

Easter 2B (2018)
John 20: 19-31
Grace Lutheran Church
Pastor Dave Wegner
April 8, 2018

I wonder, where is our locked room?

**Where do we hide for fear of the world around us?
How many dead bolts are thrown,
chains drawn, curtains closed?**

**Where do we retreat when the stark reality of life, of death,
And everything in between makes itself painfully known to us?**

**Wherever or whatever it is,
Where do we go or what do you do
When the world as we once knew it
Comes crashing down around us?**

**It's not too grim a question to ask, even this second Sunday of Easter,
Because it is exactly what had happened to the disciples,
As the first day of the week came to a close.**

**No matter how many times Jesus told them what was to come,
No matter how many times he tried to prepare them,
They still didn't grip the fact that he was going to die,
He was going to be taken away,
And where he was going, they could not follow.**

And he did die.

He was taken away.

And they were left behind.

When the stark reality of life and death finally met them face to face,
They retreated to their room, locked the doors, drew the curtains,
And hid...not knowing what their own fate might be.

They were all seen with that Jesus fellow.
Like Peter in the courtyard, they were known associates.
Not even the proclamation of Mary Magdalene
Seemed to draw them out.

“I have seen the Lord!” she said.
“Well we have seen the power of the crowd,”
They might have replied,
Fresh shouts of “Crucify him!”
Echoing through their memory.

So they hid behind locked doors, afraid of the world around them,
A world full of betrayal, fear, death, and doubt.
A world not unlike our own today.

We are asked again, how are we locked up?
Who are we afraid of?
What drives us to those places?
When is it safe to come out?
Where are the keys?
Why does it seem so dark in here?

Are we separating ourselves from the world
After having just celebrated the best news of our lives together?

Are our alleluia's returning so quickly
To the dust and ashes from which we came?

**Why, in the short hours of one biblical day,
does it seem like Easter Morning
turns right back into Good Friday afternoon?**

**And why is one of the first post-resurrection scenes in John
Full of locked rooms, fear, and doubt?**

**Because even in the midst of good news truth and light,
Those to whom the Gospels were written so many years ago,
We sitting here centuries later,
Still live in a world that is stuck in the tomb.**

**They, like us, look outside their rooms and see nation against nation
Race against race, social class against social class
Violence, greed, anger, hostility, regret, remorse, shame.**

**They, like us, hear the noise and confusion of life
drowning out everything else...
like a storm tossing waves against the sides of a boat.**

**But then, just like on the lake,
A singular, familiar voice comes and speaks
A singular, prophetic, and powerful word...
“Peace!”**

**A singular presence, without regard to locked doors and drawn curtains,
Comes and issues a command:
“Let there be peace with you all.”**

**It’s the same voice that issues life to Lazarus in the tomb,
The same voice that issues recognition to Mary at the tomb
It’s the voice that breaks into our locked rooms**

And issues peace.

**Jesus, the risen Christ, breaks through every barrier,
Huge stones, barred gates, heavy doors,
Chained locks, jammed knobs, crashing waves,
Even those we make for ourselves,
Even those of sin and death,
And speaks peace to those gathered together in his name.**

**Even while we live in a world that seems to
echo the sadness of Good Friday...
God has, is, and will continue to act
In the hope and light of Easter Morning.**

**Even while those other voices speak,
those that would cause us to stumble or doubt,
they do not have the last word in our lives.**

**Even while we may yet retreat to our locked rooms,
We can boldly proclaim that we too have seen the Lord,
And in that hope emerge again for ministry.**

**He is present in Word proclaimed, water poured,
Bread and wine given, brothers and sisters united.**

**We are Easter people
And we live in a world that desperately needs to hear from us!**

**In the chapel at Southern Seminary,
A monolithic marble slab forms the base of the pulpit
That shoots back and then up behind the preacher.**

**On it reads these words of Jesus recorded in John,
The very same we read this morning.**

**They are engraved into the very heart of the stone.
“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”**

**Those words carved into the stone remind all who see it
Of the words Jesus speaks to those in locked rooms,
Of all the words of promise and redemption contained
In the good news of God’s story in our history.
How they are proclaimed into the assembly,
How they enter our hearts
And calm the storms of life around us.**

**How that Word then flows down to our feet,
The Word proclaimed becoming our foundation and stepping stone.
It sends us out into the world with peace proclaimed
...Easter people with Good News to share.**

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

**How firm a foundation that reaches up behind us,
guarding and protecting, nourishing and sustaining,
going before, behind, and beside us in the journey.
A journey from cross, to tomb, to locked room,
to out there.**

**God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit breaks into our locked rooms,
destroys the fear that paralyzes us,
And sends us out to share Good News with all of the world.**

**Now, our doubts removed, we join in proclaiming
with Thomas, Peter, and all the faithful witnesses
that have gone before us,
“My Lord and my God.”**

**Since we belong to God who brings life to the lifeless,
And hope to the hopeless,
What, then, shall we say to this ailing world?**

**Perhaps we start with one of the first words of the resurrected Christ.
Perhaps we start simply,
With “peace.”**

**May the loving power of God,
which raised Jesus to new life,
strengthen you in hope,
enrich you with love,
and fill you with joy,
this day and always.**

Amen.