

# “Peace Be with You!”

Revelation 1:4-8 & John 20:19-31

Pastor James York

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Life is like rock climbing. We grow, learn, and love to go higher and higher. Numerous times in life it all falls apart. We free fall towards the ground until the rope catches us providing a safe landing. We repeat this process over and over throughout our life.

The rope is like the peace of God. Whenever things fall apart, Jesus saves us with peace. Our English word “peace” is weak for the robust word “shalom” originally used by Jesus. Shalom is peace and completeness, fulfillment, order, perfection, reconciliation, wholeness, pure love, exuberant joy, harmonious community, complete truth, well-being, tranquility, prosperity, security, a blessing, a manifestation of divine grace, a permeation of glory, a meta-value of every goodness, the pinnacle of abundant life. God’s ever-flowing peace preserves and sustains the cosmos. God’s peace establishes equality between all people and adopts us into God’s family. The disciples heard all these aspects when Jesus said, **“Peace be with you.”** Peace resonated with all the transformation experiences they had with Jesus. Peace reminded them of all the healings, forgiveness, and nourishment with Jesus.

No matter how much peace one experiences, even spending three years with Jesus, life still gets chaotic and we find ourselves plummeting towards death until God’s peace catches us. The disciples were overwhelmed with hate, paralyzed by fear, and devastated by grief as they huddled behind locked doors. Jesus caught them by appearing and saying “Peace be with you.” **John 20:19 NRSV “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.””**

Jesus took on all the fear, hate, violence, brokenness, disease, discord, pain, suffering, tears on the cross. Jesus buried all of that, and death, when he descended through death, then Jesus rose resurrecting every form of goodness, life, and love. The resurrected Jesus appeared to the disciples and said, **“Peace be with You.”**

John writes in Revelation, **John 1:4-8 NLT “This letter is from John to the seven churches in the province of Asia. Grace and peace to you from the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come; from the sevenfold Spirit before God’s throne; and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness to these things, the first to rise from the dead, and the ruler of all the kings of the world. All glory to Jesus who loves us and has freed us from our sins by shedding his blood for us. Jesus has made us a Kingdom of priests for God. All glory and power to Jesus forever and ever! Amen. Look! Jesus comes with the clouds of heaven. And everyone will see Jesus—even those who pierced him. And all the nations of the world will mourn for Jesus. Yes! Amen! “I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end,” says the Lord God. “I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One.”**

John declared, **“everyone will see Jesus—even those who pierced him; all nations.”** Everyone will be caught by God’s peace. Despite the best efforts of all of humanity we still are falling to our demise, but God will always catch, everyone of us, resurrect us, and fill us with peace. We live in the tumultuous in-between time. God is Alpha and Omega. God’s first word brought creation into being. God’s eternal word resurrects all of creation and permeates all with peace.

**John 20:19-31 NRSV “When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After Jesus said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When Jesus had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.” A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then Jesus said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not**

**seen and yet have come to believe.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in Jesus’ name.”**

Jesus wounds are an affirmation that every form of death has been overcome by God’s boundless love. Jesus caught the falling disciples with peace. Next, Jesus commissions the disciples, and us, to catch other people. We are peace makers for the world. We cannot do this by ourselves, so Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into us. In the beginning, God breathed life into Eve and Adam. Today, God sustains us with the breath of life. For eternity God will breathe abundant peaceful life into everyone.

With every breath we draw in the peace of God. We are set free to breathe out all that diminishes life. We breathe in grace. We breathe out punishment, blame, and retribution. We breathe in forgiveness. One’s experience of peace grows as they forgive, starting with forgiveness of self: Letting go of guilt, what ifs, if only I would have; Stopping negative self talk so we are free to be the wonderful, creative, loving peace bearing masterpiece God created us to be. One’s experience of peace grows as they forgive others: Vast amounts of energy are consumed by our strife with others; Stopping division enables each person to create goodness producing a synergy of harmonious love. Imagine if your every thought was encouraging, your every action life enhancing, your every word life building. Forgiveness propels us there. Jesus infuses us with the power to forgive ourselves and others.

The cosmos is moving towards harmony. All people are moving to community. Resurrection is much more than an isolated miracle. Resurrection is eternal loving relation with God, all people and every goodness. Jesus resurrection gives us a glimpse of our astounding future.

Martin Luther King Jr said, “Easter comes out ringing in terms that we all hear if we seek to hear it, that the souls of people are immortal. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have fit testimony that this earthly life is not the end, that death is just something of a turn in the road, that life moves down a continual moving river, and that death is just a little turn in the river, that this earthly life is merely an embryonic prelude to a new awakening, that death is not a period which ends this great sentence of life but a comma that punctuates it to loftier significance. That is what Easter says. That is the meaning of Easter. That is the question that Easter answers—that death is not the end.”

Thomas Merton said, “The power of Easter has burst upon us with the resurrection of Christ. Now we find in ourselves a strength which is not our own and which is freely given to us whenever we need it. Now we no longer strive to be good because we have to, because it is a duty, but because our joy is to please God who has given all God’s love to us! Now our life is full of meaning!”

Richard Rohr said, “The true self is the Risen Christ in you and hence, your true self is not afraid of death. Because your true self has already been to hell and back.”

Susanna Metz says, “Let us lead each other out of all that confines us on Easter to dance in the brilliance of our hope, our joy and sing out the deepest desires of our collective hearts—that our God is alive! Alive in each and every one of us!”

There is no quote, experience, metaphor; no word; no container large enough for what Easter means. And there is no detail in any life too trivial to be redeemed by our Risen Lord. Jesus’ resurrection collects everything, embraces all, into the joy of glorious eternal life. The resurrection introduces a turn into our life, a turn in every life, a turn in every story to peace. Our wounds remind us of all that has brought us to this moment. God invites us to rise daily with Christ. Death only appears to be the final word in our life. Resurrection proclaims that peace permeated eternal life is the eternal word.

Easter catches us every time we fall and gives us the courage to climb again and again. We are permeated with peace, forgiven, and filled with the Holy Spirit to continually shift our focus from death to life. In our daily life, it often seems death is in control; strife, fear, and hate bombard us. Jesus’ resurrection proclaims life is in control; love, joy, and peace are eternal. Each of us is commissioned to climb higher by focusing on life, to be wild in our striving, confident in our ability to reach new heights, to take bold leaps of faith. All of heaven is cheering us on. When we reach new heights, heaven rejoices. When we fall, Jesus will catch us, give us peace, and encourage us to climb again. Amen