

Easter 2

April 11, 2021

Scripture: John 20: 19-31

A Sermon by Rev. Dawn Allen-Herron,
with the People of St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Anchorage, Alaska

Unless I See....

“Peace be with you.”

All week long, I've looked forward to today, and an opportunity to hear this Gospel text from John read, to hear again these words from Jesus, “Peace be with you.”

The truth is, I cannot think of a single day in my life that I would not welcome a moment when I could hear, clearly, this: “Peace be with you.”

So this story is among my favorites.

To disoriented, frightened disciples, sitting with gut-wrenching grief:

“Peace.”

And then, again,

“Peace.”

And one week later, for Thomas, who had not been with the others on that first day,

“Peace be with you.”

Somehow we can feel that this is no picnic-in-the-daisies, all-is-right-with-the-world kind of peace.

In fact, in Greek thought—which John, the author of this Gospel, knew well, PEACE (*Eirene*) was one of the *horae*, divine women of seasons. The *horae* affected not only humans, but also agriculture, wildlife, and all of creation.

And Peace never travelled alone. None of the *horae* did. The three sisters—*Eunomia* (Good Order, lawful harmony), *Dike* (Justice), and *Eirene* (Peace) travelled together. In art and in literature, if one left, the others followed.

Peace, in Greek thought—the kind of peace that Jesus breathes on his followers—requires justice and a community rightly ordered.

John knew this, and his hearers did, too.

But here—in these post-resurrection appearances, the Gospel adds something else.

If we look more carefully at the story, we can see it.

Jesus stands among the disciples, and says, “Peace be with you.”

AFTER THIS, he showed them his hands and his side.

THEN the disciples saw the Lord.

THEN they rejoiced.

Much, of course, has been made of Thomas’ supposed doubting.

I’ve always assumed that Thomas needed to see Jesus—to touch him—to believe that Jesus was *raised*, that resurrection was real.

But what Thomas asks to see are the mark of the nails and the wound in Jesus’s side.

Thomas is changed when he experiences the marks of Jesus’s crucifixion.

THEN Thomas recognizes Jesus as “my Lord and my God.”

Thomas, it seems, already knew that resurrection does not erase the cross.

The Crucified One is resurrected,

and among other things, this means that the resurrection was not only a one-time atonement equation,

but that the message of the cross is a pattern for God’s presence in the world.

God shows up in suffering.

God shows up in the suffering of the world.

God has promised to show up in my suffering, and in yours.

Maybe it wasn’t the resurrection that Thomas needed more evidence to believe,

but that God had suffered,

struggled,

gasped a last breath,

and died.

And that the Love that Thomas knew in the person of Jesus,

the Love that John says is what God is all about

THIS Love, in Jesus,

LASTED through death and suffering

And this Love

transforms every reality,

even those that leave scars.

“Peace be with you.”

The Risen One offers a Peace that only lives
with Justice and Right Relations—
and something more:

This is the Peace that shows up.
Shows up when you're where you're supposed to be,
doing what you're supposed to be doing.
Shows up when you're all alone,
trying to figure out how to go on.
Shows up when the world is upside down;
when it's upside down because of your own action,
and when it's upside down because of deep injustice and wrong.

It is the Peace offered by the Risen One.
To you.
To me.

My friends,
Peace be with you.
Amen.