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The dog had torn a hole in the arm of the sofa. Her son had come home from school, drunk a whole liter of Mountain Dew, and was now bouncing off the ceiling. The vacuum cleaner had blown a hole in the bag and scattered a month’s worth of dust all over the living room. The clothesline had drooped into the mud. Her boss had sprung a last minute project on her and now her mom was calling to complain about her bunions.

Her husband walked in, saw what was going on, and quietly started to do things. He put the dog outside, put a frozen pizza in the oven, fixed the vacuum cleaner, reloaded the washing machine and sent their son on a 2 mile bike ride. After she got off the phone with her mom, she turned to her husband and said “It’s quiet in here. It’s a miracle!” She finally had peace in her life.

But as good as the peace and quiet and order in her life was that day, we have a peace that is even more miraculous. God tells us very clearly in today’s Scriptures “**JESUS’ PEACE IS YOURS.**” His peace comes by faith and faith comes by the Word.

Part One: Peace comes by faith

As we begin our study of God’s Word today, it may seem as if the disciples didn’t have a lot of peace in their hearts. I’d agree with that. There they were, stuck behind a door that was locked “***for fear of the Jews.***” They were afraid, but just think of all they had gone through in the last few days. Some of them were in the garden of Gethsemane when their friend and Savior was arrested. Some of them saw the beatings He endured. Some were there when Jesus was crucified. And some of them had helped take His dead body off the cross and carry it to the tomb. They saw Jesus dead, up close. They had felt the lack of a pulse, the coldness of a dead body.

Now, they were behind closed doors. What happened to Jesus, their leader, could happen to them - or so they thought. Jesus had been railroaded into being crucified. Jesus had been scourged. Jesus had suffered, and they could be next. Who knew what those in charge had in mind?

Some people think that the actions of the disciples that first Easter Sunday evening show a lack of faith. The ladies had told them that Jesus wasn’t in His tomb. Several of these same disciples had seen it, too. Mary had seen the risen Lord. So did Peter and the disciples on the way to Emmaus. All of them had reported to the disciples that Jesus was alive, but when Jesus appeared, they were terrified. They must not have expected Jesus to rise, so therefore these men didn’t have faith. Of course they wouldn’t have peace. They didn’t believe.

I don’t agree with that train of thought. They didn’t have peace in their hearts because their faith was weak, not because they didn’t have any faith. If we were in the disciple’s sandals, we’d probably have the same reaction. They were confused by the events of the last few days. They had seen people die before. Goodness sakes, they’ve been to funerals. They saw the events of Jesus’ last few hours, and now people were telling them that He was alive? Jesus’ death was seared in their minds, and they were supposed to erase that image immediately? The disciples were gathered together in that upper room on that first Easter Sunday because they had weak faith. They wanted to talk about what they had seen, what they had heard, what it all meant. They didn’t reject the fact that Jesus is the Son of God. They just didn’t quite understand the whole plan yet. They wanted peace in their hearts over the events of the last few days.

And Jesus miraculously delivered this peace to them! Notice the first words out of His mouth when He appeared to them. “***Peace be with you.***” Not any ordinary peace, but peace from God. Imagine their joy, after they got over the shock of Jesus suddenly appearing before them. The Old Testament prophecies? All true! Their sins? Forgiven! Now, they knew that they had peace between them and God. Now they knew they could go to heaven when they died. Jesus had done it! He had won peace between them and God! His appearance proved it! Can you imagine the joy that flooded their hearts when they realized this? Wonderful, miraculous news! Death has been conquered! Heaven is theirs!

Jesus’ peace, true peace, comes by faith. And Jesus’ miraculous peace, the peace that exists between us and God, is ours right now. But, maybe you’re like those disciples on that first Easter Sunday evening. Maybe you don’t have a lot of peace in your heart right now. Maybe you have doubts as to what Jesus did. Maybe you have questions that are causing you a lot of anxiety. Maybe your life is throwing you a ton of curve balls, and you wonder if God is really there, if He really cares, if you really are saved. You believe, but your faith is weak and your peace isn’t there. If you’re like that, you’re in good company. All of us, at one time or another, acted that way. We’re like people who see a famous person within 3 feet of ourselves and say “I can’t believe it! He’s right here!”

It’s time to grab on to that peace that comes from God, and that peace comes through our faith in Him. He did die. He did pay for our sins. Our sins are forgiven - every one! He did rise again. He is in heaven, preparing a place for us. He will come again to take us home to heaven. He does love you. He does have plans for you in

life. He will never leave you nor forsake you. God loves you and wants you to experience the complete joy of knowing you have a Savior. He wants to increase the joy you have right now, or give you that joy of knowing nothing can separate you from the love of your God.

OK, so maybe you don't have that kind of peace, at least not yet. But the lack of complete peace in the heart of a Christian doesn't mean you don't have faith. It means you have a weak faith. But God wants you to have a complete peace. A stronger faith and a deeper peace in your heart comes to all of us through His Word. That's how God increases the peace in our hearts. Through a stronger faith. And a stronger faith comes through His Word. And that's a miraculous thing, isn't it?

Part Two: Faith comes through His Word.

Those first disciples had their faith strengthened through the miraculous appearing of Jesus. Not just once, or twice, but at least three times and perhaps even more for some of them. During that first visit of the risen Lord, Jesus sought to strengthen their faith by saying they could touch him and see that He wasn't a ghost. We learn this from other Gospel accounts. Plus, Jesus even ate something in front of them to prove He wasn't a spirit, but risen flesh and blood. Oh, what a wonderful thing to have been a disciple and seen the risen Lord face to face! Don't worry; our turn will come on the Last Day.

Even Thomas, the disciple who wasn't there on that first Easter Sunday evening, saw the Lord. Now, I've got to say a few things about Thomas, because he sometimes gets a bad reputation among Christians. It's not that he doubted more than the others. He wanted what the other disciples had witnessed. It's almost as if Thomas could say "I need what you got before I'll believe what you believe." Thomas was no better and no worse than the other disciples. After all, he did come to that upper room the next week, didn't he?

Thomas had faith, a faith that had been created by the Holy Spirit through the power of God's Word. Just imagine, for a moment, what Thomas might have gone through during the week. I think he spent the week regretting that he wasn't at the first meeting with Jesus. That first meeting of the disciples in the upper room had nothing to do with expecting Jesus to appear. That first meeting was trying to get some peace, to answer the question "What do we do now?" But, he missed it, and I think he spent the week wondering if Jesus would be there. Is it true? Lord, help me. Strengthen my faith. I'm so weak and I need a stronger faith.

And Jesus did. Listen to His words of comfort and strengthening, using Thomas's own words. ***"Peace be with you... Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Stop doubting and believe."*** Believe with your whole heart, not just a small corner of it. Believe that your sins are forgiven. Believe that Jesus is your risen Savior and God. And Thomas did just that. He didn't have to touch Jesus' hands to strengthen his faith. His faith was strengthened simply by the powerful words of Jesus. Then, he confessed his faith - his stronger faith - by saying ***"My Lord and my God."*** Oh, the wonderful, miraculous power of the words of Christ!

They're still just as powerful today, you know. We don't need to touch Jesus' hands or put our hand into His side to receive a stronger and deeper peace. We only need the words of Christ. They have the ability to give us the peace that we so desperately and intensely desire. As we study the Word of God, our faith increases. As our faith increases, so does the peace that we have in our hearts.

That's part of God's will for us, right? He wants us to believe and He wants us to have that kind of peace that passes all understanding. He wants us to have peace in our hearts knowing our sins are forgiven and that we're going to heaven. He wants us to have peace knowing we will rise from the dead and live with glorified bodies, as our brother Jesus does. (Although His body is more than ours will ever be.) And along with peace, comes joy!

How can you be happy in life? I know all people want to be happy, but how do you get to the point of being super happy? Truly happy? Deep down in your soul to your bones happy? Well, the world will tell you that you can be happy by being richer, thinner and tanner. That's what happiness is all about. Bleahhh. That's superficial happiness and never lasts beyond next week. God's idea of happiness is all tied up with peace, faith and joy. As our faith grows deeper, our peace increases and our joy will finally bubble over. And it all starts with the words of Jesus Christ. ***"These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."*** Keep the joy of Easter alive in your heart and life. Keep in contact with the Word to grow your faith, your peace and your joy.

I hope you never have as hectic a day as the one I first described. But even if you do, you know that you have peace, even when things are going haywire. You have Jesus' peace, and ***"JESUS' PEACE IS YOURS"*** Don't forget that peace come through faith and faith comes through the Word.

AMEN