



COMMUNITY
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

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Acts 2:14a, 22-32
John 20:19-31

Pass the Peace

How many of us have ever heard something and didn't believe it right away? I certainly have! In the past three months I have become quite a believer that fifteen-year-olds are not the most tidy of people - in fact, they seem to like bedrooms that look like disaster zones. Just last week I told myself I would inform Tamara that all fun in her life would come to an abrupt end until her room was picked up.. And looking as though it were a safe place for a human to inhabit. But wouldn't you know, when I went to give the ultimatum, she tells me she already did it. "What? Your room is clean?" I was in serious disbelief. "Yeah," she said, "I did it after school today." Now, you have to forgive me, but I was suffering some serious shock - thus my response, "Wait a minute, you mean it's really clean? Like the clothes are all picked up and hung up? The garbage is out, and the stuff is all put away, like, it's really clean?" Starting to laugh at my disbelief, Tamara told me to go look for myself.. And you better believe I went flying up those stairs, thinking the whole time, "No way, I don't believe it." Imagine

my reaction when I walked in to see a sparkling clean dresser, a carpet in which I had forgotten the color, and of course, a clothes hamper overflowing in a nice neat pile. My doubt quickly turned to sheer amazement as I felt the floor under my feet and ran my hand along the made bed. I was told the room was clean, but I didn't believe it until it was right before my very eyes. Disbelief; that anxiety of the unpredictable - that something needed to happen but just how and when was unknown. That anxiety that things need to be a certain way, and they need to be that way, right now. That anxiety that something out of the ordinary can't possibly be real until I see it for myself. Oh, our lives are full of anxiety. But Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

It was after the death of Jesus and the disciples were gathered in a room with the doors locked. They were terrified, scared.. The crowds had just crucified Jesus, what would they do to his friends? So, they sat in fear... locked in a room... until their dead

Jesus stood at the doorway. Now, imagine that reaction! It's like when we hear news of something so great we can't believe it until we see it - and when we do see it - our doubt is challenged and we can hardly contain our disbelief... There is no way this is really happening... but there it is, standing in the doorway. It's that moment in your life when all anxiety and all fear is brought to a sudden stop because what you need to see and touch and believe is right there in front of you.

But one disciple missed it, Thomas, he wasn't there when the Risen Savior appeared. Of course the other disciples told him the news, but that same sense of "no way" was all Thomas could say. "Prove it!" Now, Thomas gets a lot of criticism for being doubtful, for not believing that Jesus would and could rise from death to life. But let's really think about that; Thomas was in a state of distress - the one he followed and believed to be the Messiah had been crucified, died, and was buried in a tomb. And now his friends were telling him that they just saw the Messiah, that he was alive and walking among them! Come on, we all know we would question it too - I mean, dead is dead right? For someone to pull a complete 360 on the finality of death is quite different than all we have ever known to be real. Sure, Jesus had once said it would happen - but to truly be faced with the impossible is not something we are quick to grasp. There is a little of Thomas in each and every one of us. And yet, Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."

I think what Christ is getting at here is that, yes, there is anxiety in our lives. Yes, we are faced with many survival tactics that create fear and cause us to live "on guard." But Christ appeared before his disciples, and in doing so, he confirmed that the disciples - and us as Christians of the twenty-first century - are called and inspired and encouraged to live in this world as bearers of the good news; enabled to share the ministry of Christ. And we can only do that when we set aside our anxieties, our fears, and we extend the peace of Christ.

Yet, too often we resist that peace because we can't let go of all anxiety and fear. A school teacher was struggling with belief in God - she wanted to believe - but the world threw her such a curve ball she couldn't accept the divinity of a higher power... it just didn't make sense to her. And on one particular bad day, she decided it was time to prove her point to her class. So she asked one of her students, "Tommy, Do you see that tree outside?" Tommy answered, "Yes, I see it." So the teacher continued, "And do you see the grass outside?" "Yes." "Well, then, go outside and look up and come back and tell me if you can see the sky." So Tommy disappeared out of the room only to come back and inform the teacher that he did indeed see the sky. So the teacher continued, "Well, did you see God?" At which Tommy answered, "No." "That's exactly my point!" the teacher began, "We can't see God because God isn't there - God doesn't exist! It's as simple as that." But then one of Tommy's classmates stood up and asked if she could have a turn at asking Tommy some questions. The teacher agreed

so the girl asked, “Tommy, do you see that tree outside?” “Yes,” Tommy answered, “I still see it!” “And you still see the grass outside, right?” Growing annoyed, Tommy answered, “Yes, the grass is still outside - right before our very eyes.” “Well then, “ the girl continued, “tell me, Tommy, do you see our teacher?” Tommy looked confused, “Um.. yes, I see the teacher.” “Well,” the girl asked, “do you see the teachers brain?” At which Tommy got a smile across his face as he answered, “No, I don’t see the teachers brain!” “And that,” the girl concluded, “is exactly my point! According to what we have been taught in school today, because we can’t see it.. Our teacher has no brain!” And in unison the students responded, “class dismissed.”

We can try and prove it - or deny it - all we want - but the one thing remains. God sent Jesus Christ into the world to rise above death to new life. And Christ enables us to go into the world and share this sense of peace. It’s like the Biology of Mud: Healthy mud is actually seething with invisible creatures, little bug-like species. And its very vital that such creatures populate the mud in order to change their death into nutrients for the soil.. And the soil causes trees to grow and the trees provide shelter for birds, and birds provide music for humans.. All because an invisible creature was real. Through the most basic of things, like a mud puddle, scientists have learned that matter appears and disappears quite randomly, and in those milliseconds of the transition between invisible energy and visible matter one can readily imagine how its possible for the invisible God to have

become visible flesh in Jesus Christ. And through the most basic of things, like a mud puddle, we are reminded that sharing the peace of Christ is a cycle that gets spread from one to another.

The point is, my friends, we too often try and evaluate life on what we can see - or what most causes us the least amount of anxiety and fear. And when something just doesn’t measure up to what we think looks and sounds good and right (like a dead man appearing to his disciples), then we quickly move on to something that looks better. But remember, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

It’s not about going into the world a flustered people, obsessed with what we can and cannot see - preoccupied with what is and isn’t acceptable and explainable to our society.. Because we might just miss the obvious - that figure of God standing at the door... “Peace be with you.” Our task is not to pass on the anxiety and fear, but rather to pass the peace. The peace that even when we can’t see something, or touch it and explain it.. God is still alive and active in our world. It’s as simple as that: “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” Thanks be to God. Amen.