

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

The disciples had the best three years of their entire lives. Jesus picked twelve men to follow Him, learn from Him, so they could be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. They heard every word of Jesus' teaching and those words stuck with this band of men as is seen in the content of the Gospels. Jesus had told them at least three times that the Romans would put him to death. **Matthew 16:21(ESV)** ²¹From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. I am certain the announcements by Jesus of His impending death and future resurrection bewildered this group of men. After all Jesus performed miracles and never did or said anything wrong. Jesus announced that people's sins were forgiven. They knew only God can forgive sins. Jesus raised people from the dead. The three years flew by and then it all came to a crashing halt. Jesus was arrested, brutally whipped, and then publicly crucified. The disciples ran for their very lives thinking they might be the next ones to be at least arrested or at the worst, put to death.

We have the advantage of knowing the rest of the story; they did not. Jesus told them **(John 15:18(ESV))** ¹⁸"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." Friends I do not know if any of you have ever feared for your very life. Yes, I know we have war veterans in our midst whose lives were on the line. When this happens to you, it is something you never forget as I have been told by my friends who have been in war. A few years ago I was made aware that someone I know quite well had his very life threatened. This was in another state. There is no connection to his church. He had learned that there was someone who hated him so badly that the person wanted him dead. When you are fearing for your life even the rustle of a leaf can fill you with paralyzing fear. A knock on the door can send shivers down your spine. Is this it? In the middle of the night a dog barking outside can cause a panic attack. As the disciples are huddled together behind closed doors I believe they were

filled with anxiety of all sorts, fear, panic, confusion, and possibly hearing noises that were not even there. One does not lock their doors to outsiders when they feel safe. They were locked inside and dared not go out where they could be attacked at any moment.

I continue to ask people of all ages how having to stay at home during this time of the virus is affecting them emotionally. I am particularly concerned with our young people. I read this week several articles where the youngest of children, 4, 5, and 6-year olds express their personal fears. It affects their sleep patterns, their diet, and their emotions are all over the map. They express heartfelt concern for their grandparents since they are not able to visit with them like they normally do. We as adults have greater tools to deal with our own emotions but living in such a time as this can stress out the most emotionally healthy.

Intense fear can enter when we think we have no control of what is about to happen. The fear is intensified because we do not know what is going to occur. I honestly believe this is where the disciples were emotionally until Jesus appeared to them in what we call a post resurrection appearance. At one time Jesus appeared to 500 people. He is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia.

John 20:19,21(ESV) ¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

Filled to the brim with fear, Jesus enters the scene. This only added to their fears because they thought they were looking directly at a ghost (Luke 24:37). If you have ever had a scary dream in the middle of the night relating to ghosts or other frightening happenings, you know exactly how they felt.

Jesus spoke these words to them. "Peace be with you." At first they thought they were seeing a ghost but after Jesus speaks to them, they understood that He was not a ghost and

that He was risen from the dead. Alleluia. Ghosts do not have bodies that you can touch and feel.

All of us have our own personal fears including young children. Friends, what are we to do with fear? The Bible says, in **1 John 4:18(ESV)** “¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.” I have heard it said that hell is the place where God’s love does not exist. I think the closest place to hell on earth is when we as believers in Jesus Christ let our fears take over. In that way our fears push out what we know to be true of the love of God. It is as if we begin to practice atheism until we hear the Words of Jesus, until we let Jesus enter our room of fear and speak into us God’s wonderful peace. It is impossible to separate God’s peace from His love. They fit together as the Holy Spirit pours God’s love into our hearts bringing with it a peace that passes all human understanding. Jesus is able today to enter into your room of fear and breathe peace into your very soul. That breath of God is the Holy Spirit working inside of you to deliver you from your fears. God’s perfect love casts those fears aside and helps you to see Jesus as your strong deliverer. Jesus is in the room. He will never leave you alone. We may even lock the doors hoping to keep everything and everyone away, but Jesus is able to enter with supernatural power and grace and to place inside of your soul exactly what you need. Jesus says, **John 14:27; 16:33(ESV)** “²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. ³³I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”

It is the peace from God that encourages us not to sink into the pit of fear. At one time in my life, several of my worst fears came true. I never thought that possible. What I feared the most actually happened. The Lord Jesus came to my rescue and delivered me out of the pit of fear. His Word spoke directly to me. Christian books such as *Trusting God* by Jerry Bridges and *Knowing God* by JI Packer were ways Jesus’ truth came to me that set me free. Having a

person to pray with weekly, a prayer partner, was essential to the process of the peace of Jesus being breathed into my very soul. Reading biographies of fellow sufferers could not have been more helpful such as Corrie Ten Boom and others who faced far worse things than I ever will. They each overcame even as Jesus overcomes in our lives the greatest of fears. It is God's promises to us that we will never be separated from God. But to feel separated from God is hell on earth. Jesus' death and resurrection overcame for us the powers of hell. Peace from God is not a special gift for a select few. It is ours in Jesus Christ for Jesus is our peace (Ephesians 2:14). God's peace is there inside of you. Exactly how we experience that is often up to us. The promise of peace is secure. I think we take our eyes off of Jesus as Peter did on the water and sank.

Inner peace produced by the Holy Spirit inside of you gives to you a sense of wholeness, a sense of completeness, knowing that the Lord is by far more powerful than any of your fears. It comes to us also as we receive God's wisdom from on high. Jesus enters your room of fear and speaks peace into your soul. God's truth sets us free. Having wise Christian counsel from mature believers is a God send. God's peace is that inner knowledge that you are not alone, that the Presence of Christ is with you, and that no matter what the circumstance, the Lord will never abandon you. Peace comes when you know you are fully forgiven, and this peace impacts one's relationships in the body of Christ. Finally, peace from God is the experience of His Presence within. It is not the absence of conflict. As Christians we are sent out into the world full of peace telling others how they too can have peace from God. Amen and Amen. Let us pray.

Benediction: Read these Scriptures **Philippians 4:7(ESV)** ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **Isaiah 26:3(ESV)** ³You keep all in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because they trust in you.

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you.....