

Peace be with you

John 20:19-23

April 19, 2020

Introduction

Have you heard “Low Sunday”? They say today is “Low Sunday” Sunday right after Easter Sunday, because of low worship attendance on worship service. But here at Fairfield Grace, the second Sunday in Easter is not “Low Sunday,” but “Holy Humor Sunday”

See several humorous pictures. 1. The Devil says to God, “With Covid-19, I closed your churches.” In reply, God says, “On the contrary I just opened one in every home!” 2. A Roman soldier warned to Jesus who was ready to be out of the tomb, saying, “Quarantine regulations. Go back inside!” Hahaha.. More corona virus humorous pictures? A woman on the bed in the morning says, “I need to get out of this bed. I am late for the couch” “Quarantine has turned us all into dogs. We roam the house all day looking for food. We are told ‘no’ if we get too close to strangers. And we get really excited about car rides.” 2020 Airline Codes: Popular Spring Break Destination LVG – living room KIT – kitchen BTH – bathroom MBR – master bedroom BDM – bedroom PAT – patio BAL – balcony OFC – office BKY – backyard BMT – basement.

Why has it been known as “Holy Humor” Sunday? Our faith forefathers and foremothers considered the resurrection of Jesus Christ was the divine humor that shook the universe, the world and all the people on earth.

You heard this story before from me. A Sunday School teacher asked the class, “What was the first words Jesus spoke right after he was raised from the dead?” One boy in the back raised his hand, saying, “I know, I know!” “Ok, tell the class” He opened his two arms wide and said, “Da- da!”

Surprise! The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God’s big and awesome humorous act. Can you see God laughing big? Can you hear God laughing aloud?

Raising Jesus out of the tomb is something beyond our intelligence. How can a dead man come out of the tomb alive? But God made it happen.

God made the impossibility possible. God surprised us and we smiled. We Easter people are people smiling with awe and thanksgiving. Wow. "God, you are incredible! You have waken us up from dullness to excitement and from despair to joy.

1

Prayer: May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

Today we encountered the risen Christ visiting his disciples, saying, "Peace be with you" If he used the sign language, he put his two hands together in the middle and move each hand to the left and to the right respectively and bring them back to the middle and then move to the front, one to the left and the other to the right with its palm open upward. "Peace be with you"

His disciples were afraid, anxious, and locked behind closed doors. They were in fear. "What would happen to us?" They were terrified and perplexed by uncertainty before them.

We live in a world of fear. Don't we? The Covid-19 pandemic global crisis has been intensifying fear and anxiousness and uncertainty more. We have had to stay home more than a month now. Mass media keep feeding us with terribly sad and scary news. We are scared.

Domestic violence has been increasing since "Stay at home" restriction has been issued. So has alcohol consumption and so has gun purchasing. Many are out of work. We are perplexed and worried and afraid.

Oh, that today, this very moment, the risen Christ would break through our walls of fear and speak a word of peace. "Peace be with you." "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." (John 14:27)

They say there will be peace if there are no wars, no conflicts, no pain and suffering. But the peace the risen Christ gives is not the same as the peace this world gives. The peace that the risen Christ gives is joy and freedom in

the middle and in spite of pain and suffering. It is ours when we place a total trust in God's love from which nothing can separate us. Knowing and believing in God who loves and cares about us empowers us to enjoy the peace of the Lord. So we sing, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me"

May we all trust in the Lord and remain at the peace of the Lord as we go through this uncertain and turbulent time of crisis.

2

Back to the first Monday after the first Easter Sunday, the risen Christ said one more time to his disciple, "Peace be with you!"

I wonder why the risen Christ greeted them once again with the same Peace greeting. This time, Jesus wanted to set them free from their past that gripped their heart and mind.

If I were Jesus, I might have addressed the disciples differently at this first meeting following the crucifixion. I might have said, "What Happened?" "Where were you?" "Why did you betray me?" "Why did you leave me alone when I needed you most?"

Jesus did not come to accuse; He came to invite and accept them as they are once again. He restored and renewed them and empowered them. "Peace be with you!" He forgave them graciously.

Wouldn't we like to hear those words today? No matter who you are, what you've done, whomever you've betrayed, or let down, or how far you have roamed away from home, "Peace be with you." The risen Christ graciously leads us to a new beginning.

There is a story about two little boys who were fighting, as little boys are often prone to do. One of them yelled at the other, "I'll never speak to you again." They went to their respective houses, but the next day they were back out playing as if nothing had happened. One of the little boys' mothers asked them why they were speaking to each other now. A little boy responded, "Me and Johnny are good forgetters."

Jesus is a good forgetter. Forgetting your sins and my sins, the risen Christ sees us you and me as a God's beautiful child and gives us peace and a new beginning today. "Peace be with you."

The risen Christ desires us to be free from the bondage of past sins and journey boldly and confidently as a forgiven people of God.

3

Back to the first Monday evening after the first Easter Sunday again,

"Then 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."

Now, the risen Christ commanded his disciples to do forgive as a forgiven people. At the upper room on Holy Thursday evening, he washed his disciples' feet and said, "I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:15) This time, at the closed room on the first Monday after Easter Sunday, the Lord asked his disciples to do forgive as he has done to them.

The verb, to forgive is "charizomai" in Greek. It is from the word charis, which means "grace." Charizomai indicates being gracious toward someone. This word appears 27 times in New Testament. Ephesians 4:32 reads, "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you." Be gracious one another as God in Christ has been gracious to you.

One day, Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?" What he said is "Lord, according to the law, we ought to forgive anyone who sins against me up to three times. Look at me. I am your disciple. I am willing to forgive up to seven times? Aren't you proud of me, Jesus?"

To him, Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22) Forgiving, being gracious to others as God has been gracious to us is what we are called to do as Jesus' disciples.

A little boy fought with a friend. His mother who heard about the quarrel talked with her little boy about it, trying to show him he was wrong and his need of asking God's forgiveness. Accordingly, when the little one kneeled down to pray, he humbly asked, "O God, please forgive me for getting angry and quarreling with Tom." So far so good. The boy went on, "And make Tom come to me and ask my forgiveness. Oh Lord, give him no rest until he is sorry and comes and tells me so!" Aren't we like this little boy?

So the Lord taught us to pray this way, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." We forgive our fellow sisters and brothers as we ask God's forgiveness. We will be forgiven as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Being forgiven, we forgive. Forgiving, we are forgiven. It sounds like Yin and Yang philosophy. Balance. Harmony. This is what makes this life keep moving. That is why we need to pray this prayer often.

4

We say, "Forgiving those who trespass against me is not easy. Forgetting those wrongdoings someone did against me is difficult."

To all of us, Jesus breathed and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Let the Holy Spirit come to your heart and mind. Your heart and mind can be broken, betrayed, abandoned, and hurt.

Let the Holy Spirit heal the wounds of your soul and make you whole, and you will be empowered to do forgiving and be gracious to others freely.

Let the Holy Spirit fill you, and you will be awakened to see how much God has been gracious to you, and you will be gracious to others freely.

So we, Easter people sing and pray every day, "Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me. Melt me, Mold me, Fill me and use me. Spirit of the living God fall afresh on me." Amen.

5

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

The risen Christ is sending you and me to this world. We, Easter people believe that God has chosen the Church through which to act in the world. We believe that God has sent us to share the peace of the Lord with others.

According to data from 2018, out of 7.6 billion people in this world, there are 2.3 billion people that practice some form of Christianity. This means that about one-third of the world's total population are Christians, Easter people. We, Christians are a trans-national, trans-racial, trans-linguistic global people of God who confess Jesus Christ as risen Lord and Savior. Fairfield Grace is a part of these beautiful people of God.

What would happen if we who call ourselves Christian became the instrument of the peace of the risen Christ?

“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

“Receive the Holy Spirit.” “If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” (John 20:21-23)

The Word of God for the people of God. Amen.