

## **“Cabin Fever”**

### **Sermon on Sunday, April 19, 2020**

**Dear friends and church members,**

It's Week 6, can you believe it? This is the sixth Sunday of the Corona Quarantine! By now the dreaded cabin fever has befallen many places and can be felt in our neighborhoods. Homes that had problems before the virus outbreak are probably not having any less now, with the forced togetherness, the increased stresses and economic hardships that many experience. People who coped with substances before this crisis may be more tempted to do so now. Individuals who were lonely before this halt to public life may feel even lonelier at this time. So it's time for the Easter message to shine some light into the shadows of this pandemic. The Lord has risen, you know!

The Easter stories are a perfect medication for cabin fever. As we hear in today's gospel lesson, Jesus' main ministry after the resurrection was comfort ministry. He reached out to his quarantined disciples, scared and huddled up as they were in some place in Jerusalem, their mood at a low point. They had lost someone. They had lost someone close to them. They had lost someone who was in the prime of his life. Jesus was in his early thirties when he was crucified. And they couldn't even express their feelings or go out and have a decent service to honor Jesus' life. Emotions were pent up in that hiding place where Peter, James, John and the others stayed, afraid to go out, shaken. But wait, dawn is coming!

This Easter story tells us that Jesus is a specialist in breaking through doors and walls of fear, meeting people where they are and blessing them with peace. As we celebrate Easter this year, and remember - we are only in the beginning of the Easter season, - there is no reason to believe that your door, your house, your neighborhood, your mask, your Nursing Home, your home office is any match for the ability of the Risen Christ to reach you, to speak into your heart and soul, to bless you and to say, "Peace be with you and your loved ones!" And when the Risen Christ shows you his hands and his side, he is assuring you that he is no ghost, no super hero, no mere vision or fantasy, but a vulnerable human being. Christ was not resurrected with a

picture-perfect new body but in the only way you and I will ever get resurrected in this life: with wounds and scars on our bodies and souls.

And still, he says, "Peace be with you!"

Going forward, many of us will bear the wounds and scars of this crisis. Jesus spent three days in the tomb. We may spend three months in our homes; our country may spend three years to recover. But there is this prevailing sense of hope in these Easter stories. And it goes far beyond optimism. I tend to be an optimist and I know that pessimists are actually more often correct about their predictions, unfortunately. But this Easter message goes beyond optimism and pessimism. You may have good reason for pessimism where you are right now. But Jesus will still find a way to your home, your heart, your reality and he will, as ever, extend his peace and presence to you.

For people of faith, the source of hope does not rely on the news you see every night, thank God! The source of our hope is deeper and more mysterious, and if we really become connected to Christ's presence in us (Paul often used the expression 'Christ in us') we will become less impacted by the ups and downs around us. Faith is liberating. It enables you to cope with life's hardships, not always easily and cleanly - but ultimately that sense of peace and purpose which Christ brings to our lives as he breaks through our doors and fears and into our lives is a difference maker. And so, I repeat Christ's own words, and I hope you receive them wherever you are at this very time. And if you feel only a fraction of the presence of Christ that the disciples felt at the time at the time when Jesus spoke these words, you will be blessed:

"Peace be with you!"  
Christ is in your home.

Amen.

## **The Gospel Reading for the day: John 20: 19-31 (Bernie)**

**19** On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. **21** Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." **22** And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

**24** Now Thomas (also known as Didymus ), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." **26** A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" **27** Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." **28** Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" **29** Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

**30** Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. **31** But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Here ends the reading