

Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family

Title: Jesus and Peace

Lesson: John 20:19-31 NRSV

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28 Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

It's the second Sunday after Easter. I learned that the second Sunday after Easter is called as Holy Humor Sunday, so I've brought some short humors from my holy humor book. Are you ready to laugh? Start with the very short ones: "The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible."

"A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, 'and why is it necessary to be quite in church?' Annie replied, 'Because people are sleeping.'"

"A few minutes before the service started, the townspeople were sitting in their pews and talking. Suddenly, Satan appeared at the front of the church. Everyone started screaming and running for the front entrance, trampling each other in a

frantic effort to get away from evil incarnate. Soon everyone had exited the church except for one elderly gentleman who sat calmly in his pew without moving, seeming oblivious to the fact that God's ultimate enemy was in his presence. So Satan walked up to the old man and said, 'Don't you know who I am?' The man replied, 'Yep, sure do.' 'Aren't you afraid of me?' Satan asked. 'Nope, sure ain't,' said the man. 'Don't you realize I can kill you with a word?' asked Satan. 'Don't doubt it for a minute,' returned the old man, in an even tone. 'Did you know that I could cause you profound, horrifying, physical AGONY... for all eternity?' persisted Satan. 'Yep,' was the calm reply. 'And you're still not afraid?' asked Satan. 'Nope.' More than a little perturbed, Satan asked, 'Well, why aren't you afraid of me?' The man calmly replied, 'Been married to your sister for the last 48 years.'"

Here is the last one: "For a pastor's 50th birthday, the congregation decided to give him a new suit. He was so touched by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and, with tears in his eyes, announced, 'Today I am preaching to you in my birthday suit.'"

Holy Humor Sunday is a tradition that the Korean church does not have, but it seems to be a good tradition in the American church where we can get away from the heavy atmosphere, tension, and spiritual training of Lent. The season of Easter is probably one of people's favorite days along with Christmas.

2,000 years ago, by the way, there were people who trembled in fear after Jesus died on the cross and even rose from the dead three days later. They were Jesus' disciples. They saw and experienced many miracles when Jesus was alive, so they probably expected Jesus to rule the world politically, and they expected the benefits of Jesus' kingdom they would enjoy as his faithful servants. However, contrary to their expectations, Jesus died on the cross. Before his death, Jesus encountered pointing by people, was ridiculed and mocked, whipped, and naked and crucified on the cross. The disciples expected Jesus to be a political king, but in reality, Jesus was considered as a serious sinner, and tragically died on the cross. It was the exact opposite of what the disciples had expected of Jesus.

Although the disciples had seen and experienced many miracles that Jesus performed, the disciples were not with Jesus when he was captured by Roman soldiers and was crucified on the cross. Rather, they hid and denied the fact that they were Jesus' disciples for fear that they also would be crucified like Jesus. The death of Jesus was astounding to the disciples, and they were mentally very

unstable and fearful that they too would die like Jesus. They might have regretted all the time they had with Jesus.

On that evening of Jesus' resurrection, the disciples were gathered in one house, and the door of the house was locked for fear of the Jews. (19) They were very terrified. The meaning of the door of the house being locked means that the door of the disciples' hearts was also locked. There is no hope, no faith, no trust, no love when people are gripped by fear. In this way, fear closes the door of the heart.

By the way, the disciples apparently locked the door, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (19) And let's all read verse 20 together: "After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord." Only then did the disciples recognize Jesus and experience the resurrection of Jesus. When they experienced the resurrection of Jesus, they rejoiced. And Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." (21)

Verse 22 says: "When he had said this, he breathed on them." The image of Jesus breathing on his disciples reminds us of God creating man and breathing on him in Genesis. This means that Jesus made his disciples a new human being, a new life. There are many important concepts in Christianity. However, the most important of these is the resurrection, because there is a big difference between those who experience and believe in the resurrection of Christ and those who do not. Until before experiencing the resurrection of Jesus, the disciples were gripped with fear. However, after experiencing Jesus' resurrection, they no longer felt fear. Rather they rejoiced.

To his disciples who began to believe in Christ's resurrection, Jesus says: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Jesus came to this earth to love us and to forgive our sins. And now he says to his disciples: "I send you to forgive others." So if we have a mission today as Christians, it is to love and forgive others.

By the way, Thomas wasn't there when Jesus came. When the other disciples told him about Jesus' resurrection, he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." (25) Thus, Thomas got his nickname, doubting Thomas.

A week later when Jesus' disciples and Thomas were in the house again, Jesus came, although they locked the door, and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (26)

That painting you're seeing is a very famous painting. That painting describes Jesus looking tired, Thomas with his hands on Jesus' side, and the other two disciples looking at it with interest. However, if you look closely, you can see that Jesus was holding his hand as Thomas put his hand on his side. This means that Jesus embraced even Thomas' doubts.

Friends, as we are walking on the journey of faith, we sometimes encounter times when we do not know the will of God. There are times when the words of the Bible are unbelievable. Especially when bad things happen to us, when we become ill, or when we suddenly lose loved ones, we easily resent God and turn away from him. However, the important thing is that Jesus embraced our weaknesses, even our doubts, and even our resentments. Thus, when Jesus came to his disciples, he said: "Peace be with you," "As the Father has sent me, so I send you," "Receive the Holy Spirit," rather than rebuking them.

When the disciples experienced Christ's resurrection, their fears turned into joy. And when they experienced Christ's Resurrection, their doubts turned into convictions. Doubting God is not a bad thing because it leads us to a deeper faith. Convinced of Christ's resurrection, Thomas confessed to Jesus: "My Lord and My God!" (28)

Peace is the gift of the Lord's resurrection. We all need the peace of the Lord. Christ is risen. Christ is risen indeed. He is always with us. May you all walk with the Lord and live in peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.