

## WELCOME 27<sup>th</sup> April 2025 – 2 Easter '25 C

John 20:19-31

Guess what?!? Things haven't changed... **CHRIST IS RISEN!**

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & Bible Study Qs & Growing Praise inserts that help lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m. Resume THIS Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> May...**

We live in the blazing light of Easter...scarcely a week ago we were here shouting *He is Risen!* (*He is risen indeed*) back & forth at each other...But I always wonder; were these last 7 days really **ANY DIFFERENT** for you than the 7 before that?

Don't answer that right now...I have good news...

1<sup>st</sup> **Christ IS risen**...and he did that for us. How I might have dropped the ball in the last week failing to live that reality...can't change that reality.

2<sup>nd</sup> Jesus was clear while he was here on earth: "**Healthy** people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners." When life seems too big & you feel too small, not good enough, inadequate, or you believe Jesus has no reason to care about you, life is too messed up & you want to stay in bed...Jesus comes to **RELEASE IN YOU "the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead"** (Eph 1:19-20) so the Holy Spirit can lead you in a life of peace, purpose & power just like those earliest followers.

Listen...really listen to Jesus today...**As** *the Father has sent me, so I am sending you... Receive the Holy Spirit...Don't be faithless any longer. Believe!* As followers of the risen Jesus, our lives are to match the new reality of death's defeat & Christ's victory in us. Does yours? Could you be identified as a follower of Jesus? Do your daily choices show that his way is your way? Over these weeks we'll be led by the Spirit into his likeness, so that the world around us can experience his new life for itself.

*Let's pray then experience this IDENTITY CHECK by the Holy Spirit today...*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Living God, You appeared to your disciples in their hour of fear, & gave them your peace to still their hearts. Come to us now & open our hearts so we can be living hope in our world. By your Spirit equip us to bring peace to those in living in fear or trapped in sorrow & distress. Give us courage to be bold in what we believe & through us reveal your promise of abundant life, unstoppable joy & unending love. Through you Lord Jesus we pray ... Amen!*

*Let's hear God's word for this morning...*

## FAITH CHAT:

1. Why do you believe in Jesus as Lord & Saviour?  
(Jn 20:30-31 & 1 Pet 3:15)
2. What "mark" has Jesus left in your life?

## 2 EASTER '25 C – IDENTITY CHECK: SHOW ME YOUR FAITH

I was talking to a retired pastor a bit ago. He said one of his denominational leaders rang from Sth Oz...asked if he knew anyone who might be open to a sea change... NSW to SA for a couple of call opportunities they had. He described the open positions & the opportunities & he said "I could feel my pulse get faster. I had a plan starting to form in my heart...what I would do in those places. Then I remembered I was retired & if I even thought about reengaging in full-time ministry what my wife would say... My heart sank & my soul yearned to be 30 years younger."

Do you ever do that? Get excited about something only to remember how that is impossible for you now? You sense the passage to shortage of time? Like the sand in the egg timer? More on the bottom & less on the top...? And you wonder...What if you could turn it upside down & start again? Well...in many ways you can...because the death & resurrection of Jesus Christ radically transform the way we view the future...the way we view life & death...the way we view the world we live in...

Remember Sunday I said...A whole new story begins as the tomb IS EMPTY & Jesus is again alive among us. Not just the future but every moment<sup>b/;</sup> now & then for you...for me...for all creation **CHRIST IS RISEN!** are the words that transform it all. :|| Look...you may not move to SA to plant a church, or Africa to minister to orphans, but **YOU ARE** filled w/ the power of the resurrection unleashed when Jesus rose from the grave. He did it to the 12...He does it to us...watch...

*That evening, of the first day of the week, the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands & his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!* The first words Jesus speaks **AFTER** His resurrection are almost identical to what He said throughout his life...2X on the night he was betrayed/crucified... **Peace** I leave with you; My perfect **peace** I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled nor let it be afraid. – Jn 14:27 **I** have told you all this so that you may have **peace** in me. Here on earth you will have many trials & sorrows. But take heart; I have overcome the world – Jn 16:33...now 3X the day he is raised...vs 19, vs 21, & vs 26...

I'll get to those others in a bit...But **PEACE** is the gift we receive part & parcel w/ the resurrection & it's perhaps the most neglected, ignored or forgotten... **Therefore**, since we have been made right in God's sight (justified – declared righteous) by faith, we have **peace** with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. – Rom 5:1 Paul declares, we have nothing to prove to God...God is not interested in anything but you living the peace he has planted in you by the rez of Christ...your life revealing the defeat of sin/death/evil by **HIS LIFE IN YOU IN FULL** stronger than any enemy.

But even more...**For** God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, & through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made **PEACE** with everything in heaven & on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. – Col 1:19-20 --- And again...**For CHRIST HIMSELF IS OUR PEACE**. He has made Jews & Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. – Eph 2:14 You have nothing to prove to the Father who has already claimed you as his own, but you don't have to fear the judgment of the world (neighbour, guy across the street, kid's friends or your kids who have quit believing) because you are united to the risen Jesus Christ...and crucially... the Catholic friend you've known from forever, your Baptist neighbour, your Lutheran relatives in one of the "other" Lutheran churches...are all your blood relatives in Jesus Christ not the religious competition...they're siblings not suspect.

On that first resurrection evening the followers of Jesus were scared. They knew the religious bigshots would happily give them the same treatment they gave Jesus... The word "fear" in vs 19 carries the idea of "flight." The disciples were so frightened they would have run if they knew where to go. Which is why Jesus comes in "peace/shalom" which means "restoring to wholeness or putting together that which is broken." Spoken like this as a blessing it likely means "**All good to you.**" It's all good...I have restored all that was broken, righted all that was wrong, remade what was damaged, & straightened what sin distorted/twisted/bent... <sup>W/out</sup> pretence <sup>W/out</sup> acting as if the denials & evasions didn't happen...**PEACE**. Jesus doesn't whitewash the past...ignore their or our failings...he simply plants peace in their place...embraces us in his restoration to & reconciliation w/ the Father. We are from now on to **LIVE IN HIS PEACE**. **LIVE. IN. HIS. PEACE.**

**Again** he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." The 1<sup>st</sup> time Jesus bids "peace" to quiet their/our hearts. This time he pours out his peace to prepare us for our role as those who will be raised w/ him at the last day & live his new life today. Again there should be no surprise here for them or us - At the table the night of his betrayal Jesus prays to the Father: **Just** as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world...I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through **their** message. – Jn 17:18 & 20 Our role from that 1<sup>st</sup> Easter on is to make the crucified/triumphant life of Jesus visible in our lives & invite those who do not yet believe to join us...to offer what we have received as freely as we have received it. Whatever else we do in this world we are above all else to be engaging people around us in such a way that they, like us, might believe in Jesus & have life in his name. We are to **LIVE IN HIS PEACE** but as we do we are above all...to **LIVE OUT HIS PURPOSE**.

Author Mark Mittelberg writes, "Our faith is not just for ourselves. It's not to be hoarded. It was meant to be shared with other people. To be infectious...contagious." He says all followers of Jesus face the danger of what he calls the 2<sup>nd</sup> law of spiritual dynamics: Left to ourselves we move toward self-centeredness. Left to ourselves we leave those in danger of eternity separated from the Father to their separation...that's on them...won't listen...don't care...unlike Jesus who kept challenging unfaith & offering his love as alternative until unfaith had no other choice but to kill him...can we do any less. *Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."* We are to *LIVE IN HIS PEACE* but as we do we are above all...to *LIVE OUT HIS PURPOSE*.

**Then** he breathed on them & said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." It's easy to leave the Holy Spirit out of the conversation until Pentecost...but it's woven through the story of Jesus...conception to Revelation – creation to consummation the Spirit indwells each of us who have been drawn to faith. When you think of yourself as too small for the commission Jesus commits...too timid for his purpose of carrying the gospel to every soul in our surrounds...too ill-equipped to start a faith conversation w/ someone you know...It is the Holy Spirit not you who is in charge in that & every moment...Scripture promises the Holy Spirit (not you)

- gives us the right words (Lk 12:11, 12)
- convicts (Jn 16:8) & converts (Jn 6:44)
- sustains us as the presence of Jesus w/in us (Jn 14:26)
- gives focus & substance to our prayers (Rom 8:26)
- gives each of us gifts to do God's will & build Christ's church (1 Cor 12:7)
- shapes us more & more in likeness to Jesus Christ (Gal 2:20 & 5:22-25)

Jesus steps out of the tomb & from that moment his followers...**ALL** his followers... **ALL** who trust in him are filled w/ *POWER TO LIVE ON*...**A whole new STORY begins as the tomb IS EMPTY & Jesus IS again alive among us.** Take hold of that word "story." **NOT** like a bedtime story you tell your grandkids...cute quaint & likely not true...but a story powerful enough to change a life. Stories are deep/rich. Stories move the heart. Stories transform lives. Stories are dynamic. I can tell you the facts of the rescue of those schoolboys from the flooded cave in Thailand, 2018, but their **story** is gripping. The empty tomb & a few post-resurrection appearances from Jesus are **not** the story of the resurrection. Who else makes an appearance in what we read...? Who else is center stage w/ Jesus...? **Thomas**

You know what you know about Thomas...We tell ourselves the "Thomas story" is of doubt/disbelief...What if that was just the beginning of the Thomas story...but one episode in the unfolding Thomas drama...? Do you know where Thomas died?

Near Chennai, **India**. He was the apostle to the people of India. He brought the gospel of Christ to India. He died a martyr in captivity. When Thomas cries out, "My Lord my God!" Thomas throws himself into a new relationship, a new worldview, a new way of living & is swept away in the resurrection. A whole new STORY begins as the tomb IS EMPTY & Jesus IS again alive among us. Austrian priest/scholar Ivan Illich grew up in & survived the horrors of Nazi Germany; but saw what catapulted them to power. He was asked if evolution or revolution was best...but he said "neither... rather you must tell a new powerful story that even shines some light into the future so we can take the next step." "Tell a better more powerful story." What better story to tell than "**CHRIST IS RISEN!** and here's the mark that has left on me."

When life seems too big & you feel too small, not good enough, inadequate, or you believe Jesus has no reason to care about you, life is too messed up & you want to stay in bed...Jesus comes to **RELEASE IN YOU "the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead"** (Eph 1:19-20) so the Holy Spirit can lead you to *LIVE IN HIS PEACE* ...to *LIVE OUT HIS PURPOSE*...& be filled w/ *POWER TO LIVE ON*...just like those earliest followers.

**As** the Father has sent me, so I am sending you...Receive the Holy Spirit...Don't be faithless any longer. Believe! As followers of the risen Jesus, our lives are to match the new reality of death's defeat & Christ's victory in us. Show me your faith...

*As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...*

### **TAKE IT HOME**

This week...to whom will you intentionally show your faith?  
How? For what can we pray for you in the meantime?

*(Be specific...so we can pray for that to unfold.)*

### **Prayer after the sermon...**

*Lord Jesus, be with us not just today but always. Speak your word of triumph into our lives & breathe your Spirit of peace, purpose & power into our hearts. Free us from ourselves so we might boldly represent you & offer your eternal life & glorious peace to the people we encounter throughout the coming days. Amen.*