

If you were to ask people today if they feel secure and safe in the world today more people would say no than did about 10 years ago. This is despite the reality of great prosperity in our nation and a sense that life is ultimately good. While we seek material things, and we are very good at that the one thing that seems to elude many people is something that the world can never ever give us, peace.

One of the issues Jesus seemed to have with the Jewish leaders of the day was that he perceived that they had compromised their integrity by seeking to overturn the occupation with the Romans by means of force. He said, that if you fight evil with evil, guess what, evil wins. If you fight the Romans with the tactics of the Romans then you are fighting a battle not with God's agenda, but with the heathen's agenda. And again you have lost before you even start.

His mission seemed to be a radical new way turning the hearts and minds of the world to God through love, the way of self sacrifice, the way of peace, the way of the cross.

Now that the resurrection has occurred Jesus is on borrowed time as far as his physical visual presence in the world. He has only got a limited amount of time to instruct the disciples to take on the mission that he has started. It needs to take on a new dimension, but he has prepared them carefully for it and they are nearly ready for the challenge before them.

Here is the scene. The disciples are afraid, and confused. They are afraid of the repercussions from the Jewish leadership to the Jesus movement. They are also confused. They have had reports from the women that they have seen Jesus and Peter himself has been a witness to the empty tomb, what can all this possibly mean? It is easy for us to judge the disciples this far removed from the event, but there must have been real confusion and fear in them so soon after the tragic death of their leader and friend, and the great let down of their expectations.

So when Jesus comes into the room and stands among them what are his opening words to them? Peace. This word peace is not saying to them, be quiet. The word peace has huge implications for the disciples. When people live in peace they live in safety, they live in security, they live without fear.

Jesus is inviting them to have their lives transformed by his presence. They are to live from now on in a world where their safety is less than assured, as if it is assured. They are to love in a world with a great sense of security even though the world they live in does not afford them that security, and they are to live in a world free of fear, even though the world they live in is a fearful place.

But why should they be able to do that? One word, resurrection. The resurrection completely revolutionizes the traditional world view of life. The Resurrection event calls us all to love in a new way, a living way. We are called to see life in the new light of resurrection.

The normal human instinct is to preserve our life. So we will go to great lengths to ensure that our existence is assured, and we will also do our best to ensure that

our life is lived to its fullest. But that presupposes that this life is all that there is. With the resurrection a reality all that is cast aside. It now means that our lives lived here have repercussions for the life to be lead after this. It also means that we do not have to preserve this life for all it is worth. It means that we can live our life to its fullest, and with complete integrity.

Of course the danger with the knowledge of the resurrection is that we can completely disregard this life with the desire to enter fully into the new life promised by the resurrection now. This would be to completely misunderstand what Jesus is on about and the model that he gave us in his own life.

What is this to do with the disciples for this passage? What it means for the disciples is that they no longer have to fear the Jews.

Jesus comes in and says to them, peace be with you. I am alive, the Jews have tried to silence me, they have failed. If they try to silence you they will fail as well. God's purposes will not be supplanted by human purposes. The disciples were afraid that the Jews would give them the same treatment they gave Jesus, the resurrected Jesus says to them that tactic will fail. The Jews are afraid the Romans will treat them the same way, the resurrected Jesus says that will fail, the disciples are afraid that the world will reject them as it has rejected Jesus, the resurrected Jesus tells them this is inconsequential.

The resurrected Jesus tells them that their confidence in the world for safety, for security, and for lack of fear will be a faulty confidence. Only by placing their confidence in the resurrected Jesus will they have any confidence in the world they are called to participate in. They can operate as Jesus' disciples in the world confident that the world has already been overcome by the Lord. They can function in a world that is hostile to the message of God confident that the message of God will ultimately prevail. They can act with boldness in the world telling the world about Jesus knowing full well that whatever the world throws at them, God will prevail in the end.

This is why they were fearless even in the face of martyrdom. While they did not actively seek martyrdom, as some do in this day and age, they felt confident, that should martyrdom come their way it would not matter. After all it was only death, and Jesus has overcome death, and promised eternal life for all believers.

This message is still relevant for us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We live in a world that is less certain.

We live in a world which is still hostile to the message of God, we live in a world that does not offer us security, and we live in a world where people thin that the only response to violence is to be more violent.

The Easter event reminds us this is a flawed strategy. If we place our faith in the world we will be disappointed. Ultimately this is because the world is inherently

flawed, and only God is able to overcome all things. When we place our faith in the resurrected Jesus we place our faith in someone who is able to overcome all things. We are able to be confident in being faithful members of the Lord Jesus and not hide our light under a bushel and be faithful witnesses of the Lord Jesus even in the face of persecution. We don't seek persecution, but we are confident that even in the face of such a situation God will still prevail.

The bottom line is, once we place our whole life in the hands of Jesus we lose our fear of what can happen to us. After all, the world will think that the worse that can happen to us is death, but the resurrection tells us that even that event does not have any control over us any more.

The world might think it can bully us into its way of thinking, but the resurrection tells us that nothing can overcome God's purposes. What can the world do to us to prevail over us? Answer, nothing!

So with the most terrifying event that hovers over the human psyche removed as a threat over us, we are free to live in peace. That is to live free from fear, to live lives secure in the knowledge that God has overcome all things, to live safe in the knowledge that God is with us in all the situations we find ourselves in.

So we are called to live authentic Christian lives that are authentic to the teachings of Jesus and not shaped by the world. We are in fact called to reshape lives and the world by our living as children of God. We can only do that by living faithfully as Christ himself calls us to live, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is of course the clue. But, with the Spirit of God active in our lives we are able to live lives of peace, and therefore lives lived on God's terms not the worlds.

This means we have a great message to the world that is currently living with fear and doubt. Do we ourselves live in fear and doubt, then we need to turn to the resurrected Jesus, and receive peace. If we know this in our own lives then we can assist others.

Are there people we know whose lives are lived in fear, and uncertainty? We have a message that is relevant for them. Are they concerned that their life is not what it might be, or that they hoped it might be? The risen Jesus makes sense of our life because the risen Jesus sees our life from the other side perspective. Are we afraid or do we know of someone who is afraid of death and trying to hang on for all it is worth because we want only this life? The risen Jesus says to us peace, be not afraid, I have conquered death. This does not mean we seek to end our lives prematurely, but we live our lives confident of the future and free from fear of what is to come, for the risen Jesus gives us the assurance of new life in him. Are we afraid of or do we know of someone who is afraid of engaging with the world? The risen Jesus says to us and them, peace, be not afraid I have overcome the world. They can throw whatever they like at us, it will not overwhelm us.

Engaging with the risen Jesus is an ongoing process. While some may have Damascus Road experiences the rest of us have to be like the disciples, glad when they see, or encounter the risen Lord, but still a bit uncertain as to how that all works out.

That is what life is for, to live our lives to God in the power of the risen Christ to learn to place our faith and trust in him and allow him to continually convert us to himself and allow him to give us his peace, a peace that the world neither knows about or can give, only through faith and a life changing relationship with the risen Jesus. When we give our lives to Christ, or lead others to Christ we are changed and transformed and made new, but best of all we have true peace.