

UNEDITED DRAFT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

All I want is a little peace! Have you ever said that, or felt that?

- Maybe those words were uttered in your chaotic household... or classroom... or workplace... when things seemed out of control.
- Maybe it was a time of trial when the future seemed so uncertain.
- Maybe it was a critical time in your life when things could tip one way or the other, and the outcome was out of your hands.
- Maybe it was that sleepless night when your mind kept racing... you know about what... and you just couldn't let it go and rest.
- Maybe you did something seriously wrong, and your conscience was troubling you and all you wanted was peace.

Peace is something we want so badly that it is a crime to disturb the peace of others. Yet somehow peace often eludes us. And so today we will learn from Jesus about peace. Peace is found in the resurrected Son of God.

Context: Jesus was crucified Friday. He rose early Sunday morning. It's now Sunday evening and we read this:

19 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews,

“Peace” would not be a term to describe the disciples on that Sunday evening. This in spite of the fact that they had already heard testimony of Jesus’ resurrection. They’re meeting behind locked doors. Why? They were afraid that they might be arrested and harmed. They were afraid that what happened to Jesus might happen to them. They had no peace because their world was turned upside down. Just one week earlier that entered Jerusalem with Jesus to praises and shouts of “Hosanna!” Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” That week ended with their beloved friend and teacher dead and lifeless on a cross. They were filled with doubt and uncertainty about their life and about everything that meant something to them. They had doubt about their identity and their purpose. They had doubt their eternal future.

Can you associate with them? Have you ever felt doubt and a lack of peace for the same reasons? Do you fear what people will think about you or how they will treat you because of your association with Jesus? Do you doubt your faith when it seems like following Jesus doesn't result in blessings but hardships? When you lose things or people that are very important to you, does this fill you with doubt and fear? Do you sometimes question your identity and purpose? Do you wonder about your eternal future? Listen:

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.

Peace in the risen Lord – in his word and in his presence. They went from fear to being overjoyed in 4.0 seconds. What accelerated them so quickly from fear to peace? Jesus was present. Jesus was alive. Jesus spoke peace to them. Our well-wishes are just that: wishes. We have little power to bring to pass what we are saying.

- “Get well soon!” But we can't make that happen.

- “Have a good day!” We say to someone as we *are parting* at a very time I can no longer do anything to make that happen. (Why don’t we greet each other “have a good day”? Then we could actually do something about that while we’re together!)
- “Drive safely!” Again, we’re powerless to grant that.

But when Jesus says, “Peace be with you” it’s not a wish. (I hope you will have some peace somehow, someday.) He grants what he says! He is the Son of God who self-resurrected! He is the one who paid our full sin debt so God hold nothing against us any longer! When Jesus says peace, he doesn’t wish it, he gives it! You have peace with God. So by Jesus’ command, peace is yours!

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

Peace in purpose: The second reason they have peace is that Jesus is giving them a reason for living: a divine task. He is making his disciples his ambassadors. “The Father sent me, now I am sending you!”

The same is true of you. You have a purpose for living because God has made you an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. As you go about your every day life, would you keep this in mind: You have been sent by Christ. You are going to work as one sent by Christ and you represent him in your words and actions. Same is true at home. In public. When you’re driving your car. You are sent by Christ as you carry out the daily vocations God has put you in.

That’s an extremely important job! You have a divine purpose to your life that removes doubt and fear and gives peace!

22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you are going to represent Christ, then you will need the Spirit of Christ... the Holy Spirit. He breathes his life into you by faith. The Holy Spirit has entered you and empowers you for this job of being an ambassador of Christ.

23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

The most important of your divine purposes is, in the name of Jesus Christ, forgive the sins of those who are sorry about their sins, and to announce to the person who’s not sorry and who justifies their sins that they are not forgiven by God. We call this the power of the keys... the power to lock or unlock heaven to someone. This is a power given to you as a believer!

24 Now Thomas (called 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 it.”

I think Thomas gets a bad rap. He is criticized for being skeptical and we still call him doubting Thomas. But the truth is, he is not criticized in this text, is he? There are a few times Jesus says, “You of little faith? He does rebuke some for doubting. But I don’t find a rebuke of Thomas. Thomas needs to truly believe that Jesus has risen. And he wants evidence to know that it’s true. And so as we will soon see, Jesus provides that evidence.

Some people have a view of Christianity that we are supposed to be people who mindlessly follow what is told them. We are not to employ critical thinking. We are simply to tow the party line and parrot back whatever we are taught. Not true! Thomas was not rebuked by

the Lord for his skepticism. In fact, I believe it is healthy for us to ask questions and seek answers!

I did this throughout my college and seminary days. I am very skeptical by nature. I am so skeptical that when I applied for a job to sell Cutco knives when I was in college, I didn't get the job. ANYONE who wants to sell Cutco knives is hired. But I wasn't. Because during the sales presentation which we would have to model, I kept asking questions. "Does it really do this? Well what about that? It can't be that good! Your sample knife from the competition is clearly dull and worn out!" Finally the recruiter said, "I don't think this the right job for you." I was too skeptical so I was out. I did this during my theological training as well. "Does God say we should baptize infants or not? Do we make a decision for Christ, or does the Holy Spirit create faith in our hearts? Is Christ's body and blood present or not?" But when I asked the questions, I sought answers in the word of God. And that's what Thomas did. He wanted answers from Jesus. And he got those answers.

If you have questions and are skeptical about Bible teachings, that's fine! You are welcome here! But would you please look for answers? Search Scripture and see if the answer is there. I have found that it is and I'd be happy to share that with you. Also... come to our class Monday evening and we'll listen to Jesus and find the answers. See if your skepticism is put to rest!

Thomases was:

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."

Jesus knew exactly what Thomas has requested because he is God, and so without Thomas speaking a word, he tells Thomas to touch his hands and side. The answer to Thomas' skepticism was found in Jesus.

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

He believes! And note how Jesus accepts his worship!

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Not everyone gets to see with their eyes, but we do get the eye witness testimony of reliable witnesses. And that's enough. Even the most skeptical people typically believe the newspapers and TV news reports. Even the most skeptical believe Napoleon lived and George Washington was our first president. You don't see, but you believe. What's different about story of Jesus. Eye witness accounts were researched, corroborated and found to be true. The accounts are recorded in the Scripture. Read and believe!

30 Jesus did many other miraculous 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 Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

John reveals why he wrote the book. He records only 7 of the 34 or so miracles of Jesus. Yet 5 of his are unique to his gospel. Why did he choose what he did? His goal was not a biography of Jesus, but to record the things that would convince you that Jesus is the Son of God and the by believing the eye witness testimony of the things Jesus said and did, and then relying fully upon him as the Son of God, the true Savior of the world, and the one who paid your personal sin-debt in full... through this, you have life in his name. You have a right relationship

with God and that kind of living is truly living. You have that life now. And you will have that life forever!

Lacking peace? 1) Listen to Jesus and his word. In that word he speaks and gives peace as he removes sin grants you a right relationship with God. 2) Understand your purpose. You are ambassador of Jesus Christ in your everyday life. You have peace in that identity and vitally important service. 3) As a believer, you have the Holy Spirit living in you. He is a fount of peace. 4) You have peace because you have power and authority: power to forgive in Jesus' name! 5) You have peace because you have heard and believed the eye witness testimony. You rely upon Jesus as the one who truly lived. Truly died and rose again. You have life in his name. Peace be with you. Amen.