

*19When 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." 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." 24But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25So 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."*

*26A 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." 27Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." 28Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" 29Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." 30Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. 31But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

I remember a song from my childhood: "Come into my heart, come into my heart, come into my heart Lord Jesus. Come into today, come in to stay, come into my heart Lord Jesus."

The song is an invitation. But on that evening they sent no invitation to Jesus.

I remember the favorite painting of the folks I first served in North Dakota – based on Jesus statement – "Behold I stand at the door and knock – if anyone opens to me I will come in and eat with him." The painting shows Jesus knocking on a door with no handle on Jesus' side. The artist wanted to communicate that we must open the door to Jesus. But on that evening no one opened the door.

I think of the flood of books on spirituality. They tell of how we must ready ourselves for God - prayer, silence, meditation. But on that evening no one readied himself for Jesus.

The door was locked, those hiding behind that locked door were afraid. Suddenly Jesus was there offering his peace.

"Peace be with you." He showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."

Jesus did not wait for them to open the door. Jesus did not wait for them to replace their fears with faith. Jesus did not wait for them to believe. Jesus came to them.

But not all of them. Thomas was not there that night. Though they all told him, “We have seen the Lord,” Thomas did not believe. He said, “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.”

Thomas demanded proof that could be seen. – proof that could be touched. The word of others was not enough for him.

Jesus gave Thomas exactly what he demanded. And Thomas believed.

No barrier was greater than Jesus love for his disciples. Their fears, their unbelief, their failings would not keep Jesus from coming to them and claiming them for his work.

He said to them, “As the Father has sent me so I send you.” He breathed on them as said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any they are retained.”

And these fear filled, unbelieving failures became great witnesses to Jesus.

Jesus will have his way with you. Your fears are not greater than Jesus’ power. Your sins are not greater than Jesus’ power. Your unbelief is not greater than Jesus’ power.

I have a habit of focusing my attention on me. I think that if I can sin less then I will be more helpful to Jesus. Or I think that if I could just believe more I could do more of Jesus’ work. If only I was not so fearful, then I could be a mighty witness to the Lord.

But Jesus does not depend on my opening the doors – he can enter even when doors are locked.

Today, Jesus offers you peace. In his word of peace he gives you forgiveness of all your sins – before you even say you are sorry. Today you are the one Jesus is sending – he has breathed his Spirit into you. You have the power to forgive sins – not in yourself but in Jesus’ gift of that power to you.

So stop thinking about yourself – what you lack – how you have failed – what you fear – and set your mind and your heart on Jesus. He chooses you to go into every place you are to carry his peace. You bring his peace into your home, you bring his peace into your school, you bring his peace into your place of work. You dress yourself in his forgiveness – you extend Jesus forgiveness with every hand you shake, every one you embrace.

Jesus is not willing to wait until the doors are unlocked, or until hearts are opened. Jesus is not willing to wait until lives are holy enough or faith is strong enough. “As the Father sent me so I send you,” he says. Now, just as you are. For Jesus power is greater than any barrier, not even death can hold him. He will come into every locked room and locked heart to claim his own.

Go. Carry Jesus’ peace out with you. Jesus will take care of the rest.