

The Phrase We Want to Hear

John 20:19-31

If I was to ask you what one four word phrase you don't want to hear, what would you say? I guess it depends on who you are and what you're doing at the time.

Golfers never want to hear: "Jeff, you're still up".

Red neck relatives never want to hear: "Hey guys, watch this."

If you're married, you never want to hear: "I have a headache."

But all of us, regardless of who we are or where we are or what we're doing never want to hear: "*I told you so.*"

When we hear, "*I told you so*" it generally means that somewhere in our not too distant past we ignored well intentioned advice and we've gotten ourselves in trouble. "*I told you so*" means someone was right and we should have taken their advice to heart.

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter, the most important and joyful day of the Christian year. There is no news that can compare to the message that Jesus rose from the dead.

Our passage for this morning takes place on Easter Sunday night. The disciples are locked away in a room, hiding from the Jewish leaders, confused by what they saw that morning and scared to death by what might happen next.

Jesus' tomb was empty. His body was missing. Surely the authorities would suspect that Jesus' disciples had stolen it. And the disciples had abandoned Jesus in his time of greatest need. If he really rose from the dead, then surely was going to be ticked with his faithless friends.

And so, imagine the disciples huddled in this locked room, nervously discussing in hushed voices all the possible disasters awaiting them, and suddenly Jesus just shows up in the room, stands among them and says . . .

Hold on! Let's pause here. What would you say if you were Jesus? If I were Jesus I'd be tempted to say, "I told you so! . . . I told you I was going to be arrested, and crucified, and die. I told you I was going to rise from the dead." Aren't you glad that I'm not Jesus?

The risen Christ greeted his terrified disciples with four little words, but they weren't "I told you so." Instead, Jesus said, "Peace be with you!"

The peace that Jesus promises his followers is not based on our circumstances or our comfort or our confidence in our own abilities. Jesus' peace comes from our knowledge of God's unfailing love and God's plan for the world.

Jesus' peace comes from knowing that in the end God will redeem all of creation and undo the destruction and distance from Him caused by our sin. That's the peace that Jesus offered his disciples then, and offers to us now. So what does that peace look like in our lives?

First of all, **Jesus' peace leads to greater joy.** Right after Jesus said, "Peace be with you!" he did the strangest thing: he showed them the scars in his hands and side.

And the disciples response was joy because Jesus' scars proved God's love for them - and us.

Jesus could have escaped his arrest and crucifixion. He could have found 100 other ways to save the world. He chose instead to sacrifice himself, to bear the full penalty of suffering and death, to save us from our sins. Those scars prove Jesus' commitment to his mission: that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).

The sight of Jesus' scars instantly turned their fear into joy. His scars motivated the disciples to unlock the door and go into the world to spread the good news of his death and resurrection.

Jesus' peace also leads to greater courage. Immediately after showing them his scars, Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

What an incredible calling! There's no way we could live the mission of Jesus with our own skills and charisma without the Christ-given power of the Holy Spirit living in us. The Holy Spirit who comforts us, strengthens us, and teaches us also grows our character to be more like Jesus.

The Holy Spirit in us assures us that we are never alone in difficult times and reminds us that God works all things together for the good of those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose. (Romans 8: 28)

And finally, **Jesus' peace leads to greater purpose** - to proclaim to the world the good news that Christ has come into our world.

Easter isn't a one-and-done holiday. Easter is every day for those who follow Christ. We don't just celebrate the Resurrection, then go back to our old lives. We've seen Jesus' scars. We've received the Holy Spirit. And we've been called to share the good news of Jesus Christ to the whole world. There are people all around you, in your neighborhoods, at work, who need to know the joy, the peace, the courage and the purpose of Jesus Christ. And we've been equipped to share it with them. And if you can't remember that, remember Jesus' scars. Is there anything we can't do with his power living in us?