

## 1st Sunday After Easter

### Psalm 103

103 Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

<sup>2</sup> Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

<sup>3</sup> Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

<sup>4</sup> Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.

<sup>5</sup> Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

<sup>6</sup> The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

<sup>7</sup> He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

<sup>8</sup> The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

<sup>9</sup> He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever.

<sup>10</sup> He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

<sup>11</sup> For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

<sup>12</sup> As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

<sup>13</sup> Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

<sup>14</sup> For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

<sup>15</sup> As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

<sup>16</sup> For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

<sup>17</sup> But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children.

<sup>18</sup> To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

<sup>19</sup> The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

<sup>20</sup> Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

<sup>21</sup> Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

<sup>22</sup> Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.

### **First Lesson Isaiah 43:1-12**

43 But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.

<sup>4</sup> Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honorable, and I have loved thee: therefore, will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.

<sup>5</sup> Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west.

<sup>6</sup> I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.

<sup>7</sup> Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.

<sup>8</sup> Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

<sup>9</sup> Let all the nations be gathered together and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth.

<sup>10</sup> Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

<sup>11</sup> I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior.

<sup>12</sup> I have declared, and have saved, and I have shewed, when there was no strange god among you: therefore, ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.

### **Second Lesson: St. Luke 24:36-49**

<sup>36</sup> And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

<sup>37</sup> But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

<sup>38</sup> And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

<sup>39</sup> Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.

40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet.

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb.

43 And he took it and did eat before them.

44 And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

49 And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

## **Introduction**

Both of my parents grew up in England during the Second World War. When I was younger, I was fascinated by the tales of victory gardens, food rationing and how each person was allotted one egg, each, per week, with my grandmother sacrificing hers for the Yorkshire pudding on Sunday. They both told of neighbors who left to go and join the war effort, many of them not returning home and how death was a common occurrence. My father told me about being a teenager in London and the ear-shattering blare of air raid sirens and the chaos of bombs

exploding. He also shared with me how scared he was not knowing what would happen next. Living in the relative calm of Pocatello Idaho, it was hard to imagine such a time or experience. In the midst of the Blitz in London, people would describe the "silence" after the sirens stopped and how calming it was to not have the shrill sounds continue. But that silence was not peaceful; it was often filled with the dread of what buildings had been hit and who may have been killed. True peace only came when a loved one knocked on the door or called out from the rubble, showing them that they were indeed still alive. Nothing else mattered but the safety of their loved ones and friends.

When Jesus stands among the disciples and says, "Peace be unto you," He is not offering the world's definition of peace which is merely the absence of trouble or the silence following noise. He is offering the peace of His Presence. The disciples were afraid of what they thought was a ghost and Jesus reassures them who He is. Jesus shows them that His Peace is not a state of mind, but a Person standing in the room. It is this profound sense of peace that is beyond human comprehension, a peace which surpasses all understanding (Phil.4:7). It is a peace that God provides to those who are in Christ. It is this peace that Jesus offered to His disciples in our Second lesson reading for today.

## Body

**(Luke 24:36-49) Jesus appears in the upper room where the fearful and anxious disciples are gathered, fearing the Jewish authorities. He assures them of His peace, shows them His wounds as proof of His resurrection. He invites them to touch Him and shares meat with them as proof He is not a ghost. He then commissions them to continue His work.)**

Our second lesson reading from Luke, opens up with Jesus appearing to his disciples in a locked room, where the fearful and anxious disciples are gathered, fearing the Jewish authorities. They were terrified at seeing Him and thinking He was a ghost or spirit. Knowing their fear He states, "Peace be unto you" (v. 36.) He then shows them His hands and feet (v.40) and eats a piece of fish and honeycomb with them (v.42). This is a crucial moment, as it signifies His resurrected, physical presence and offers comfort and assurance to them in the midst of their fear and doubt. It proves to them that our Lord has risen and now stands before them, just as He had foretold. The peace He offers, it is a specific kind of peace, rooted in faith and God's grace, which is so profound and transformative it transcends human comprehension. Jesus shows them His wounds, providing another piece of tangible evidence that He is indeed the resurrected Christ. In Verse 45 it states, *"Then opened He their understanding, that they might*

*understand the scriptures*” (v.45). This proof is crucial for their faith and understanding that He is indeed risen from the dead and what must come next.

Jesus then commissions the disciples, as they must now continue His work. In verse 47 and 48 he says *“that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things* (v. 47-48).

In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus commands His Apostles to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations”* (Matt. 28:19). Jesus offers all people a new life with God and repeating the transformational promises of a Risen Christ. All of us here today can be reassured of the same promise. Last week we proclaimed, “He is Risen, The Lord is Risen Indeed!” and now we move on with the knowledge of His resurrection. Many of us, like the disciples huddled in that room, live with fear and anxiety. Keep in mind that the disciples were men who all had fled in fear for their own lives when Jesus was arrested. Peter had denied the Lord three times. They all had doubted the initial reports of Jesus’ resurrection (Luke 24:11). We too have done things we ought not to have done and often in fear we have not lived our life in ways that glorify God. It would certainly be understandable if Jesus had greeted them with scorn and rebuke at their behavior, but the Lord graciously extended, and then underscored, His peace to them.

We too can experience the Peace of God amidst our fears and worries. Remember what the angel of the Lord said to the faithful women who sought Jesus early on the first Easter day. “*Do not be afraid.*” We can remember how Christ showed the disciples His wounds and we can remember His pain and suffering on the Cross. These wounds remind us of how He suffered for us but also His triumph over death and His offer of eternal life with Him. We can share in the peace that is offered, a peace that comes from knowing the Risen Lord is with us.

### **Action**

Peace with God is foundational in your mission for Him. You cannot begin to serve the Lord unless you first are reconciled to Him through the peace that Christ won on the cross.

In his letter to the Romans, St. Paul tells Christians that “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1).*” In other words, when we trust in Christ, we enter into a new relationship of peace with God.

As we reflect on the joy of last Sunday and our lives moving forward, we can be assured that our Risen Savior has given us His peace. Our Risen Savior has given us tangible evidence of His resurrection. That historical fact should be at the center of our witness for Christ. The message of the gospel is that Christ died for

our sins and was raised again according to the Scriptures. While Jesus can and will help us to endure life, that is not the basis for our belief and faith. Believe in Jesus because you are a sinner and understand He is the only Savior we have. He is risen and is coming again to judge the living and the dead. We can proclaim the gospel with confidence because we have great proof of His Resurrection. The Resurrection is not a past event to be debated; it is a present reality to be experienced. He is Risen! This is not just a statement of past facts, but the declaration of a present reality that defines the Church's identity. Christ stands among us today offering His peace, showing us His wounds, and sharing His table. He is the Host of the future, calling us to be His witnesses.

Finally, as with the disciples, our Risen Lord has given us great purpose. Jesus came to establish the Father's kingdom by inviting people to enter into a relationship of obedience and to do His will. By sending us in the same way that He was sent, His purpose becomes our marching orders. We should live in obedience to Christ and teach, or help, others to do the same. We should remember the commandments of God and walk henceforth in His Holy ways. We should remember how Jesus taught us to live and pray, forgiving others so that we too may be forgiven of our sins. On this First Sunday after Easter, we should remember His sacrifice on the Cross for our redemption and be thankful, not just in our words, but by how we live our lives.

## Conclusion

Our reading from Luke is a short but powerful passage. We see Jesus's presence despite the fear and worry of the disciples. Jesus gives the gift of peace and presents the mission of forgiveness empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Every Sunday we come to church and remember His sacrifice is a mini-Easter. We encounter the Risen Lord, and then we are sent out with the words: "*Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.*"

So, with renewed strength, understanding, and joy in the Resurrection of our Lord, and in His great mission for us, let us resolve to continue without failing to do His work here on earth each and every day. As we continue, please hold fast in faith and pray that the Peace of God which passeth all understanding will keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:25).