

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the 1960's, there was a large group of young people who called themselves hippies. They were free-spirited, anti-war, and often engaged in drug use. They did have some interesting habits. One was making the V sign with their fingers. That was their way of saying "Peace." The peace they were looking for was to bring the troops home from Vietnam. But peace also meant, 'chill out.'

In our gospel today as well as last Sunday, Jesus greets his disciples with the words, "Peace be with you." He's not telling us to chill out or to protest a war. Rather, he's announcing that the war between God and human beings is over and that the forgiveness he earned on the cross brings peace to our souls. That's why today we can say,

RESURRECTION CHRISTIANS LIVE AT PEACE

I. There is no reason to doubt the resurrection of Jesus.

That Easter evening, we are told by Luke, "**Jesus himself stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'**" Suddenly the disciples were thrown for a loop. "**They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.**" They doubted that Jesus was really alive and they were fearful of what they saw.

To remove their doubt and fear, Jesus speaks to them with a question. "**Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your mind?**" To remove those doubts Jesus gave them proof of his bodily resurrection. "**Look at my hands and my feet. Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.**"

When Jesus gave them this invitation, the disciples realized it was Jesus in the flesh. Their doubts were removed. Peace filled their hearts. Jesus was now their risen Savior.

Our risen Savior is still our source of peace for body and soul. Sadly, there are people who call themselves Christians, even Lutherans, who reject the bodily, physical resurrection of Jesus. Why do people doubt the clear words of Scripture? Perhaps it is because they trust in science more than in God's Word. It is not unusual to hear a person say, "It is impossible for someone to rise from the dead. When you're dead, you're dead, and that's it."

Fifty years ago, Dr. Siegbert Becker, who would later become a professor at our seminary, was enrolled at the University of Chicago with the intention of getting a PhD in theology. Everything was going fine until the class got to the subject of the resurrection. When Prof. Becker voiced his belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, the professor said to him, "The bones of Jesus Christ are moldering away in some Palestinian grave." He rejected what the Bible says, and he told Prof. Becker, "As long as you believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, you will never get a degree from this university."

This is an example of someone who denies the clear words of Scripture and ignores the eyewitnesses who saw the risen Christ face to face. Sadly, people who deny the bodily resurrection are without saving faith.

Paul points this out in 1 Corinthians 15. He says to us, "**If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.**" He's very blunt about it. Then he continues, "**If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.**" To put it simply, if your sins are still hanging over your heads, then there is no way you can be at peace with God, or at peace within yourselves.

Thankfully, you and I are not doubters when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have peace with God through the resurrection. It is a lasting peace because the

work of Jesus for us never ends. We never have to doubt whether our sins are forgiven. We are certain because of the resurrection. We never have to doubt whether we have a place in heaven. We are certain that we have a reserved seat in heaven because that's what Jesus promised to those who believe in him. We live at peace in heart and mind. We trust the facts delivered to us by the eyewitnesses. We live at peace with God.

People who don't have that peace in their lives, don't have much to look forward to. For them there will be no joy on the last day. But we resurrection Christians are at peace with God because we know Jesus is not dead, but alive.

II. That means we have every reason for joy.

Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins on the cross and then died for us, is now our risen Savior. Our sins are all forgiven and heaven is ours. That is the source of our joy.

In our text, the disciples came to realize this. They had been shocked by the appearance of the risen Christ. So you can expect that there was some disbelief in their hearts for a moment. But Luke tells us that their attitude changed quickly. They were amazed and they rejoiced to see the Lord.

We are also joyful. Jesus is not some dead rabbi. He is our living Savior, our living brother. He did the same thing we do. He ate food. He asked the disciples, **"Do you have anything here to eat?"** We are told the disciples **"gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence."** If Jesus appeared in our presence today, we could give him some coffee and donuts and he would eat. He is our human brother.

Furthermore, since Jesus is our risen Savior, we have the certainty that he is watching over us. We don't see him, but because he is God, we know that he is with us. That simple fact fills our hearts with peace and joy.

The risen Savior also means that we can live in contentment. Contentment has been hard to come by since this latest pandemic started. People have lost jobs, some have struggled with the illness. The news media tends to bombard us with statistics that are meant to scare us into being careful. There is a rather morbid focus on the number of those who have died. All this can be unsettling. We can be nervous or worried. I find it odd that there is rarely a mention of those who have survived the disease, returned to work, and are feeling fine.

In this midst of this, where do we find contentment? We won't find it among those who are alarmists. We look to our risen Savior and all he has done and continues to do for us. And we rejoice in the wonderful situation we have as believers in Jesus. We are going to be okay no matter what happens. As Paul says in Philippians, **"For to me, to live is Christ, to die is gain."** Like Paul, if we are alive, we get to serve our risen Lord and Savior. And if we succumb to death because of an illness, or an accident, or a disaster, we gain the glory of eternal life next to our Savior in heaven. That's why we sing, *"I am content, my Jesus lives again."*

Yes, we are still sinful. Because of that we may have moments of doubt. When doubts arise in our hearts, we go back to Jesus. We go back to the facts of God's Word that tell us all that he has done and is still doing for us. The fact that we are forgiven through Christ chases the doubts away and fills us with joy and contentment. Then we will live at peace, peace with God and peace in our hearts and minds. Amen.

The peace of God that passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.