

EXPLORING THE SERMON

- * What did you hear?
- * What did you think or feel about what you heard?
- * What is one thing you can take away from the sermon this week?

KEY VERSES

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." ²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." ²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

REFLECTION

There is a lot of wonder surrounding the events of this passage, which takes place on the evening of the first Easter day. Though it is Jesus in his bodily resurrection, something is obviously different: he is not as recognizable to his friends, and even though they can touch him, he can materialize behind locked doors. The evidence Thomas asks for is simply what the others needed in order to believe it was him, too. **What do you think God was trying to show us in the slightly different resurrected Jesus? What does this mean for us, for our new life in Christ?**

Rather than a rousing speech on strategy, Jesus' first words to his disciples--spoken three times in this passage--are "Peace be with you." The chaos of the time and danger they faced from the Roman and Jewish authorities would have made the disciples feel anything but peaceful. **On this side of Easter, given the events in this world and our lives, how readily can you accept Jesus' words, "peace be with you?"**

Peace can be defined as **1)** a lack of conflict; and **2)** a sense of inner calm or tranquility. From the outside, we can look successful and together, but might be restless and searching on the inside. The peace that Jesus offers through his resurrection is one that passes understanding. This text teaches us that we can have this peace not because we know what the future holds, but we know the One who holds the future. **How can you have peace knowing that the living God is present in your life through the Holy Spirit?**