

“Peace be with you.” As darkness created deeper shadows on the streets that first day of Resurrection, the followers of Jesus gathered in the room they had last shared a meal with Jesus. Grieving, angry, disappointed, and confused, they came together, fearing more violence following the death of Jesus. Grief hits us all differently, and likely, women and men continued to weep while others silently remembered moments when Jesus had spoken to them, unable to hear the questions asked of them. It seems they did not understand what Mary Magdala told them, that she had seen Jesus. And when we think about it, who would understand? In this place where the disciple huddled to protect themselves in a locked room, perhaps also crowded with friends and family, Jesus appears. His words are apparently meant to shatter their personal wonderings and he repeats the words, “Peace be with you”.

To say “Peace” was to speak to his friends’ deepest longings and brokenness after his death. Jesus’ Word speaks into the promise of God’s desire to bring wholeness and well-being with the greeting “Peace.” In the darkness so prominent in John’s Gospel, Jesus brings Light and Breath—John perhaps here even demanding that we see Genesis and a New Creation happening in the moment of his encounter.



Jesus shows his wounds, the very flesh that bled and bruised and felt pain as he died; it is a death that will come to us all as mortals. Why show his wounds, we might ask. This Resurrected Jesus came into a locked room, electrons and energy rearranging cells that made Jesus the same, but not the same, a Risen Christ that astonishes, bewilders and changes the people that encounter him. The showing of Jesus side where a spear pierced him, and his hands where he was nailed and bound to the splintered wood of the cross are reminders of their own encounters with angry soldiers and unhealing wounds bound up with care and hope. Perhaps the healing balm of “peace” did not bring understanding; instead, it brought faith, a life changing moment of “God with us.” With his breath he bestows the Holy Spirit, commissioning his followers to go forth to set others free from the choices that turned us way from God’s Love and our care for one another.

And what of Thomas, who had perhaps left his friends to see his ailing mother after the crucifixion or to share Sabbath with his sister who had just had a child and longed to see him. Thomas who had said he would follow Jesus—and now missed out on seeing Jesus? Thomas the Twin encounters the Risen Christ; he receives the same greeting of “Peace be with you” that the others received. Jesus grants him his desire to see his wounds, to know the well-being of wholeness in seeing the Risen Christ. Thomas’ response is to recognize him as the Messiah, “My Lord and my God!” Thomas becomes the one who asks for what he needs; the Risen One appears where there is confusion, love, loss, hope, and a turning toward something we do not fully know or understand.

The tradition is for us to be reminded that we are all invited to wonder to ask, to discover that faith grows and changes, even as our relationships change and grow; hopefully we are becoming more compassionate and able to see more clearly with the power of the Spirit as we face our challenges. I do believe that the Risen One speaks “Peace” to our embodied being and it fills us with astonishment, wonder and questions. How can there not be questions?

As we continue to celebrate this Eastertide, may we be open to how Christ appears to us in others, in creation, in the breaking of the bread, in celebrations of life at all the tables in our lives and in the healings that set us and others free to begin a new day. May we too be the signs that point others to the Risen One, even as witnesses with lots of questions.

Peace be with us all.

*Susan+*