

3 Easter B 2018

Acts 3:12-19

Psalm 4

1 John 3:1-7

Luke 24:36b-48

Fear is a locked room,
With a lost key.

The first disciples,
Shut up in their upper room,
Had no idea what to do or where to go.
They were too afraid.
And they were not wrong to be afraid.
There was no clear way forward,
All their hopes were gone,
And they doubted the gifts of the past.

The disciples were locked
Inside their fear,
Until, beyond their knowing or expectation,
Jesus was standing among them, breathing peace.

Bringing them – not encouragement,
Not advice, not proof,
But peace.
The peace that comes from being in his presence.

The door was opened,
And they stepped out into new life.

Can we live into the stories
Of the first days after the resurrection?
Can that story be our story?

The first disciples were trying
To wrap themselves around this question:

How do we live in the power of the resurrection?
How do we see and show
That love is alive and cannot be killed?
How do we embrace a transformed life?

In the upper room
Jesus breathing peace

Changes fear into joy,
Offers a way forward,
A mission, an identity.

The disciples are to be witnesses
To the power of the resurrection,
The possibility of transformation,
The reality of reconciliation.

They are not disciples anymore,
They are witnesses.
The power of the resurrection has done that.

And through their witness,
The story spread.

It spread to different communities,
With different gifts,
Different challenges,
Different joys.

The community of Thomas.
The community Mary,
The communities of Matthew, Mark,
And Luke.

In the community of John,
The story thrived.
That community heard and told the story differently,
And just as powerfully.

They spoke of the power of love,
And the revealing of truth.
For them, it was love that cast out fear.

Love and peace.
In the midst of all their troubles,
Peace gave them courage,
And love gave them hope.

Those gifts are there for us as well,
Because their story is now our story.
We are only here because they told their story,
And now it is ours to enjoy and share.

We can do that by telling the old story.

And we can do that by telling the story
In new words,
In new places.
We can do that by the way we live into our own story now,
In this moment we would not have chosen.

How we encounter this moment in our life together
Can be a good news story,
If we let Jesus enter the room,
Breathing peace,
Bringing love.

We are at a moment of decision
In this community of faith.
We must decide how to live into our mission and vision now.

Is it by continuing with our plans
To build permanent supportive housing on our parking lot?
Is it by discontinuing the project?
Is there some third way
That I at least cannot see in this moment?

To some, the decision we face,
After a long discernment,
Remains or has become a clear choice.
For others, confusion remains,
Or a divided heart,
Or fear –
Fear of the unknown future
No matter what we decide.

However we go forward from this moment,
We will be changed.
Empowered? Diminished? Inspired?
I have no idea.

But I have a hope.
It is my hope
That whatever we decide,
Whichever way we turn,
We will find, as the disciples found,
That a shut room full of fear
Presents no obstacles to the risen Christ.

There are only two things that can hold us back.
Fear, and division.

I am not saying we will not disagree.
Clearly we do, and will continue to do so.
But if we reach towards a unity beyond division,
If we can hear the message
That we are God's children now,
Then we can trust that we will continue to become
The people God wants us to be.

There are only two things we need right now.
The peace of the risen Christ,
Which blows away all fear.

And the love of the One
Whose children we are,
Who is continually calling us forth
To become, and become,
And finally be revealed in our fullness.

Our full becoming won't happen here and now –
At least I don't think so.

The fullness of who we are
Is waiting in a future
That has not yet arrived.

But knowing that it is out there,
That there is more to us
Still to be discovered,
Can transform the way we live here and now,
The way we engage the questions,
The way we encounter the challenges,
The way we hold on to hope.

I still have no idea what will happen among us
In the hours and weeks and years to come.

But I don't need to know right now.
I don't need to know how we will decide to move ahead.

But I do long to know this.
Will the risen Christ enter the room with us,
Breathing peace?
Will we recognize ourselves
And each other
As beloved children of God?

Will we trust that there is more to be revealed
Than we can know right now?

The resurrection is always true.
That is the essence of our faith.
God can bring life out of anything –
Out of nothing,
Out of death.
God makes new love to spring up
Always and everywhere,
Which makes no sense,
But keeps the world alive.

The resurrection is always true.
It becomes real
When it happens in our own lives.

God will bring forth new life
In this place, no matter what.

God is not waiting for us to make the one and only right choice.
God is longing for us to open our story up
To let the power of the resurrection go to work in us.

I don't know what that will look like.

It might look like one of the options
We see before us now.
It might be something else.

If love binds us,
And peace holds us,
Then we will find a way forward.

This is the promise of the resurrection.
That promise is fulfilled
When we live the story here and now.