

“The Patience of Jesus”

Over and over and over again, the followers of Jesus are told that He is risen. He tells His disciples beforehand – and afterwards, the angel announces it to the women, that He is risen, “just as He had told you.”

Jesus has done the hard work of teaching His disciples about His Passion – preaching to them of His Resurrection. And what is He met with? Unbelief! The women only come to the tomb because they expect to find a body – the disciples wouldn’t believe the report of the women coming back from the tomb.

And instead of chastising them and scolding them – Jesus shows great patience, a steadfast love and mercy – as He teaches them all over again. He shows them that – what He had preached into their ears over and over and over again – is true!

In our text today, Jesus comes to His disciples who are locked behind doors “for fear of the Jews.” They were afraid they’d get the Jesus treatment – that they’d be arrested, tortured, and crucified. They were afraid of ending up dead, like Jesus.

So, He who WAS laid in a tomb, comes and stands in the midst of them – risen, alive! And patiently, He preaches – not an, “I told you” sermon – but rather, “Peace be with you.” PEACE because His death conquers their fear and death. PEACE because there is no sin standing between them and Jesus. PEACE, because they are now reconciled to God.

But you don’t hear any shouts of “Hallelujah!”, do you? So, Jesus patiently shows them His hands and His side. He shows them the very wounds by which they are healed – by which they are redeemed from sin and death.

And then, FINALLY, they rejoice! FINALLY, they believe! And Jesus drives home the message once AGAIN – “Peace be with you” – that is, your sins are forgiven.

Maybe the most amazing thing that Jesus says, is what He says next. To these fickle, slow to believe disciples, Jesus says: “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” Who in the world would do such a thing!?!

Jesus would, and does. He sends these disciples to do His Father's will. He breathes out the Holy Spirit upon them and says: "If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld."

Jesus is giving His authority to these men. He sends them out to forgive all sin and all sinners. That is what the Father desires – that all would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth – that everyone would believe and trust that Jesus' death and resurrection is their death and resurrection.

These Apostles are sent out to PATIENTLY preach and teach God's Word – by which the Holy Spirit brings sinners to repentance – so that all who hear and believe might be forgiven.

And those who will not hear – those who don't want Jesus and His forgiveness? Those who will not believe that Jesus has forgiven their tremendous sins? Those who will not trust that His blood pays the price of all sin – that His resurrection shows that sin has been atoned for?

No, those who will not repent and believe – are not forgiven. Forgiveness is withheld from them – by the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. For the unrepentant sinner, there is no – "Peace be with you." Holding on to their sin, they will receive the death and damnation that all sin deserves.

Our text for today continues – and you know how it goes – along comes Thomas. Is he too late for God's peace, too late to be forgiven? Will he believe what his fellow disciples preach to him? Will he be bound in his sin? Well, what does Thomas say?

"Unless I see in His hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into His side, I will never believe." NEVER, Thomas? Unless you take the Risen Jesus in hand, you will NEVER believe? Those are strong words. It sounds like its all over for Thomas.

But Jesus is patient. Eight days later He comes AGAIN and stands in the midst of them – and St. John tells us that "the doors were locked" – AGAIN. Sounds to me like it's not only Thomas who needs to see the wounds of the resurrected Jesus.

If Jesus has been raised – what is there to fear? If Jesus has been raised – there is peace with God, and peace on earth. But Jesus knows who He is dealing with – weak, frail, quick to fear disciples. So He patiently preaches the same sermon AGAIN. “Peace be with you.” Peace be with you, Thomas. Peace to all who hear and believe.

That is why Jesus comes and stands in your midst today – to bring you His peace. You who are locked up in fear – who fear that your health will soon be replaced by death – fear that your finances will put you in dire straits – fear that your family will be shattered – fear that your sins are too much for Jesus, too much for peace with God.

Standing in your midst, Jesus patiently preaches to you AGAIN. My suffering and death is for you. My blood pays the price in full for all your sin. It is finished – there is no debt – no sin that stands between Me and you – no sin between you and God.

Here is my Body, here is my Blood – for you – so that you may live in peace. Blessed are you who have not seen – and even now cannot see my risen Body and Blood, placed into your mouth – and yet, have believed.

Dearly beloved, listen once AGAIN – so that you may have life in My name
“Peace be with you.” Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, guards your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.