

Sermon April 27, 2025

John 20:19-31

Remind them that each Gospel tells of the Resurrection appearances differently –

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.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' 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 retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 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.'

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.' 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.' 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 come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 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.

Christ Showed Up for Us!

Easter Monday began with the news that Pope Francis had died and billions of faithful -- Catholic and non-Catholic alike grieve at the loss of his dynamic voice. Today's gospel begins in darkness and fear. The disciples are all alone, grieving the loss of Jesus' dynamic voice. They are locked in a room, terrified that they will be the next to be hauled before Pilate and dragged up Golgotha, with a cross on their back. You can see them, cowering in the corner, checking to make sure the doors and windows are secure, too scared to even talk about how scared and they are. Fear and grief are a toxic mix. Not only has their beloved leader been killed, so have their hopes and dreams. Yes, Mary came with that crazy story about the empty tomb and the Risen Christ, but they must have thought she was delusional. So, according to the evangelist John, they stayed locked up and scared. And alone.

But then something amazing happens.

Christ shows up!

Against all odds, against common sense, Christ shows up

And the first thing he does is give them peace. He doesn't blame them for times of denial... for leaving him to die alone... for losing faith and hiding alone in this room where he finds them. No, he comes in and stands among them, shows them his wounds and breathes the Holy Spirit on them "Peace be with you," he says, as he sends them out of that locked room and into their ministry.

Here is the good news we crave! The peace he breathed on them... he breathes on each of us. Wherever we are, whatever rooms we have locked ourselves into, Christ comes to us and gives us peace!

Now you might be thinking "That's crazy talk, Pastor Katie." How can we have peace in a world where the places where Jesus lived and walked are still torn apart by war and conflict, where hate crimes strike fear as people gather to worship in places like San Diego, Pittsburgh and Charleston... where we all seem more and more divided along political, religious, ethnic,

racial gender and class lines... where a two year old citizen is deported without due process and countless people are pulled off the street without even a warrant... where judges are at risk for arrest for standing up for the Constitution and justice.

Peace seems like a faraway dream-- not a current reality, breathed on us by the one we love.

But Christ gave more than Peace that day. With that sacred breath, he also gave us Power. Christ's breath upon the disciples reminds us of God's breath into Adam. The action is personal and relational... and it gives each of them the spiritual power and discernment they need to fulfill his commission. Remember the prophesy in Ezekiel, when the breath of God brings new life to the dry bones? In the same way, the breath of Christ, brings us new life and new hope. When Christ breathe on them, he gave them the transforming power and they were changed forever.

Christ gave them power through his breath, and they were transformed. Christ transforms us with his breath too. I am so glad that God transformed us.... Look at what God did with Moses; God can turn a murderer into a leader.... Look at David; God can turn a ordinary shepherd boy into a powerful king...Look at Jonah, God can take a coward and make him a prophet.... Look at Mary Magdalene, who wasn't locked in any room. God made her an apostle and the first witness to the Resurrection. Christ's power is not temporary but everlasting.

Christ gives us power in that sacred breath. Power is not a bad thing. Power is what we need to bring about the peace that angels sing of and that we are sent to bring to all the world.

Less than 24 hours before his death, Pope Francis tweeted: "Christ is risen! This proclamation contains the entire meaning of our existence, which is not made for death, but for life."

This is the good, empowering news we are sent out to share!

Today, filled with sacred breath, we are sent out to share the good news and make disciples... go out and share the sacred breath of peace. We are called to continue the work that Jesus began. To speak for him, to work for him, to minister for him, to love for him.

I think St. Teresa of Avila said it best in her prayer:

*"Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.
Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes,
you are his body.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours."*

We are the Body of Christ. Christ gives us peace. Christ gives us power. Christ gives us New Life. Today we are sent out to continue the work Jesus began – as we become the hands and feet of Christ. Amen.

BENEDICTION

**Please take the hand of the person next to you.*

By the power of your Spirit, O God,
imbue us with the power of the Risen Christ's wounded hands.
May that power make us one in You.
May that unity cause us to love as mightily as You.
May your love move us to use our hands as You do--
to do works of care and justice for your beloved Earth and all its
people—
works that heal, free, plant, hug, write, show, speak, and grow.
Give us grace and strength for abundant life!
For this is the day that God as made, let us go forth, rejoice, and be
glad in it!
Amen! Alleluia!