming down in 90AD and its still coming down today. It started that first Easter: ...

It's the "City of Peace"...Jerusalem...the church...

And check it out: ...the Gates are always open.

The gates are always open...

In a fallen world that's dangerous

In a fallen world that could hurt.

Jesus said, *"As the Father sent me, so send I you"*...Jesus is the open door and Jesus is crucified and Grace can get you crucified. This world hates Grace for this world runs on debts and fear and

So the Proclamation of Grace will get you crucified.

And forgiveness itself always forms a wound.

But look at His hand, look at His side...Grace wins...Love wins...It's how the kingdom comes...It's how our Lord conquers.

Father O'Malley was working late on Sunday's sermon when he got the call. A woman said, "Father we have a terminally ill patient here in Auburn. He wants someone to give him Last Rites – can you come?"

O'Malley drove the 30 miles in the middle of the night...when he arrived the nurse informed him that this fellow was an alcoholic, who lived...in the woods alone, His name was Tom. Tom was cantankerous, rude, and ungrateful.

Father O'Malley asked if Tom had anything to confess. "Absolutely not" was the reply. O'Malley stayed by his bed...just talking until the sun came up and he asked him again, "Tom, anything you'd like to confess?"

Finally Tom said, "Father when I was young I did something so bad...I never told anyone about it and I haven't spent a single day, since, without reliving the horror."

...I was a switchman on the railroad...it was 2 nights before Christmas...32 years, 2 months and 11 days ago...It was in Bakersfield...the whole yard crew was drinking and I was drunker than most...I pushed the switch for the 8:30 freight...in the wrong direction. At 45 miles an hour, that train slammed into a passenger car at the next crossing and killed a young man, his wife, and 2 daughters. I've lived with that every day since."

There was a long silence and after what seemed like an eternity Father O'Malley put his hand on Tom's shoulder and said very quietly...

"If I can forgive you, God can forgive you, 'cause in that car were my mother, my father and my 2 older sisters."

That's how the kingdom comes and our Lord conquers and it hurts. But, if we hear His word of "Peace" and touch His wounds...our doors will never be closed in fear but opened in Grace.

AND the "Gates of Hell will not prevail against us."

In that movie, *Devil*...Detective Bowden gives Anthony a ride home...

The detective is still in prison

And, Anthony wonders if he's going to prison.

[Devil clip 5]

God is Real...God is Grace...and God is in Control.

Martin Luther said, "Even the Devil is God's Devil." Even he is under the sovereign control of our Lord...

God is Grace and Grace wins...Jesus wins...

So, have "Peace."

If you believe that, the doors of your heart, will always be open. So as they gather together on a dark night, in a dark room...Jesus took bread:

"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

Have Peace.

This is the Gospel...your sin is forgiven...your debt has been paid...
It is finished (the proclamation of the Gospel is utterly radical and revolutionary).

I'm convinced that most of what passes for Christianity in our society is an effort...to candy coat the Gospel for Pharisees, for people who like to justify themselves with their knowledge of good and evil in the power of their own flesh.

But the Lamb of God has already taken away the sin of the world and everything is Grace.

If you believe that:

1. You will have unquenchable peace
2. And you will become as generous as Jesus...
A door that is always open.
If you proclaim that: "All debts are cancelled."
3. You will get crucified...this world runs on debt and fear.
Messages of peace...get shot
Messages of grace...get crucified

But look at His hands...look at His side..."Have Peace."

[Communion]

[Benediction]

Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.

Footnotes

¹And so some say “we don’t save”

 God saves, but He actually doesn’t want to save everyone.
So He will ??? you to save some...His elect (whom He loves)

But He will endlessly torment others...(whom He hates)

So I’m not the Savior...God is the Savior

 But I’m commanded to preach “God saves.”
 Knowing that many or most He doesn’t want to save.

And He did say, “Love everyone”...though He hates most...

 Thinking you are the savior or

 That God will endlessly hate the people you’re trying to
 save...pretty stressful.