**Bishop John’s Sermon for a Sunday after Easter**

Let's begin with a moment of prayer.

*As the risen Lord comes to bring peace to his first disciples, so he comes to bring us peace today. Now.*

*And so, Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead. We thank you for your presence with us among us, and pray that we may hear what you would say and that we will respond to your word of life and love that you are alive now and forevermore. Amen.*

The doors were locked. The disciples had locked themselves in - they were afraid because they feared the Temple. Police would be looking for them to arrest them, perhaps to imprison them. They were locked in physically, but they were also locked in psychologically. Imprisoned by their fears, by their anxieties. Almost certainly also by their guilt.

They had let Jesus down.

Mark tells us in his gospel that at Jesus’ time of need, all the disciples forsook him and fled.

We might recognize this kind of imprisonment in our own lives at some times in our lives, perhaps even now, imprisoned, perhaps paralyzed as another word by our fears. Our anxiety, even our guilt from which Jesus seeks to release us. All those things.

But John tells us Jesus comes through those barriers, the physical locked doors and the inner locked doors, and he comes bringing peace.

Peace be with you.

This is what Jesus had promised shortly before his own betrayal, and arrest, his passion and his crucifixion. Before his betrayal, Jesus had told them ‘My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives. In me you may have peace in the world. You have trouble. You face persecution.’

The recognition of the Risen Lord is, for those first disciples, a dawning experience. It doesn't happen all at once.

It was a dawning experience for them, as it was for Mary Magdalene, who supposed the risen Lord to be a gardener.

As it was for Cleopas and his companion, who supposed the stranger walking with them was the most ignorant person around.

As it was for the seven disciples out fishing on the Sea of Galilee, who see this stranger on the shore.

John tells us it is not until Jesus shows the disciples his hands and his side, these first disciples locked in the room, not until he shows them his hands and his side that they recognize him.

Then John tells us they are full of joy, and they see him.

The word John uses is not seeing with the physical eyes, but perceiving they recognize the truth of who he is. And it's the sight of his wounds that authenticates his presence that it is the Lord.

It will be the same also for Thomas.

Before his betrayal, Jesus had told them

‘You have pain now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice. You weep now, but your tears will be turned to joy.’

Now, having shown them his hands and his side, the marks of his crucifixion, their fear truly has been transformed to joy.

Imagine what's going on within each of them. Think yourself into that situation. Surely, they would be overflowing with joy. Such a release of joy and hope and love and purpose. And now, having received that peace that the Risen Lord comes to bring, they are receptive and ready to hear the words of the Risen Lord.

‘As the Father sends me, so I send you’ says Jesus.

They are to continue the mission of Jesus.

Their mission is the mission of Jesus.

Our mission is the mission of Jesus.

But they cannot do this. And of course, nor can we in their own strength. So, Jesus breathes on them. The breath of the Spirit.

Whose breath? The breath of God. Just as God in creation is recorded in Genesis, breathes the breath of life into Adam, the breath of creation.

So, Jesus now the risen Lord breathes the breath of the Spirit into His disciples, the breath of new creation. New life in Christ. Beyond simply the natural life of Adam.

So, what about us here today in Eastertide, worshipping the risen Lord, celebrating the life of Jesus crucified and risen? Easter people, you are here today. I am here today. The church is here today celebrating Easter because the Lord is here.

Present tense. The historical fact of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the impact it had on his first disciples is the same or should be as it is indeed for us that the Lord is here. His Spirit is with us. Christ is risen and like those first disciples we have experienced, and we may, to a degree, be experiencing it now.

Degrees of locked-in-ness, perhaps again through anxiety, fear, perhaps even guilt. Things that can paralyze us, prevent us from entering the glorious liberty that the risen Lord comes to bring us.

But he comes today, just as He did to those first disciples locked in physically to bring us His peace, no matter what is going on around us, no matter what the challenges, difficulties, struggles, turmoil we face or experience,

He comes to bring us his peace and he comes the risen Lord, as he did then to show us His hands and his side.

It is by his wounds, Isaiah writes, that we are healed. Only a wounded God can heal as the story of our amazing cathedral reminds us, the new built onto and physically attached to the ruins of the old.

Our wounds, our brokenness, our struggles our travails are not obstacles to his healing and redeeming love, they themselves can be agents of our transformation, bridges to the experience of resurrection life. Like those first disciples, we are sent out in the power of the spirit. That same breath of God to share in and continue the mission of Jesus.

The last words of the risen Christ, as Matthew records them, are ‘Go and know that I am with you always to the end of time, to the end of the age.’

Jesus Christ, the risen Lord with us, within us, always, no matter what the turmoil of the world around us or inside us.

So, let us be alert, as Easter people, to the opportunities that God gives us in everyday life, in the ordinary. There is nothing ordinary to God, and God gives us each one of us opportunities to be instruments of the coming of His Kingdom. To share the good news of His resurrection among those we meet and know and connect with. And it is as we share Christ, as we share the good news, that the good news doesn't diminish in us. It grows in us.

As we share Christ, we receive Christ. We discover afresh the good news of the Gospel as we share it.

Alleluia. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

May we, each one of us today know that wonderful news not only in our heads, but in our hearts, and let us, by his spirit, be transformed as we go out in his name to share the good news of the Feast of feasts that Christ is risen. He has risen indeed. Alleluia.