THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECION
Rolling Meadows - 1969

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IN NOMINE JESU

St. John 20: 19-23 ON THE EVENING OF THAT DAY, THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, THE DOORS BEING SHUT WHERE THE DISCIPLES WERE, FOR FEAR OF THE JEWS, JESUS CAME AND STOOD AMONG THEM AND SAID TO THEM, "PEACE BE WITH YOU." WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE. THEN THE DISCIPLI WERE GLAD WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD. JESUS SAID TO THEM AGAIN, "PEACE BE WITH YOU. AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, EVEN SO I SEND YOU." AND WHEN HE HAD SAID THIS, HE BREATHED ON THEM, AND SAID TO THE, "RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. IF YOU FORGIVE THI SINS OF ANY, THEY ARE FORGIVEN; IF YOU RETAIN THE SINS OF ANY, THEY ARE RETAINEI

Where does Jesus go in His hour of victory and triumph? There might have been a way back into the city and over to Gabbatha to tell Pilate that He was truly a King! There might have been a way back over to the temple area to say t Annas and Caiaphas that IN HIM the New Israel had begun. There might have been a way to stand in the midst of the proud Sanhedrin that had condemned Him and show them that He was truly King of life and death.

He did none of these things! During His lifetime He had never been interes ed in the acclaim of the multitudes- and He was not about to call for their applause now. He is NOT looking for any self-justification, but His primary concern is service to His beloved people.

At once He is on His way to the locked-up house and the barricaded doors where ten of His frightened disciples were in hiding. Their reason was very simple - if the Lord, whom they trusted for strength, could be destroyed, they ha better beware, for surely their shameful death was only a matter of time.

Why does He do it? What is it that draws Him to this beaten, frightened little group? Surely none of them expected or deserved this visit. If any of them had dared to even think of it, they would NOT have been so frightened by His appearance. They, more than anyone else, had seen the power of our Lord in His words and deeds. They, more than anyone else, should have understood that His whole life must inevitably have ended in the death on the Cross. Over and over again He had told them that He would die and rise again. They should have been looking with eager anticipation to this triumph of their Lord.

But like all people of no faith or little faith, they are afraid and in despair. The words that Jesus had said to them before, had all been forgotten, or they had no confidence in them. Their fear is distrust of their Lord and His

Words. Their dread is faithlessness and guilt. They surely had not deserved this visit from their Lord. They had deserved nothing but rejection and fear!

Why does our Lord go to them? Certainly He does not need them - because He has ALL POWER IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH. He could pick for Himself any kind of a worthy messenger. He does not need these disciples - but THEY NEED HIM - especially in their guilt and fear. This our Lord sees in His divine mercy - and nothing could hold Him back from His frightened friends. Just as in His lifetim He sought the fellowship of publicans and sinners and those whom life had beaten and broken - so now His searching, tender love brings Him to the guilty men behind the locked doors.

What a great comfort that we know about a Saviour like that who does not discard or destroy those who hide in fear and anguish - but He comes to SEEK AND SAVE. This is the Resurrection - and He comes to comfort us with His presence; He comes to give us the assurance of His love. Like the disciples, we can find our fear driven out and our broken lives healed and made new again.

He gives them His PEACE. Twice He said to them PEACE BE WITH YOU! With th word He goes straight to the heart of their distress - to their guilt. This was the reason for their fear - and it must be taken away if they are to find help and comfort. When a man is guilty, he loses the peace of God. That is the way it was at the very beginning when man wanted to be like God and lifted his hand against God. In that hour Paradise was lost - and IN THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW man has to eat his bread WITHOUT PEACE. For all the years after this would be the reason for the seas of blood and tears that would wash over all the world. MAN HAD LOST HIS PEACE WITH GOD! The ancient world sobs it out in its hymn of longi and praise: HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR, MIGHT GOD, EVERLASTIN FATHER, THE PRINCE OF PEACE. Out Of the need and frustration the old prophet sees a way of release: THE CHASTISEMENT OF OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM that we might have peace, AND WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED. The PEACE OF GOD was called down fro heaven in countless, peaceless years. Then the angels came to sing at Bethlehem about PEACE ON EARTH AND GOOD WILL TOWARD MEN.

We belong to the frightened group of disciples! We know all about fear and dread that comes to us because of our own sin and guilt, and that of others. We know how uncertain our existence is in the uncertain world of our time. We know all about THE DOORS which we make for ourselves and THE LOCKS which give no security behind which we might hide with our uncertain peacelessness.

IT IS THE DAY OF THE RESURRECTION! We can have the PEACE OF GOD with those disciples there in Jerusalem. Out of those nail-pierced hands we can take the forgiveness of our sins and the surety that there is NOTHING NOW TO SEPARATE US FROM GOD. If PEACE has been established in this way, then GOD CAN NO MORE BE AGAINST US - then terror and fear have no more place - because He is also the God of the future and everything that can or will come must come through Him! The PEACE OF GOD makes our hearts content even in the midst of the terror of our time and our rootless existence. That is ONE GIFT of our RESURRECTED LORD, BUT HE GIVES EVEN MORE!

He gives us JOY. THEN WERE THE DISCIPLES GLAD WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD! It was a real joy to have Him with them again. They recognize Him as the Lord whom they had followed for so long in faith. He is the One who had been taken away from them through the Death on Calvary and the Tomb in the Garden. Our Lord gave them every assurance that He was really their Lord and Master, their Saviour and Messiah. That is why He showed them HIS HANDS AND HIS SIDE. They could recognize that His LOVE had not stopped in spite of their denials. His faithfulness had shown itself triumphant over their lack of faith. His GREETING OF PEACE gave them the assurance that they had been completely forgiven - and that brought them this SUPREME JOY!

To be sure, there were many pressures and fears still to be faced in the world around them - but Jesus gives the assurance that NO POWER IN HEAVEN OR ON EARTH could ever take away that PEACE again. Even when the persecutions threatened them in later days, they heed the call of Paul: REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE. THE LORD IS AT HAND!

The world around us does not breathe out much of this PEACE, this JOY. Wherever we look there is evil ambition, and plotting, and bitter war. The weapons of destruction have almost wiped out the hope of peace for the future. This is the kind of a world that MAN - unfaithful and separated from God - has made of himself. Man, who wants to know everything, and have everything, and rule everything, will most likely, at the pinnacle of his success, find that he has destroyed himself. That is the kind of a world to which God came - and in which Christ lived and died and was buried and rose again. In Him God triumphed and the peace that He has made in Christ no one can destroy or blot out.

The world will have to bear the pain of this separation from God - this rupture of peace - for many years to come. Until the day that Jesus comes again and God gives us A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH which He has promised, there will be wars and fears all over. But just because Jesus LIVES AND REIGNS in this fear-filled world we can live in the PEACE OF GOD. He can come through the LOCKED DOORS of our rooms and shelters and have us experince it too: THEN WERE THE DISCIPLES GLAD WHEN THEY SAW THE LORD!

The Lord came to the frightened disciples and gave them His peace and made their hearts glad. Now He sends them on their way to spread these gifts and give them to all men: AS THE FATHER HATH SENT ME SO SEND I YOU. It is not going to be easy: I SEND YOU FORTH AS SHEEP AMONG THE WOLVES.

He, who is the Conqueror, sends them forth with his conquering Word. He sends them forth to talk about atonement, eternal life, and joy, and peace for the whole world, because it is the Word of the Triumphant Risen Christ. It brings about decisions. He who accepts it from us has the forgiveeness of sins and lives in the peace of God. He who does not accept it remains in his fears behind the locked doors of terror and peacelessness.

The world only knows that Christ is the living power if WE, who live in Him, actually proclaim Him wherever we can. We are His people - the company of the fearful, whom He has comforted - the company of the guilty, whom He has forgiven-

the company of the despairing, who have been made glad by His peace - the compar of those who have suffered many defeats, but always come up with the withess of His triumph and Resurrection. That is HIS CALL - and whoever heeds it knows that the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS ARISEN WITH HEALING IN HIS WINGS. Amen.