

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

JOHN 20

¹⁹On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you.” ²²After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³Whenever you forgive people’s sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

²⁴But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

²⁵So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!”

But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.”

²⁶After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.”

²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

²⁹Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

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



What do we do when our plans fall through? For instance, when we are locked in a room?

Here are a few examples bordering on the comical: The boy who wrote a note about being “homed school” said this: “It is not going good. My mom is getting stressed out. We took a break so my mom can figure this stuff out, and I’m telling you it’s not going good.”

One dad said, about his son peering through the home office window shade, “My son discovered that I’m not really at work, but I’m working at home.” Another parent said, “When the world is fighting over toilet paper, my son is giving ours a

bath.” There was a picture of 18 rolls of TP, soggy and wet in the tub. Another of my favorites was a photo of a girl with toys, stuffed animals and ribbons and balls, in the shape of a triangle within a circle. To the adult, it looked like a playful little pentagram and a child casting a spell. “Day 10 of quarantine,” the parent said, “and I think my child is up to something.”

The comic relief may last for a while, but not forever. We truly find ourselves stressed and looking for answers. However, I need to point something out. Your Lord and your God is perfect for this. **He is perfect for closed tombs just as He is perfect for locked rooms.**

Today, He invites you to focus on the peace. Three times in our text He expresses the words,

PEACE BE WITH YOU!

1. Jesus confirms His resurrection Rejoice in His peace.

The disciples were on lockdown. It wasn't so much that they, at this point, doubted Jesus' resurrection. The women, Mary Magdalene, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and Peter and John each had stories to share. However, they didn't fully wrap their minds and hearts around its impact. They were still afraid of the very people Jesus had come to save, His enemies, both Jews and Gentiles. If they put Jesus to death, they would likely put their followers to death, too. So they were on lockdown.

But was there even more than that? Perhaps they believed so thoroughly from the other witnesses that Jesus was raised from the dead, that they were uncomfortable to meet Jesus ... perhaps even afraid of Him. What had they done when Jesus was put to death? Those who had vowed to protect Him had scattered and denied Him.

Your Lord and your God is perfect for appearing behind closed doors! It was becoming a habit for Jesus, wasn't it? It reminds us why the angel rolled the stone away. The angel did not roll the stone away so that Jesus could get out of the tomb that morning. The angel rolled the stone away to show that Jesus had already come to life and gone! Jesus had passed through stone walls; how

much easier for Him to pass through locked doors. So Jesus confirmed His resurrection to the ten disciples before Him that evening.

Jesus is not confined to stone walls and locked doors. Some fanciful interpretations exist. The idea that Jesus crawled through an open window or was in hiding behind a wine casket until He wanted to appear. But we can know that our Lord Jesus can appear /apparate bodily out of thin air if He wishes to do so.

Proof positive is that Jesus has also appeared inside the stony heart of each of these disciples' hearts. He cancelled their sins at the cross, and removed them from their record forever; in so doing He has made peace between them and God. Let's not forget how they rejoiced at the Lord, even on lockdown. Jesus has done the same for you. He has canceled your sins at the cross and removed them from your record forever. His appearance confirmed that. So you can find joy at the peace He has made between you and God, even on lockdown.

2. Jesus confers the keys Forgive one another.

In their joy, I'm not sure if these ten apostles really heard what Jesus had to say, so He repeated the message of peace. "Peace be with you," He said a second time. But He also repeated that peace in a special way. "*'Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you.'*"²² After saying this, he breathed on them and said, *'Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'*"

What a beautiful message of peace from our Savior! In the past, devoted churchmen have taken it as a given that "*only God can forgive sins.*" Here Jesus confers that gift of the keys to heaven to His Church. (Note that it wasn't just the apostles who are allowed to use the keys; Thomas wasn't even there, and He didn't repeat that gift. Plus we all are taught to pray, "*Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.*" On lockdown, Jesus wants us to use these keys. What do you do when your plans fall through? Confront one another. Call to repentance. Forgive one another, even your worst enemy.

Notice that the keys also include retaining sins, not just forgiving them. Jesus Christ has objectively finished the work of forgiving sins for all people. But without faith in that promise of Christ's cross, the sins of any sinner are not

forgiven. They are stuck like glue to the person, and the lifelong rejection of forgiveness leads to hell.

If your habit in quarantine is to sin against your family members and leave those sins unaddressed, your salvation is in doubt. Your faith is wavering, and Jesus wants you to leave aside your offerings in order to go reconcile with your family member ... or whomever you have hurt. Receive the forgiveness of sins.

If forgiveness seems too powerful for a Christian, remember from where our authority to forgive comes. Jesus Christ has given this authority and directs us how to use the keys. He gives us these two tools, the binding key and the loosing key, the locking key and the unlocking key, which are really nothing other than law and gospel. In these two main doctrines of the Bible, the Holy Spirit Himself proceeds from the Son and is breathed on the Church of Christ.

3. Jesus convinces the doubting Trust the witness of Thomas.

Thomas was not present that first Easter evening, and He doubted. But the next week, Sunday night, was the new tradition of the Lord's day. A third time, Jesus spoke, "*Peace be with you.*" Even doubting Thomas was allowed to thrust his hands into the wounds, the hands and side of Jesus and know this was the Lord.

This raises the question in my mind, "What if I have the same doubts?" Does Jesus bless blind faith? Not at all! We are allowed to follow the witness of Jesus' friends, who did foolish things like doubt His Word, and we trust the gospel accounts, not blindness. Do you trust there is a coronavirus? Yes, assuredly! Have you seen one of these viruses with your own eyes? I haven't. Yet I trust the science. If you believe the invisible enemy of the coronavirus, you can believe the invisible-to-us victory of our Savior Jesus. You can trust the science of Thomas and the other disciples, that Jesus Christ is risen. Even though His miraculous rising from the dead broke the laws of nature and science, still Thomas was allowed to touch the wounds of a dead man walking.

So before you put down the chalk in the driveway that reads, "Save me from my kids"; before you clock into a life that is forever locked down; before you roll your own stone into place; before you doubt Who was there all along; hear the peace of Jesus. In His name, Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.