

PEACE BE WITH YOU

Sometimes the events of Easter sound so familiar to us after having heard the gospel proclaimed all these years, that we do not hear how strange or truly unexpected much of this was and still is. Jesus appearing to his huddling band of apostles that first Easter night. They are sequestered in the darkness of the same room where they celebrated the Last Supper. Remember: None of these men are from Jerusalem. This is not their hoe. They are from the Galilee, up north.

They are really afraid. They saw what the powerful were able to do to Jesus the very One they thought had come from God to save his people. They could not believe he let them do all that to him. They were crushed and crestfallen. They were in shock. Just think about that statement for a moment. Have you ever been in shock? I have. At least a couple of times. One was the morning of the fire when our church burned down. It was almost like I was paralyzed and things were happening in slow motion, not real time. Those men were so downtrodden—and very aware of their own failure to stand up for Christ, and to be reliable in his moment of greatest need. There was such remorse, such shame in each man's heart. And then there is this report that the women bring about the tomb being opened and his body gone but not the burial wrappings. They go to check it out and find it as they said. But him they did not find.

And now here they are at night, wondering what it all means. So much confusion. Everything is in upset mode. And then, suddenly, Jesus is there. Right there. With them. And he is with them in gentle fashion. What does he say? How does he greet them? He says simply: Peace be with you! And then he says it again after showing his wounds. Peace be with you. And then he breathed on them. His breath. A breath that had all gone out of him but is now present again but in a completely new way. Like the Spirit which hovered over the chaos at the time of creation. His Spirit is breathed upon them in this moment of the new creation, the new beginning. Who can grasp all of this? But notice. There is no rancor in him. No finger pointing. No dressing them down. No accusation. No asking "How could you?" No. There is none of that. All there is, is his peace. Peace be with you. That is the way he wants to be God for them—and us. Will we let him? That is the question of the week.