April 7, 2024 MARKS OF FAITH

The Holy Gospel appointed for this Sunday St. John 20: 19-31, announces how our Lord Jesus Christ conferred huge powers upon his followers when he appeared to them as the Risen Christ. This story places at our disposal the same kind of Easter power.

The appearance of Jesus appears to be substantiated by the other Gospel account in Luke. The disciples were quite obviously in a state of shock. They were completely drenched with fear because of what might happen to them in the light of the disappearance of Jesus from the tomb. They are locked in the Upper Room as a defense against anyone who might be seeking them out.

The first words Jesus uttered to his assembled and frightened disciples the first time He saw them after the resurrection was “PEACE BE WITH YOU!” Jesus speaks these words to the disciples, once without Thomas and once when Thomas was present.

What is the message of Easter for you this year? I believe God has a new message for us this morning. For those of you who live constantly in fear: fear of failure, fear of death, fear of so many things, etc., etc. and the list goes on.  Christ is risen and He brings PEACE!

Sometimes we do not know how to convey the news to someone, to the group of fearful disciples the risen Lord Jesus comes to them to take away the fear and tells them “Peace be unto you”.

From beginning to end, the life and ministry of Jesus revolved around the message of peace. Prophet Isaiah spoke of Him as one who would come as the “Prince of peace,” (Isa. 9:6). At his birth, the angels shouted words of praise saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"  (Luke 2:14). Now Jesus comes to his disciples with the words “Peace be with you.” In both the Old Testament and New Testament “peace” means “order, harmony, and spiritual well-being.” This is what Jesus came to give, “order, harmony, and spiritual well-being.”

Jesus’ peace takes away the fear that is so much a part of our living. It was fear that brought the disciples together behind locked doors. And Jesus enters the room to give them the only thing that can take the fear away, “Peace be with you.” Thomas was not with the disciples the first time Jesus appeared to them. And doubting Thomas needed proof before he could enjoy the peace. He would not believe until he saw Jesus with his own eyes and touched Him with his own hands. His peace was based on proof.

You know, we often live our lives with the attitude of Thomas. “God, I won’t believe that you are real until you show me.” Jesus says, “Peace I give unto you.” He wants you to have this “peace.” Peace that brings “order, harmony, and spiritual well-being.”  And the good news is, “You can have it, and enjoy it” right now, at this very moment.  All you must do is to receive this gift of peace, by faith. Receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and you’ll have His promised peace.

If you like to learn more about Jesus, please join us in our Sunday worship at 11:00 AM.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister

West Center Congregational Church

101 Pondfield Road West

Bronxville, NY 10708