

“Peace Be With You”**John 20:19-31**

Do you have peace in mind? Today, our Lord speaks to us “Peace be with you, don’t be afraid, for I am with you every moment of your life. All the promises I give you come true.”

Let us pray; heavenly Father and Lord Jesus Christ, we seek your eternal peace and life. You are the Lord of life. In Christ name, Amen.

Today’s scripture describes the great moment that the fearful situation turns to the peaceful situation. It is because of Jesus who was dead and has risen from the dead. Before the disciples have peace, they experienced three different moments of fear. The three different moments of fear were turned to peace with a great joy and power.

When the disciples were facing the crucifixion of Jesus and his death, they suddenly fell into fear. At the moment when they entered Jerusalem with Jesus on a colt, they may have a thought that everything is now complete, but their joyful thinking was immediately turned to sadness and fear by the crucifixion of Jesus, which was not in their mind, even though Jesus implied them a number of times, saying “I will be dead and then raised on the third day.” **All the disciples were gathered because of Jesus**, their master, and for the past three years, they watched many miraculous signs and then thought that Jesus will become the king of this world, but now they lost their master. It is likely that they lost everything. They all are in fear because of the loss of their master and the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders may take an order to arrest and to put them into prison for the responsibility of the social confusion by following Jesus. **The disciples were also very confused** because of the empty tomb, even though Mary spoke about Jesus who has risen and said “I have seen the Lord.”

Now then, the disciples were together in a house, with the door locked for **the fear of the Jewish leaders**. At the moment, Jesus came and stood among them, and said “Peace be with you.” Some of his disciples might have asked Jesus, “Are you really Jesus who was crucified on the cross? My master” Then, “Yes,” “Would you see my hands and my side?” “It is I who was crucified. Do you remember what I said, ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise?’ Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” Then their eyes were

opened and they recognized that it is true. The disciples were overjoyed. It is the first moment that the fear of the Jewish leaders and the complicated situation about Jesus was turned to peace.

The second moment of fear is from the word of Jesus, saying “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” This word indicates that I have completed my mission that my Father has entrusted me, now then I am sending you to complete the mission that I give you. For the reason, I have called you and taught you for the past three years as my disciples.” Then the disciples might have asked Jesus, “How can we go outside in this situation? The Jewish leaders are looking for us to arrest and put all of us into prison. So, we are hiding in this house.” Jesus said, ‘When I was with you for the past three years, were you afraid of those?’ Jesus said, “Peace be with you. You are not alone. I am with you.” Then, Jesus breathed on them, and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” When Jesus breathed on them with the Word, saying “Receive the Holy Spirit,” the second fear turned to peace.

About the Word of Jesus, saying “Receive the Holy Spirit,” there are a number of scholarly opinions because the powerful Pentecost happened right after Jesus’ ascending to the heaven, according to Acts. One of those is from the New Testament scholars, David Wenham & Steve Walton, saying, “*The incident is to be seen as an acted parable or sign of what disciples were to experience at Pentecost, just as the Last Supper was an acted parable of the Lord’s death.*” Some others say, “*It might be mini-Pentecost for the disciples in fear, which happened right before the powerful Pentecost.*”

The next Word of Jesus, saying “If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” It indicates the church’s power that is on Jesus.” This Word was also spoken in Matthew 16:18-19, “On this rock I will build my church. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

The third moment of fear that the disciples experienced may be **due to Thomas** who does not believe what the other disciples told him. When the other disciples said, “**We have seen the Lord! We saw his hands and side,**” Thomas might have asked the other disciples, “Have you touched the body of him? Are you confident without touching his body?” and then says “I will not believe, unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger

where the nails were, and put my hand into his side.” It is likely that Thomas is a straight-talking disciple, according to the scriptures, in the story of Lazarus in John 11:16, Thomas said to the rest of the disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him,” and in John 14:5, Thomas said to Jesus, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?”

Thomas wants to confirm that He is actually Jesus **by his own way**, not by **simply listening to the other disciples**. It is by physical contact. Somehow, Thomas’ question may be very reasonable, because they clearly saw that Jesus was crucified on the cross and then they buried themselves the dead body of Jesus in a tomb. By the reason, the testimony that Jesus has risen from the dead is not easy to believe. It is very common to doubt, even though other disciples say, “We have seen the Lord!” Such doubt from Thomas might influence on the other disciples. **Somehow, it is likely that Thomas’ intention was to remove any possible uncertainty on the identification of the resurrected body of Jesus**. It is why the resurrection of Jesus is crucial event in the faith of him, including the form of the resurrected body of Jesus.

For instance, I think that you read the news, reported in the middle of March 2021, in the last month, that archaeologist discovered ancient fragments of biblical text dating back almost 2,000 years and **thought to have been hidden** in an Israeli desert during a Jewish revolt against Rome. What do you think when you hear such news?

There may be someone carefully watching the translation result of the biblical text. Regardless of the biblical content of the discovery, it may be okay to the one who has a strong faith in God and has personal experiences of God in one’s life. However, it might be the news torturing someone who does not have yet strong faith in God. He may ask himself, **“If the content of the biblical text is totally different to what I believe, is it okay to me?”**

Such a small issue might be a snare to the one. Today, still there are a lot of people who doubt the originality of the Bible and do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Let’s have another example. It is about someone who does scientific research. When the one collects data, if new data points fall in the zone that the researcher anticipates, it is wonderful, but if the data points fall out of the trend, then the one may have to doubt the overall interpretation of data. It becomes a cause of confusion.

If such a question or concern is related to our salvation, it must be a crucial matter in our faith. Actually, it is dreadful question as Paul says in the letter of 1 Corinthians 15:17-19, *“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”* **This is about our faith in Jesus Christ and his resurrection.** A lot of things that Jesus spoke to us and his promise may not firmly stand. All the disciples might be concerned because of the argument of Thomas. What if Thomas’ argument is right? Today, we do always have such concerns. Is it my faith true? Does He listen to my prayer? Is He present in this worship? Where my hope be, if my faith is in vain?

Thomas’ question is very common and it is our basic question about the Jesus’ resurrection. Thomas confirmed and solved what we are asking. The work of Thomas gives us a strong confidence that Jesus raised himself from the dead and the resurrected body of Jesus **is not only a spiritual form, but also physically tangible body.** Somehow, by the request of Thomas, we are now confident that our body will be raised as well according to the new creation by the Lord Jesus Christ, **for the body of Jesus represents our human body.**

In the midst of the concern of Thomas, a week later, while his disciples were in the house again with Thomas, Jesus came and stood among them. **Jesus knew the concern of Thomas** and said, **“Peace be with you!”** And then said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” Then, Thomas confessed, “My Lord and my God.” Thomas did great job for us who live today about 2000 years later, however, we have to keep in mind that the Word of Jesus, saying, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Through the great moment that the fearful situation turns to the peaceful situation, we are overjoyed with the confidence that all the promises Jesus give us comes true. It is the great and dramatic transition of the fear to the peace.

Today, our God and Lord Jesus Christ speak to us, “If you are with the Lord, you can have peace in God, for there is no greater than the Lord Jesus Christ and the heavenly Father. Even though it is death, you shall have peace. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord of life. His peace is great and eternal! In the name of Christ, Amen.