

In that Gospel reading we're told the disciples are in lockdown and self isolating; not to Stay at Home, protect the NHS and Save Lives, but because they're in hiding.

Verse 19 says: "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews."

You see after witnessing the events of Good Friday the disciples are terrified of what could happen to them if they're arrested.

And so they go into lockdown, in the hope that if they can avoid detection for long enough things will blow over, and their lives will get back to normal.

You see following the mock trial and execution of Jesus it's been a very intense and adrenaline filled few days.

As a result the disciples are grieving, they're in shock, emotionally drained, and tired.

They're probably feeling guilty as well as they remember abandoning Jesus when he needed them most.

But then suddenly in verse 19 as the disciples gather together scared, dejected, and confused by everything that's happened, Jesus enters the room and says:

"Peace be with you."

And so there are 3 things I want to briefly draw out of the passage this morning.

And that's that Jesus gives them his Peace, he commissions them, and he meets them in their doubt.

So first Jesus gives them his peace.

Verse 19 says:

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors were 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.

After hearing reports that Jesus was alive again but not quite believing it, this must've been an incredible moment for the disciples as the risen Jesus stands in front of them.

But you know as the situation sinks in, I imagine that as Jesus stands there, the disciples are bracing themselves for a telling off.

Jesus could have rebuked them for being cowards, and disowning him when he needed them most.

He could've then criticized the disciples for hiding away instead of trusting him, after he'd told them the Son of Man must suffer many things, be killed, and after 3 days rise again.

But doesn't say any of those things does he, he says,

"Peace be with you."

I'm not surprised that in verse 20 it says: When the disciples saw the Lord they were glad.

You would be wouldn't you, and in an instant the presence of Jesus transforms there anxiety into peace; and you can almost hear the sigh of relief.

You see instead of condemning them, Jesus does the opposite; and in that one sentence gives them a fresh start.

In other words he says receive my peace; because I've accomplished everything I came to do.

Receive peace with God whose anger against sin is now satisfied because of my death on the cross.

Receive peace between yourselves and love each other as members of God's family.

Don't point the finger, and don't turn on each other and apportion blame.

And receive peace within yourself because I forgive you and set you free you from guilt.

You see the peace Jesus gives is all encompassing.

And that's so important for us to hear isn't it because how many times do we say to ourselves:

I'm not good enough, or how can God forgive me when I constantly let him down.

I can't even forgive myself?

Well if that's you, Jesus frees us from those thoughts and feelings, because his death and resurrection have made it possible for us to have peace with God, peace with each other, and peace within ourselves

And you know in all our guilt, failure, and fear, Jesus doesn't condemn us; he re-establishes a relationship with us; so that every time we do mess up, say sorry, and turn back to him, he says: "Peace be with you."

Secondly Jesus commissions the disciples, verse 21 says:

"As the Father sent me, so I am sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit."

And so after receiving his peace, the disciples are given responsibility to carry on Jesus mission in the world.

You see their place isn't to fearfully hide behind the locked door of a house in Jerusalem.

Their job is to bear witness to the risen Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit; who will guide and help them as share the good news of what they've seen, know, and have experienced.

Jesus says: "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Well in a world that's feeling nervous, frightened, and vulnerable at the moment, Jesus says to us:

Go in the power of my Spirit to tell your family, friends and neighbours, all about the love, peace and forgiveness I freely offer to everyone who puts their trust in me.

And then thirdly Jesus meets us in our doubt.

I love the fact that men and women in the first century didn't believe that people came back from the dead anymore than men and women in the 21st century do.

Verse 24 says:

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, 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 in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side I will never believe.

And so Thomas is a bit skeptical, he thanks the disciples for the information, and says I can see your excited about what you think you've seen, but unless I can, touch Jesus, and see him with my own eyes I won't believe a word of it.

And we can all have moments like Thomas can't we, where we doubt if God's really there, especially at times like this.

But Jesus meets us in those doubts and as he appears to Thomas a week later says:

Put your finger here, and see my hands, and put out your hand and place it in my side.  
Do not disbelieve, but believe.

So listen to this:

That's the way of our Lord, the way of grace. He doesn't abandon Thomas to drown in a sea of doubt. He stretches out His nail-scarred hands and pulls him in. And so He does for you.

He takes your doubts and your fears, your shame and your bitterness, and He makes them His own.

Jesus then takes His faith, His hope, His life, His joy, and His glory, and makes them your own.

He doesn't remove your outward troubles; He gives you something better: inward peace.

He may leave in place your dysfunctional family, your illness, your addiction, your pain, but He won't leave in its place a heart empty of peace.

As a result Thomas doesn't just reply my Lord and my teacher, or my Lord and religious leader, he doesn't even say my Lord and messiah, Thomas says my Lord and my God.

And it's an amazing confession.

You see Thomas recognises that standing right in front of him is God in the flesh.

In response Jesus says: Have you believed because you've seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Which of course includes you and me!

But how can we believe if we've never seen the risen Lord Jesus.

Well verse 30 tells us, it says:

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

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Or to put it another way:

When Bibles are opened and read, “Doubting Thomases” of all ages are invited to put their hands in Jesus’s wounds and made to believe again in the full all-sufficient power of his death and resurrection, that gives life and peace, commissions us to tell people about the risen Lord, and meets us in our doubt.

So I close with this quote:

Jesus gives to you the peace that passes understanding, the kind of peace that knows that no matter how unfaithful you’ve been, God will never be unfaithful to you. The kind of peace that knows that no matter how great your sin, Christ’s love is always greater. The kind of peace that knows that no matter how bad this world may get at times, any suffering here is not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us. That’s the kind of peace Christ gives.

Jesus says: 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. Amen!