

What do you need for peace today?

7 April 2024

St Peter's

Reading: John 20:19-31

And Jesus said, "Peace be with you."

Jesus is offering us peace today. The English word peace doesn't do justice to all that Jesus is offering us today. For us peace means the absence of war - but for Jesus, peace means much more. His greeting, "Peace be with you," would have used the word shalom. Shalom in Hebrew means wholeness, health, at-one-ness, fullness of relationship, and harmony.

Jesus is offering us shalom.

As well as his offering of peace, today's Gospel also includes Thomas wanting to touch the resurrected Jesus' wounds. I always thought the linkage between Jesus offering of peace, and Thomas wanting physical proof of the resurrection as random. But nothing of course is random in John's Gospel. I think for Thomas to find peace, he needed proof. Thomas had a block to finding God's shalom wholeness for himself. For him to find peace he needed to physically touch Jesus' wounds. He puts his finger in Jesus' wounded side and proclaims, "My Lord and my God."

I wonder what you need to find peace.

Angela was a parishioner of ours in Burwood. She first came to church when Rosemary ran a Princess Di Memorial Service. Angela and her husband Alan became enthusiastic worshipers and members of the parish. Alan is a fine man, as are all men who have model railways. We left Burwood after eight years and in Timaru we got a sad phone call. Alan rang to say that Angela was dying. "She wants you to visit her," he said. I checked that they had permission from the local vicar, to make sure I wasn't breaking any boundaries. "Yes," I said, "I'll visit." I was due in Christchurch for a meeting, so I went over to the hospice after the meeting. All the drive over I was thinking "What do you say to a dying person? What does she want to say to me?" I arrived shocked to see the state she was in but pleased to see her. I said a prayer and then she said, "I wanted to see you to thank you for the gift of faith. With faith I can die in peace." With faith I can die in peace! Ministry doesn't get much better than that. I hadn't done much; it takes a whole team to bring someone to faith, but she had received the gift of peace. To die in peace, she needed to thank someone for faith and the hope it brings.

I wonder what blocks to peace you have.

For some Jesus words in our Gospel may unlock your block to peace. Verse 23 for example: "Your sins are forgiven." Lack of forgiveness may be the block to peace in your life. For some of us not having a warm dry home is a block to peace as we try and look after our families and ourselves. For some it is being reconciled with an estranged neighbour or friend or family member that would bring peace. Shalom. For some, it's finding a meaning

and purpose to life that brings peace. Whatever it is that stands in the way of you receiving Christ's gift of peace in your life, the risen Christ wants to break down that barrier and offer you the peace of God which passes all understanding.

Recently the fishermen of the UK and France have again been at loggerheads about which fish they can catch. The rules get more and more complicated. In fact, one commentator described it as the peace/piece of cod which passes all human understanding!

Right here and right now Jesus is present with us to offer you that peace which the world cannot give - the shalom that is only his and his alone to give.

Is it proof of the resurrection like Thomas that you need? Is it forgiveness? Is it some material need, like adequate housing? Is it reconciliation with another person? Is it simple gratitude like Angela expressed to another person that will bring you peace? Or is it simply that you have never asked Jesus for peace?

'And Jesus greeted them and said, "Peace be with you."'

Let us pray:

Jesus, you stood among the disciples and gave them the gift of peace.

Grant us merciful God that same gift today.

I bring before you the barrier that I have to knowing and receiving your peace

I offer you my barrier now.

In the safe knowledge that you break down all barriers that divide

I thank you for your gift of peace, both now and into the future,

That I might, that each of us might, have fullness of life in Jesus' name.

Amen