

**Greetings from God the Father and from our Risen Lord and Savior
Jesus Christ, and from the Holy Spirit. Amen**

Where there is forgiveness there is Peace and eternal life and joy.

John 20:19–21:1

In the Gospel we read: ***On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.***

Are you like Thomas missing the Lord today? You are here physically unlike Thomas who was not physically there in the upper room that evening of Easter. But are you not hearing Christ in the service today? Because you are missing Jesus, not hearing completely for some reason, you are not filled with peace and joy; you are feeling uncertainty, fearful, maybe you do not think you are forgiven fully. You are not at peace today. Not at peace

with God or with your fellow neighbor. The disciples were feeling discouraged, lonely, fearful, guilty for leaving Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were not thinking of forgiveness of sins. They were confused, and maybe you are today, too – unable to understand what's happened in your life ... this morning ... last week ... or some other time in the past. They were thinking of the events earlier that day. Earlier in the Gospel of John, Peter and John went to the tomb along with Mary Magdalene. Peter and John saw the empty tomb, the linen that was wrapped around Jesus placed aside in the tomb. And then Peter and John went home. When Mary Magdalene stayed behind, she saw Jesus and spoke with Him. She went and told the Disciples. And despite the reports from the women, and Peter and John seeing the empty tomb, they (all the Disciples) still did not believe. They were afraid afraid that the Jewish leaders would do to them the same as to Jesus. They were doubting what they heard. They were not rejoicing about the events or news of Jesus' RESURRECTION. They were missing Jesus. They were hanging on to what they only knew from the past then to believe something new, exciting that Christ has risen! They like the little boy:

A five-year-old boy got his hand stuck in an expensive pottery flower vase. The vase was especially precious to the boy's mother. This vase was

her grandmother's, and it had been given to the boy's mother on her wedding day.

No matter what the father or mother tried, the boy's hand would not come out of the vase. The father suggested breaking the vase as a last resort. The mother suggested they contact the family doctor. His receptionist worked the family into the schedule. The doctor examined the vase to see if perhaps someone with pottery skills could cut a section out of the neck without too much damage. Then the doctor looked at the boy's free hand. He took the boy's hand, opened his palm, and curled the thumb toward the little finger. Then he asked the boy if he could do that with the hand inside the jar. The boy said, "I can't do that. If I do, I'll lose the quarter I'm holding."

We often hold on to things because we're afraid of losing what we know. We do not believe we may actually have greater blessing if we trust God's miracle of resurrection.

Jesus breaks through their barriers (the locked doors and their disbelief and doubts) that they set up and did not want to let go. We do the same thing. Sure your barriers are not physical barriers but they are barriers in your minds, our preconceived ideas, sin or the devil has blinded you because you may have not forgiven someone fully or you do not see that you were just as guilty of causing the problem between you and the other person. Maybe you have prejudged that person, and now whatever that person says or how kind they say it to you, you do not accept their apology. You question their actions and motives constantly.

In spite of the barriers that the disciples setup and in spite of the sin that is causing you to have a problem to see or hear Jesus today, Jesus comes and announces to His disciples and He comes and announces to

you “Peace be with you.” He comes gently, behind closed doors, and tells them what? Not “you forgot about me,” not “you forsook me.” No, He says “Peace be with you.” Jesus comes where they are and tells them that He loves them and that they are forgiven. They are right with God. With being right with God, you are forgiven, now with forgiveness there is life and now life there is peace; now peace there is joy. This is the purpose Christ came to die for their sins, your sins, to bring peace between you and God. Jesus approaches them to tell them that what He has done is for them and for all, the forgiveness of sins. When the disciples see Jesus and see His hands and His side, they were glad! For You You are at peace with God because of Jesus! Jesus has come to you today, Upon Your Confession, He gives you His Absolution (The church has said it, therefore Christ has said it! Believe it He has forgiven you), He comes in His Word, His Forgiveness His Love for you should bring gladness, an outburst of joy in your soul in your whole being! The Lord, HIMSELF, has announced your forgiveness of sins. Christ has given the church the authority to say so on the behalf of Jesus, for verse 23 ***If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.***” Also you have seen Christ in your fellow church family member as they and you have passed the “peace” to each other today.

Saying, I am forgiven by Christ therefore I can forgive you, all is right between God and me and between God and you and so it is right between you and me.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Again if you have missed Jesus, have not joyously rejoiced in seeing Jesus today, I invite you to see with your faith eyes, Jesus. See His nail holes in His feet and His hands and His pierced side where water and blood came out when He was pierced – the water of Holy Baptism and the blood for The Lord's Supper comes forth from your Savior's side. See Him and Hear Him in His Words today. Jesus is here today with us serving you by giving you His forgiveness of sins, sustaining and strengthening your faith. Hear of His love for you that caused Christ to go to the cross for you and rise on the third day to assure you of your salvation ... and be at joyful peace in the certain knowledge that you have

life in Him. For where there is forgiveness of sins there is life, eternal life!
And in forgiveness there is also PEACE. The peace given you by Christ enables you to pass the peace on to others. His forgiveness breaks down barriers between you and God and between you and your fellow man or woman. With this forgiveness , peace is given. In Peace and joy and in Love, we are able to say with Thomas and all the believers in Christ, "My Lord and My God."

And may the peace of God, which is beyond all human comprehension, keep your hearts and minds through your faith in Christ Jesus. Amen