Easter

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IN NOMINE JESU

John 20: 19-21 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He shewed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.

EASTER -- A MESSAGE OF PEACE

Have you ever stood in the quiet stillness of the evening with the gentle breezes blowing softly overhead watching the last rays of a multi-colored sunset disappear beyond the horizon in all its majesty and glory? And then as you continue standing there, almost afraid to move, completely enthrawled by the beauty, the splendor, the serene calmness of God's glorious creation, one by one the stars begin to break through the night air. Almost, it seems, you can reach up and touch them, as they twinkle down at you in all their gorgeous radiance and magnificent luster. If only, you say, you could take this wonderful PEACE, this exquisite REST and place it in your own soul! If only it could be yours for every hour of every day forever and ever!

Friends, I am here today in the name of the Risen Savior to tell you of a PEACE and of a RESTFULNESS which far surpasses and far outshines that of nature. I am here today in the name of the Resurrected Lord to bring you a PEACE which passes all human understanding. It is PEACE with God. Such PEACE knows no fear, is not bombarded with uncertainty or doubt, experiences no anxiety, feels no terror, holds no worry. UNBELIEVABLE, IMPOSSIBLE -- you say? No, it is not impossible. This peace can be yours, yours forever, if only you will let the Easter Gospel with all its forcefulness and power surge through your soul and touch the innermost depths of your heart. The message of Easter is a message of peace -- PEACE in all its radiant splendor, sparkling beauty, and glorious majesty.

When their beloved Lord was arrested and taken from them, the disciples fled for their lives. Worry, concern, fear with its icy fingers gripped them

and held them in a seemingly unbreakable strangle hold. All their hopes and dreams for the future seemed to be shattered. Their Lord, their beloved Master was taken from them; yea, He was crucified in shame. And now probably even their lives were in danger. What to do! It was all so terrifying and hopeless. Quaking in terror they hid themselves in an upper room, bolted the doors and the windows. And there they sat -- desperate, dejected, despondent.

And then a miracle happened -- a startling, unbelievable, glorious miracle. Suddenly Jesus came and stood in their midst. Locks and doors could not keep Him out. Though frightened as they were at the moment, when they realized that their Lord was risen and alive, when they saw the nail prints and His wounded side, when they heard Him say, "Peace be unto you," their gloom was turned into joy, their fear into faith. Listen once again to St. John as writes the Glad Tidings of this miraculous event: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in their midst, and saith unto them, 'Peace be unto you.' And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord."

For the first time they began to see clearly the purpose of their Master's life. Now all of His sayings and teachings took on new life, new meaning. Now they could see clearly that their Lord had not come to liberate the Jewish race from the Romans, that He had not come to establish an earthly kingdom. Now they could see that He had come to liberate the world from the dreadful curse of God, that on the altar of Calvary He was offering Himself to God as a sacrifice for the sins of men. Now they realized the truth of Isaiah's prophecy: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

Their risen Lord stood before them now as visible proof that the sacrifice on Calvary had been accepted by God. His resurrection meant that their sins had been atoned for. His resurrection meant that now they need have no fear -- they were at peace with God. His resurrection meant that now their souls were stamped with the big, black, bold letters PAID. They were indeed ransomed. Oh, what joy! What indescribable peace!

Fear is the common lot of man. But there was a time when man enjoyed complete freedom from fear, namely, in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. But then came that day of disobedience, and with it fear, so that when the Lord called, "Adam, where art thou," sinful man confessed: "I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid." And since then fear has been a universal emotion of all men. Sin is the cause of fear. Well might the man be terrified and afraid who has rejected the Easter Gospel with its message of peace. Well might the man be afraid whose guilty conscience accuses him, whose sin condemns him. He is indeed staring hell and eternal damnation in the face. But how wonderful the message of the Risen Savior to all who will but hear Him: "Peace be unto you!" "Fear not!" "Let not your heart be troubled!" "Thy sins be forgiven thee!"

There are thousands who are trying to drink themselves out of fear, to drown their fright in alcoholic forgetfulness. The drunken sot, however, does not succeed thereby to decrease his terrors but only increases them. There still more thousands who flood the offices of psychiatrists and psychologists, seeking to rid themselves of fear, trying to find peace. The superstitious are said to pay more than a hundred million dollars a year to fortune-tellers of various kinds, hoping that thus their worries might be solved. But all to no avail!

There is but one source of reliable assurance and certain hope -- namely, the ever-sure proclamation of the Risen Redeemer: "Peace be unto you!"

Our Lord does not want His disciples, His followers to be afraid, and therefore He ever and again comes to us in His Holy Word and lovingly assures us: "Fear not." "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." In every cross, in every trial, in every problem or perplexity the Christian can feel the Living Savior's loving hand upon his shoulder and hear His re-assuring voice: "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior."

That, friends, is the blessed message of Easter. That is the joy which overwhelms and floods the heart of every real Christian, when he hears the Easter Gospel. His salvation is established, his redemption is assured, his soul is ransomed, his sins are washed away, he is at peace with God. This is a certain reality, an infallible truth because THE LORD IS RISEN. HE IS RISEN INDEED. Though the world seems to have forsaken him, though all his wealth and fortune be taken away, though he be writhing in pain, though he be sick unto death -- still he can cry out in triumph with Job of old: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."

Does death hold you in fearful terror? Do you dread the inevitable hour when you shall come face to face with eternity? Then hear the voice of your Risen Savior: "Peace be unto you!" He is the one sure victory over death; He is the only victory! Listen to Him declare with re-assuring words of comfort

and peace: "Because I live, ye shall live also!" "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." Oh, what serene calmness dwells in the heart of a Christian. He can join in the confident assurance of the Psalmist and say: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, for Thou are with me, Thy Rod and Thy Staff, they comfort me." He can sing with the hymnist:

> I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless;
> Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
> Where is death's sting? Where grave thy Victory?
> I triumph still if Thou abide with me.

Let us cling steadfastly to this Easter Gospel of PEACE. Let us show by word and by deed that we prize it very highly. Let us share this priceless treasure with others. The words of our text conclude: "Then said Jesus to them again, 'Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you.'" Jesus was ever conscious of doing the work which His Father had sent Him to do -- namely, to redeem the sin-cursed, fear-stricken world. But now His work was done. His disciples were to carry on.

And carry on they did. Once fearful and cringing cowards, they now risked everything, even life and the favor of men, so that others might share with them what was their prised possession. Listen to Peter and John as they speak out boldly: "We cannot but speak of those things which we have seen and heard." Yea, all but one of these disciples suffered martyrdom for the Easter Gospel of PEACE. I ask you, "Would they have gone to their death, if their message was not backed up with the reality of their Lord's Resurrection? Will any man lay down his life for a falsehood?" Men will lie and scheme when they have something to gain out of it. A boy will lie to escape punishment; a thief to escape being found out; but a person in his right mind will hardly lie in order to invoke upon himself pain, persecution, and death. If by

spreading the lie the disciples could hope to gain riches, honor, prestige, we could understand such action. But they could expect none of these. They boldly and confidently faced persecution, crucifixion, and death for only one purpose -- to proclaim the Gospel of forgiveness and peace through their crucified and risen Lord.

We too have the Lord's commission: "Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." Think of the millions of people, yes even in our own beloved America, who are living in anxiety, dread, and constant fear. Think about them! What are we doing about them? Our world is engulfed in sin. Uncertainty, fear, restlessness are all around. We have the one and only lasting PEACE, the PEACE which passes all understanding. Oh, fellow Christians, let us get busy and share our priceless Lord with others. Let us bring them the restful repose which only we as believers have. -- PEACE FOR TIME AND ETERNITY WITH GOD. Missions and missionaries who could be bringing the Easter message to lost souls are being forced to sit back until sufficient funds can be raised. Is it because we have not given generously enough to the Lord who has given us so much, even His life blood to redeem us?

O Risen Savior:

St. Paul's - Aberdeen
St. Paul's - Leola &
- Long Lake

Bernemer - 1958
(Cfr. revised edition)

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Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my moments and my days,
Let them flow in cease-less praise.

Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold;
Take my intellect and use
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure-store;
Take myself, and I will be
Ever, only, all, for Thee.