

Second Sunday of Easter - Rev Jo Smith

Sermon: “Peace Be With You”

(Readings: Acts 5:27–32, Revelation 1:4–8, John 20:19–31)

It’s evening in Jerusalem. The doors are locked. The disciples are gathered, hearts pounding, still reeling from the violence and grief of Good Friday. They have heard rumors—wild ones—of an empty tomb, of angels, of women claiming to have seen the Lord. But they’re not out proclaiming this; they’re behind closed doors, hiding.

It’s not so different from how some of us might be feeling today.

You could say we’re gathered behind our own locked doors—perhaps not physical ones, but social ones. We live in anxious times. Rising costs, climate uncertainty, divisions between people. There’s a wariness about what we might say, how it might be received, that seeps into the bones of our communities. Even the Church, called to be the bearer of good news, sometimes seems uncertain of her voice.

And then into all of this... comes Jesus. Not with a battering ram. Not with a marketing campaign. But with *peace*.

“Peace be with you,” he says.

Not “Have you got it all sorted out?”

Not “Why are you hiding?”

Not even “Get out there and get to work.”

Just—*Peace. Be with you.*

It is such a human thing to be afraid. The disciples had every reason to fear. They had followed a man they believed was the Messiah. They had watched him die a criminal’s death. And now they were expected—what?—to carry on?

But Jesus knows their fear. He breathes on them, and says, *Receive the Holy Spirit*. It’s so gentle. Not a cyclone. Not fire and thunder. Just breath. Just the Spirit, quiet and close. Like God breathing into Adam. Like wind rustling through gum leaves on an almost still day—not seen, barely felt but undeniably there.

This moment isn’t about demanding faith—it’s about giving life.

And then there’s Thomas. Honest, brave, stubborn Thomas. Who says, “I need to see the wounds.” Not because he doesn’t believe in Jesus. But because he wants to be sure that this isn’t just hope dressed up in wishful thinking. He wants to know that the risen Christ still carries the scars. That the pain wasn’t for nothing.

Jesus gives him exactly that. “Put your hand here,” he says. And Thomas falls to his knees, “My Lord and my God.”

Isn’t that what we long for, too? Not a slick, glossy faith that denies suffering, but a risen Saviour who shows us his wounds and says, *Even this can be redeemed*.

And then—then comes the challenge. Because the story doesn't stop at comfort.

Peter, in Acts, is dragged before the authorities and asked why he won't stop talking about Jesus. Why he keeps stirring up hope. Why he insists that something new is possible.

And Peter says, "We must obey God rather than any human authority." You can almost hear the courage in his voice. But you also remember—this is the same Peter who, not long before, denied Jesus three times. Something has changed in him. (More on that next week)

That change is the Spirit. That change is Easter.

And you and I—well, we live here, now, on this island continent of droughts and flooding rains, Where our land aches with beauty and with history. And where many of us are quietly wondering what the future holds.

But this is *our* Jerusalem, our locked room, and this—this is where Jesus shows up.

Not in a temple, not on a mountain, but *right here*, in the midst of our anxiety, in the middle of our living rooms and our worship gatherings and our wondering hearts.

Today we are going to step out of the locked room, we are going to take church "out in public!" And pray! And bear witness to our hope and faith.

You might be asking: how do we share the Gospel in times like these? When people are tired of religion? When even the word *church* feels heavy for some?

We do it the way Jesus did.

We show our scars.

We bring peace.

We offer breath, not bluster.

We speak truth with tenderness.

Being missional doesn't mean having all the answers. It means being willing to step outside our locked rooms. It means visiting someone who's lonely. It means being the first to forgive. It means listening deeply, loving generously, and living in a way that says, *Christ is alive and he is here*.

You don't need a megaphone. You just need your story. Your wounds. Your breath.

Because the world doesn't need more noise. It needs witnesses.

As Revelation tells us, Jesus is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead. And he has made *us* into a kingdom of priests—a people who carry sacred things into ordinary spaces. And ordinary things into sacred spaces.

So, dear friends, this is not the time to shrink back. It's not the time to pretend we're okay when we're not. It's not the time to lock our doors.

It is the time to be who we were made to be: a people of resurrection.

Even with trembling hands, even with questions, even with tired feet—we walk forward.
Because Christ has breathed on us. Because we are not alone. Because the peace he gave
the disciples, he gives to us still.

Peace be with you, he says.

And that is enough.

Amen