

**April 20, 2014 Easter Sunday**  
**"Peace Be With You!"**  
**John 20:19-21**

That Sunday evening 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 and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Ether  
Ether who?  
Ether bunny.

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Juan  
Juan who?  
Juan more ether bunny.

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Stella  
Stella who?  
Stella nother ether bunny.

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Justin  
Justin who?  
Justin other Ether Bunny.

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Samoa  
Samoa who?  
Samoa Ether Bunnies.

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Dewey  
Dewey who?  
Dewey have to listen to any more ether bunny jokes?

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Consumption.  
Consumption who?  
Consumption be done about all these ether bunnies?

Knock, knock.  
Who's there?  
Cargo  
Cargo who?  
Cargo "beep, beep"...run over all the ether bunnies.

Knock, Knock.  
Who's there?  
Boo.  
Boo who?  
Don't cry—all the Ether bunnies will be back again next year!"

Knock, Knock  
Who's there?  
Orange  
Orange who?  
Orange you glad that's over?

I read of a college which had, for its students' protection, security call boxes every few hundred feet. If you were on campus at night and felt uneasy about somebody following you, you could hit the button on a call box and have a security officer come investigate immediately. On one of these call boxes hung a sign that read, "Out of Order." Underneath the "Out of Order" sign someone scribbled, "Keep Running!"

That is how many people live their lives these days – they can't find any security or real peace, so they just keep running.

Joseph of Arimathea was a very wealthy Pharisee, a member of the council, and a secret follower of Jesus. It was Joseph who went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body after the crucifixion. And it was Joseph who supplied the tomb for Jesus' burial.

I heard that someone pulled him aside and said, "Joseph, that was such beautiful, costly, hand-hewn tomb. Why on earth did you give it to someone else to be buried in?"

Joseph just smiled. "Why not? He only needed it for the weekend."

On that first Easter Sunday morning, early while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and some other ladies went to that tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. Mary ran and found Peter and John and said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

Peter and John went to the tomb and discovered it was empty just as the ladies had said. They saw graveclothes lying there as if Jesus had passed right through them. The cloth that had been wrapped around Jesus' head was folded up, lying separately from the other wrappings that had been around Jesus' body. Mary, Peter, John and the others were witnesses to these things. They just told and wrote what they saw. They weren't trying to convince anyone of anything, they were just giving their eyewitness account. They didn't realize that what they were reporting actually meant that no one had stolen the body. A grave robber couldn't possibly have made off with Jesus' body and left the linens as if they were still shaped around it. The neatness and order indicated that there was not a hasty removal of Jesus' body.

There are other theories of what happened to Jesus; like the woman who wrote in to a question and answer forum. "Dear Sirs, Our preacher said on Easter, that Jesus was not dead, he merely passed out on the cross and then the disciples nursed Him back to health. What do you think? Sincerely, Bewildered."

They wrote back: "Dear Bewildered, Beat your preacher with a cat-of-nine-tails with 39 heavy strokes, nail him to a cross; hang him in the sun for 6 hours; run a spear thru his side...put him in an airless tomb for 36 hours and see what happens." Sincerely, the forum.

What they saw was a puzzling mystery to Peter and John. They knew something happened but they were not sure what. So they returned to the house where they were staying.

On the evening of that first Easter the disciples were still processing all this. John tells us that the disciples were all together, with the doors locked because they were afraid. Their leader had been put to death, what would keep those who killed Him from looking for His followers to kill them too. No wonder they were huddled together in fear.

That's interesting, we celebrate Easter Sunday morning, but Easter Sunday evening, the disciples were still hiding in fear. Sure the tomb was empty, but what did that prove. Sure Mary said she had seen the Lord, Jesus, but at that time in that culture the disciples could have thought, "We know what Mary said, but after all she is a woman, you know how emotional they can be." [I'm not saying that, I'm just speculating that the disciples may have said that.].

So, there they were, these followers of Jesus, behind those locked doors, speaking in whispers, confused, frightened, like sheep without a shepherd. That's when we read this:

Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," he said. As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. [then John adds these words] They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!

And, as they say, the rest is history. The doors were locked yet, suddenly Jesus is there standing among them. This means that the stone wasn't rolled away from the tomb so that Jesus could exit, not necessary [the resurrected Christ was able to appear, and disappear in to and from a locked room]. The stone was not rolled away so Jesus could exit, rather it was rolled away so that His followers could enter, see the empty tomb and the graveclothes left behind.

Jesus not only stood among them, He spoke to them: "Peace be with you!" then He showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. There was no longer any doubt. Jesus had risen from the grave. And they were filled with joy. If the story would have ended on Easter morning at an empty tomb, there might be some questions about the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is Easter Sunday evening that is the clincher. It is the joy that the disciples experience behind those locked doors – doors bolted with fear and doubt- it is that joy that quiets our doubts and our fears. There is no question. He is alive, just As He said.

:How do we apply this experience to our lives? Let's begin with the locked doors. Why are they locked? Out of fear.

I read a humorous story this week about a couple who were vacationing in Yosemite Park. The wife expressed her concerned about camping because of bears and said she would feel more comfortable in a hotel. The Husband said that he'd like to camp, but to calm her concerns, they'd talk to the park ranger to see what the likelihood of a bear encounter would be.

The ranger told them, "Well, we haven't seen any grizzlies in this area so far this year, or black bears, for that matter.

The wife shrieked, "there are 2 types of bears out here? How can you tell the difference? Which one is more dangerous?"

The ranger replied, "Well, that's easy, see, if bear chases you up the tree and it comes up after you, It's a black bear. If it shakes the tree until you fall out, it's a grizzly."

The wife decided that a hotel room would work out quite nicely!

We can understand her reaction. Fear can be quite debilitating. Fear can keep us from living our lives openly and joyfully. Fear keeps us running when our real need is rest.

Many times people in the Bible are told, "Don't be afraid" or "peace, be still." Peace is the absence of fear, or at least it is fear under control. In this world there is trouble, stress, and things to fear. But Christ helps us keep our fears under control. He helps us to see the difference between reasonable fears and unreasonable fears. Fear causes us to resent other people and be angry and envious.

What word do you most associate with Easter? Joy? Forgiveness? Life? How about

peace? It's interesting to note that on the first Easter evening, Jesus appears to disciples and the first thing He says to them is "Peace be with you." A message so important Jesus repeats it.

Instead of explaining His death and His miraculous resurrection, Jesus simply wishes them peace. It is a message He followers needed to hear. And that may be a message you also need to hear this Easter.

There is much in this world that can raise stress levels and deplete your capacity for peace. But the message of the risen Christ is "Peace be with you." Jesus means for His followers to have peace. That's the first thing we need to see.

"The resurrected Jesus didn't promise wealth or health or prosperity or power; what He promised was peace." Adam Hamilton

During World War II in movie theaters in Britain a notice would sometimes appear on the screen interrupting the films: "An air raid has sounded. Be British. Don't panic."

That's great, isn't it? "Be British. Don't panic." That should characterize the followers of Jesus: "Be Christian. Don't panic."

Our greatest need is peace. How do you find peace of mind? If you are smart, you will find peace in the presence of the risen Christ. That is the only place where true peace is available.

I heard a story of a man who took his son Matthew to an amusement park when Matthew was quite small. After riding several kiddie rides, Matthew wanted to try a scarier ride. Sitting in the seat, his dad tucked Matthew safely between his knees and off they went. Soon Matthew whimpered a little and said, "Hold me, Daddy." Once he leaned against his father's arms, he relaxed- and even wanted to go on the ride again.

The father of that little boy said that after that experience whenever he himself faced something frightening in his life, he found himself whispering to his Heavenly Father, "Please hold me," just as his son had asked his dad to hold him. As soon as he becomes aware of God's presence, he can relax – and even find joy.

For the disciples, the outcome of Jesus' message and seeing His physical presence caused them to be "overjoyed." They experienced peace and went from being filled with fear to being filled with joy.

That is the secret to true peace within. Isn't it time you quit running? Isn't it time you leaned yourself in the arms of your God, your Heavenly Father? Jesus stood among His followers and said, "Peace be with you!" Jesus wants you to have peace. Peace is your greatest need. Peace comes when you put all your faith and trust in Christ and lean on the arms of a loving God. Jesus says to each of us this day: "Peace be with you!"