**Things Are Different Now:**

**New Peace**

**4-18-21**

I’m not sure if all of you are aware of this or not, but our friend and one of the Elders of our congregation, Ralph Dawson, recently had a pretty serious scare.

* You may have noticed that he wasn’t with us on Easter Sunday.
  + Well, he had gone into the Hospital on Sunday morning to get checked out because of some dizziness and fatigue he was experiencing on Saturday night.
  + And by the time they were done “checking him out”, it was determined he had a 98% blockage in an artery and he needed a stent put in!
* Praise God, all went well and he and Val have spent the last week at a conference in Colorado Springs.
  + But it’s pretty scary to think of how close we came to losing our friend & partner in the Gospel from this earth.

Later, when Ralph and I were talking about this, he told me a story about fear that I thought was so good that I needed to tell it to you today.

* (If he were here today I would have him tell it, but he gave me permission to share it in his absence.)
* When Ralph was a pilot with Mission Aviation Fellowship in Indonesia, he once had to fly a missionary to a village for the dedication of a new church building among a people group who had been known for their aggression against strangers not so years before.
  + He told me that when they arrived things were strangely quiet – in fact, he and the missionary were standing in a nearly empty village.
  + Then, suddenly, a band of men carrying long spears and decorated in what looked to Ralph like war paint, came charging out of the jungle with blood-curdling screams and shouts.
    - Ralph said he was startled and then became anxious as the group drew closer.
    - But when he looked at the missionary, he saw no anxiety at all.
  + But as they got closer, Ralph felt fear rising up within him and said he literally thought about how the headlines would be read about how the bodies of a missionary and an MAF pilot were found along the riverside.
    - Still, the missionary continued to be totally unfazed by the obvious threat.
  + Finally, the warriors descended upon them and picked them up and lifted them over their shoulders and began carrying them away.
    - But as Ralph thought he had met his doom, he frantically looked at the missionary who was peaceful and even smiling.
  + Ultimately, they were carried into the church building, where instead of an execution, the dedication service for the building took place.
    - It turns out that this tribe held onto their warrior-like cultural heritage and it was displayed at important events and gatherings.
      * Much like a bunch of Scots pulling out their bagpipes and kilts on special occasions.
      * So they were never in any danger.
    - Although it has to be said that this missionary had must have had a mischievous bent to him:
      * To leave Ralph in such a state of panic without once offering a word of explanation of what was actually happening.

Today, it all makes for a good story at which we can all laugh.

* But the danger could have been real?
  + There are some elements of the story that are reminiscent of the incident in 1956 when missionary Bill Elliott and his colleagues along with MAF pilot Nate Saint were killed by the attacking tribesmen of the Woadani people in South America.
    - Ralph was pretty young and inexperienced at the time.
    - He didn’t have all the information and on the face of it, things it looked pretty bleak.
    - And from his perspective, it seemed appropriate to be alarmed when a group of armed men come rushing out of the jungle charging directly toward you.
  + The only reason the missionary was at peace throughout the whole incident was that he knew something Ralph didn’t know.
* In the passage we just read, we find the disciples of Jesus hiding away in fear on that first Easter Sunday, locked in an upper room, John says, for fear of the Jews.
  + Today, with all the information we have in retrospect, we kind of shake our heads at their foolishness and their lack of faith of these disciples.
    - But, unlike Ralph’s situation, the danger they faced was not imagined and their concerns were very real.
      * The very powerful religious rulers of the people had just convinced the Romans to execute a man who, for the most part, was very popular with the people, just for claiming to be the Son of God.
        + If they could take down the miracle-working Jesus, they certainly had the ability to do away with them as well.
      * And with Jesus dead, might they not want to put an end to his teachings once and for all by imprisoning or killing them?
        + So they were hiding.
        + And chances are, given the same circumstances, we would probably have been right there hiding with them.
* But even as they cowered in fear, this day had also brought unbelievable stories.
  + Mary Magdalene had come to them and told them that she had spoken with Jesus.
    - And apparently so had Peter, as Luke and Apostle Paul both tell us that Peter had an encounter with the risen Christ that day, though there is no Gospel record of such a meeting.
  + Then finally Cleopas and another disciple showed up to tell everyone that they had just been with Jesus for at least an hour on the Road to Emmaus and then in one of their homes.
    - Luke 24 tells us that all of this was occurring just prior to the events we read about in John 20.
      * We begin the account in verse 33, where Luke is still writing about Cleopas and his friend:

*33 And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, 34 saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!”* (which would be Simon Peter) *35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how Jesus was known to them in the breaking of the bread.*

* + So here are the disciples, hiding away – answering the door with great care and suspicion as different ones came and went – quietly trying to figure out just what was going on, when suddenly (as both Luke and John point out).

*19 Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*

* Now peace was the last thing the disciples had been experiencing that day.
  + It began with great fear and grief.
  + It continued with utter confusion and incredulity with the reports of resurrection.
  + And now, they experience utter terror mixed with joy when Jesus suddenly appears, seemingly out of thin air.
    - I don’t know about you, but having a dead man show up in a locked room – even a friend – would kind of freak me out.
    - So its ironic, to say the least, that the first words out of Jesus’ mouth were “peace be with you” when his very appearance would create anything but peace.
* But showing up out of thin air is the kind of thing that declare pretty clearly to the disciples that Things Are Different Now – they are not as they were before.
  + Which was one of the primary themes of Jesus’ post-resurrection teachings.
    - Things are different now.
      * Things are not what they were in the tomb – Jesus is alive.
      * But neither will they return to the way they had been before the crucifixion.
        + They had to let go of that notion and desire, as we saw in last week’s story about Mary Magdalene.
        + Which you can find on the App or website.
    - No things are different now.
  + Obviously, Jesus is different.
    - He didn’t use to be able to just appear in a locked room before.
    - His glorified body had peculiarities that seemed to go far beyond what even his mortal body could do before.
    - This fact would become obvious again later when they would watch him ascend into heaven.
      * Again, not a human body thing.
  + But Things are Different Now in other ways as well.
    - Not the least of which is peace itself – what it is and what brings it about.
    - And the disciples are about to get a crash course in moving from fear to peace in Jesus.

In fact, the very first thing Jesus says to His disciples after his resurrection is, *Peace be with you*; and John points out that he says it twice.

* Now we all know that the narratives of Scripture are, in general are pretty brief in their descriptions.
  + For example, the entire resurrection event and the 40 days following right up through Christ’s ascension into heave take up a mere 53 verses in the book of Luke.
  + While John, being more long-winded “drags it out” over 56 verses across two chapters.
  + In other words, the Gospels present a pretty condensed retelling of the life of Christ.
* So when a Gospel writer takes the time and space to present the detail that Jesus said something twice in a very short span of time, it is important that we take note and ask, why? What was important about this.
  + In John 20:19, John writes:

*19 Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”*

* + And then in verse 21 we read:

*21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you.*

* + This is unusual, to say the least – to greet people twice in the same way in a matter of moments.
  + Thus, this is not a typical greeting – rather Jesus is making a point; two points actually about how things are different now.

The first of these points is that since Jesus has overcame death, they no longer had to be afraid – they can live in peace.

* John gives a rather matter-of-fact account of this in vs. 20:

*20 When he had said this* [Peace be with you]*, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

* + But Luke lingers here a little longer, giving a bit more of the sense of the process the disciples went through coming to grips with what they were experiencing:

*36 As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. 38 And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” 40 And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate before them.*

* + - Presumably because spirits (or ghosts) don’t eat food either.
  + The point here is that Jesus is proving that it is really him – that He who died had, indeed, been raised from the dead.
    - A concept that, even with Him standing right in front of them, was pretty hard to get their heads around.
  + But Jesus patiently and deliberately takes them through the whole process – inviting them to touch him, to observe his body’s wounds, and to eat with him – because He knows that their brains are not keeping up with their reality right now.
    - Consider how honestly the Scriptures communicate what the disciples are thinking.
    - Luke says that they *disbelieved for joy and marveled.*
      * What does that even mean – disbelieved for joy?
        + It’s a contradiction in terms because what they are experiencing contradicts their conception of reality.
      * They can’t believe what their eyes are seeing and what their hands are touching.
        + And while it fills them with joy, they don’t trust it – while they are marveling, they don’t believe it.
        + But here He is, and they are all experiencing Him together.

You can almost imagine them looking at each other as if to say, “you are seeing this too, right?”

* + - * + Things are definitely different now, and they are just beginning to understand how.
* Because believing that Jesus is alive, while necessary, is only the beginning of what Jesus wants them to realize here.
  + He knows that they will accept the resurrection as soon as their brains catch up with this new reality.
  + But, Jesus also wants them to comprehend how His BEING alive makes things different now for them from now on as well.
    - And He uses the common, simple everyday greeting of *Shalom* to do it.
* Because this is actually what Jesus said when He suddenly appeared in the room: He greeted his disciples with the common Hebrew greeting – the one that is still used today - *Shalom*.
  + Our English translations go with the literal “peace be with you” rather than the equivalent of our time, “how ya’ doin’”.
    - But that would be the essence of the greeting at the time.
    - On the surface, the greeting seems so inappropriately nonchalant for someone just come back from the dead.
    - But Jesus is using this common greeting to indicate to the disciples that they are being given a *Shalom* that is uncommon – that is actually nothing short of extraordinary.
      * It’s as if He is using the greeting to reinforce something He had taught them previously, when he said in John 14:27:

*27 Shalom I leave with you; my shalom I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

* + These disciples who have been hiding away in fear are confronted and comforted with the *Shalom* (the peace) of the resurrected One.
    - He is showing them that from now on, they can live in fearless peace.
* Jesus proves it to them by both demonstrating it as a living example and by showing them that the Scriptures have been promising it all along.
  + The living example is His own resurrected body.
    - This is why Jesus draws their attention to His own body – to the scars and to the reality of His resurrection.
    - He shows them that the principalities and powers did their worst to Him but what do they have to show for it?
      * An empty tomb, a lot of questions, and soon, an unstoppable movement of the Spirit of God.
    - Christ is alive and standing in front of them – whom shall they fear.
  + Then we see in Luke 24:44-48 He goes on to the Scriptures:

*44 Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45 Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. 48 You are witnesses of these things.*

* + - Jesus shows them that not only has He been raised from the dead, but this has been the plan all along.
      * Even when it seemed as if the wheels were coming off and all hell was breaking loose, God was in control.
        + He was pulling the levers of History and manipulating those who thought they were successfully resisting His plans.
      * God remains on the throne and, as Paul said, *If God be for us, who can stand against us.*
    - The disciples might well have harkened back to the words of David in Psalm 2:

*1 Why do the nations rage*

*and the peoples plot in vain?*

*2 The kings of the earth set themselves,*

*and the rulers take counsel together,*

*against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying,*

*3 “Let us burst their bonds apart*

*and cast away their cords from us.”*

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;*

*the Lord holds them in contempt.*

* + *Shalom*, he says to this frightened little flock.
    - Peace to you – my peace – the peace of the resurrected One I give you.
    - Because with the death of death, things are different now. (1 Cor. 15:54b-57)

*“Death is swallowed up in victory.”*

*55 “O death, where is your victory?*

*O death, where is your sting?”*

*56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

* It’s not just that Jesus wins – in His resurrection we need not fear either – Things are different now.

And Jesus introduces just how different by saying it again: *Shalom*. John 20:21

*21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*

Why this time? Why does he say it again?

* If there is one thing that stands out in Jesus’ ministry, it was the complete sense of confidence He had in His mission and in the One who sent Him on it.
  + One place where this stated clearly is at the beginning of John 13, just prior to Jesus taking on the role of a household slave to wash the disciples’ feet.

*3 Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, 4 rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. 5 Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

* + Jesus was continually at peace with whatever was required of Him because He knew that He had been sent by God was going back to God and that God had given Him everything He would need to fulfill His divine purposes.
    - Thus, He could love lavishly, act freely, teach boldly, sacrifice willingly, live humbly, and die painfully without fear.
    - He was secure in His Father’s love and so he was able to carry out His mission in an attitude of peace.
* Now you want to know just how different things are now? Look at what Jesus said to His disciples – and to us – in vs. 21.

*“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*

* + Did you catch that? IN THE SAME WAY the Father has sent me, EVEN SO IN THAT VERY SAME WAY I am sending you.
    - Authorized, Equipped, Secured, Directed, and Loved.
    - Jesus declares to His disciples that they are secured in Him.
      * Not only can they not die!
      * They cannot fail!
  + So, he begins by saying: *Shalom!* Peace.
    - Do not fear. Do not doubt. Do not hide.
    - Nothing can be taken from you that will not be given back to you 100 fold. (John 16:33)

*33 “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”*

* + - Or as Paul writes in Romans 8

*31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? 33 Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. 34 Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. 35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? …*

*37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

* Jesus says, Things are Different Now – so *Shalom.* (John 14:27)

*27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

Friends, I look around the Church in America today and I see an abundance of fear.

* Fear of the government, fear of persecution, fear of loss of privilege, fear of economic collapse, fear of apostasy, fear of China, fear of Russia, fear of lawlessness, fear of foreigners, fear of the future…
* Jesus says to us all, “*Shalom”, “*Peace out”.
  + Things are different now – things are different for you.
  + Yes, things may not go as you might like.
    - Yes, things might become more difficult.
      * First, my Word declares this to be so if you read about the end.
      * Don’t think you will escape the challenges that other followers of Jesus are facing.
    - But Things are Different Now.
      * They did their worst and Jesus is not only still alive – He sits on the throne.
      * Yes, in this world we will have trouble…
        + But Shalom – for Christ has overcome the world.
* Do we believe this, Church?
  + Then let’s stop wringing our hands and moaning like those who have no hope.
    - Let’s stop plotting our revenge and our resurgence to power and dominance.
  + Instead, let’s live and walk in the Shalom of God.
    - Praying for those who persecute you and who spitefully use you.
    - Walking the extra mile with the one who unjustly compels you to do so.
    - Hating the dark, but loving those for whom Jesus died.
* We can do this, because things are different now.
  + Jesus has been raised from the dead, and we are raised with Him – we have nothing to fear.
    - And next week, we will take note of the new power that enables us to live in the middle of His peace every day.

**Benediction:**

*Now may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*