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| John 20:19-29  | Peace x 3 | Pinelands – 9am – 16/04/2023Thornton – 10:30am – 16/04/2023 |

I am not so sure that **Thomas** was so much a doubter…

 **As he was a realist.**

It seemed almost as if **Thomas** didn’t want to…

***believe what seemed too good to be true…***

until he had seen **Jesus** like the other disciples.

**It’s not** that he **didn’t have faith…**

In fact in some ways **Thomas** had stronger faith…

than the other disciples…

**Earlier** – before **Jesus** was arrested.

**The Pharisees** had threatened to stone Jesus to death,

and Jesus announced he was going to Jerusalem…

 to confront them.

The other disciples protested loudly… it was too dangerous.

But **Thomas** just said… *(John 11:16)*

***“Let’s go and die with him…”*** **That’s faith!**

When **Jesus** appeared to the disciples…

on the evening of resurrection day…

**Thomas** was the only one of the bunch not there…

***Why would Thomas miss his Shared Life Group?***

I’ve often wondered why **Thomas…**

missed meeting with the group on that evening.

**MAYBE…** He just wanted to ***be alone***

**My best guess…** If Thomas was a realist…

Is that he was pretty sure…

Of the fact that it was ***“game-over”.***

The **Pharisees** **had won,** **Jesus** **was dead,**

and there was nothing left to do but…

start figuring-out a life beyond ***following*** Jesus,

 ***because*** there was **no more Jesus to follow.**

Then there’s the other issue…

***Why did Thomas come back to the group a week later?***

**It had to be** that some of the other disciples…

**went and got** **Thomas…**brought him back to the group.

They had seen the resurrected Lord,

They shared the good news with him.

**Thomas’ faith had flickered, and *his friends* brought him back.**

Somewhere in that there’s a sermon for us about…

what we are doing about some of our inactive members.

*(but that is for another time.)*

Today is the eight days after the resurrection…

The disciples, with Thomas back in the group…

Remembering the last time they saw Jesus.

In our **Scripture reading**… I was **STRUCK** by these words…

***“Peace be with you”.***

**Jesus** said those words **three times in our text,**

and each time they ***INFERED*** a different kind of **PEACE…**

**Firstly… Saving Peace**
This is a ***peace that rescues.***

The disciples had shut the doors for **FEAR…**

That what had happened to **Jesus…** *Could happen to them.*

When suddenly **Jesus** was present with them,

 Not sure if their FEAR **Vanished** or JUST CHANGED

 As suddenly JESUS is there…

 ***Can you imagine the questions?***

**BUT…** there was a **realization of victory.**
There is a **peace** that is surreal when…

**The darkness of disaster and defeat are…**

**Replaced** by the **morning light of victory.**

**When** **Jesus** said… ***“Peace be with you”*** he was saying,

***“I am with you… your victory, your peace…***

***I am here to save.”***

Even the name **“JESUS”** means **“GOD SAVES”...**

***Saving Peace.***

**Secondly… Sending Peace**
**Jesus** said… ***“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me,***

***so I send you.”***

The **Father sent Jesus** into the world to…

seek and to save the lost… that is **US.**

**Jesus** told the **disciples,** and he also tells us, that…

 ***in the same way the Father sent him to…***

**reconcile all people to himself…**

Jesus sends us on that same mission.

 *Isn’t that what the disciples did for Thomas ??*
**A STORY** is told of a very **frustrated woman…**

All she wanted was… *peace in the world*

and *peace in her heart.*

**BUT…** The world seemed to be falling apart.

She would *read the news,* follow *social media…*

and get ***depressed and more frustrated.***

One day while shopping… she wondered into a **store…**

**AND…** To her surprise she saw **JESUS** behind the counter.

She knew it was **Jesus** because…

he looked just like the pictures…

in her ***bible*** and on the ***internet.***

She finally got up her nerve and asked…

***“Excuse me, are you Jesus?”***

***“I am.”*** Came the reply

***“Do you work here?”***

***“No, But I own the store.”***

***“Oh, what do you sell here?”***
***“Just about everything,”*** Jesus said.

***“Feel free to walk up and down the aisles, make a list,***

***see what it is you want and then come back***

***and we'll see what we can do for you.”***

She did just that, walked up and down the aisles.

There was ***for sale…***

*peace on earth, no more war,*

*end to hunger end to poverty,*

*peace in families, Beginning of harmony,*

*end to addictions, clean air,*

*careful use of resources.*

She wrote furiously… Making a long shopping list.

Getting back to the counter, Jesus took the list,

skimmed through it, looked up at her and smiled.

***“No problem.”*** He said.

He bent down behind the counter and picked all sorts of things,

 stood up and… laid out the packets.

***“What are these?”*** She asked,

***“Seed packets.”*** Jesus said.

The woman then asked…

***“You mean I don't get the finished product?”***

Jesus replied…

***“No, this is a place of dreams. You come and see what***

***it looks like, then… I give you the seeds.***

***You plant the seeds. You nurture them***

***and help them to grow and…***

***Then someone else reaps the benefits.”***

***“Oh,”*** the woman said…

***And she left the store without buying anything.***
**Sometimes it is easier to…**

dwell on and pray about **Saving Peace** than…

on the **Sending Peace** which compels us to…

 **“Go out”…** with the good news.

But **Jesus** said ***“PEACE”*** one more time…

**Thirdly… Symbiotic Peace**

**Jesus** came and stood among them and said, ***“Peace be with you.”***

This was a whole week later…

This time he came when **Thomas was there.**

**Thomas** may have felt pretty second-class as a disciple.

**But** **Jesus** came back and spoke the same wonderful word to him….

 **“Peace”!**
**We all come to Jesus** at different times and in different walks…

But his **Peace** is still his **Peace.**

**Symbiosis is…** - ***a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship***

 ***between two people or groups or things***

To be ***“Symbiotically-Peaceful”***…is to…

get along with each other…

in the **kind of love God** planned for us.

**Romans 12:18…** One of the most challenging verses in the bible…

***“Do everything possible on your part***

***to live in peace with everybody.”***

Three times **Jesus** said **“Peace”** to his followers –

**Saving Peace…** that covers our sins and **Saves** us.

 **Reconciling** us **to God.**

**Sending Peace…** that commissions us ***to go…***

***And bring people to Christ…***

**So He** can give them **Saving Peace.**

 **Rescuing** others.

**Symbiotic Peace…** that **holds us Together** in a

***bond of Christian Community***

 in the **selfless love of God.**

**Together this…**

**Saving, Sending and Symbiotic Peace.**

 **Is the whole point of Easter.**

 **Jesus… SAVES us, SENDS us, TOGETHER**

Let us **Pass That Peace** on to each other…

***“The Peace of the Lord be with you…***

***And also with you.”***

***John 20:19-29 Jesus Appears to His Disciples***

It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you.” Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

***Jesus and Thomas***

One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”

Thomas said to them, “Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!”

Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus said to him, “Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!”