



Sermon from  
April 12 2026  
Second Sunday of Easter  
Pastor Amy Vigesaa

\*\*\*\*\*

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

\*\*\*\*\*

“Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure.”

That sounds like peace. This past week, I was out of the office. I scheduled a week off for myself at the recommendation of my spiritual director. She told me I needed time to myself, and time away with God. So, part of my week off was spent at St. Paul’s Monastery. I attended morning, midday, and evening prayer with the sisters of the Benedictine Center. I walked a beautiful prayer labyrinth modeled after the one in France. I lingered through the art displays. I rested. I wrote in my journal. I even dabbled with some watercolor paints I brought with me. I spent time with God. Just me. It was a peaceful 24 hours. However, at one moment during my stay, I checked the time on my phone and happened to see a news headline stating a deadline President Trump gave for Iran to respond to his demands or face total destruction of critical infrastructure. Nothing like massive military strikes to disrupt a person’s peace. It was 6:45pm. The deadline was 7pm. I prayed. Like many others, I prayed desperate prayers

for diplomacy, for delay, for peace. 7:01pm I checked the news. A 2-week ceasefire. A pause. It was not peace. But it was better than the alternative. Yesterday, Pope Leo called for a Global Prayer Vigil for Peace across all faiths, acknowledging that our world is in turmoil as violence and military aggression increase, and global indifference to death grows. He has been told to get in line; the Vatican has been instructed by our government officials to get on the right side. But he's on the side of peace, and that is the right side. Peace is beyond us, it seems.

It feels like there are wars everywhere, people displaced, violence and disease, political upheaval, power plays, people starving, and that's just the global news. We can look at our personal lives and there would be just as much happening- family discord, job insecurity, financial concerns, illness, addiction, internal upheaval- all threatening our peace.

Peace is beyond us, it seems, but it is not beyond God. That is good news for us today.

Three times in our reading today, Jesus says, "Peace be with you." "Shalom" in Hebrew. "Eirene" in Greek. It was much more than a greeting. Peace was just as illusive for the disciples 2000 years ago as it is for us today. Jesus was crucified three days earlier- they lived in violent, oppressive times. In fact, they lived in fear locked away in an upper room thinking they might be the next to be arrested. They hid away, behind closed doors, sheltering in place. Thomas

was probably the unlucky one sent to find food. “Peace be with you,” Jesus said. It was much more than a greeting. Saying “Peace be with you” was to voice a desire for their lives and relationships to be made whole- as one description says, “when all essential parts are joined together,” “set at one”. Jesus greets us with this desire fulfilled in his death and resurrection. We can now be at peace with God. We can now experience peace within ourselves and with each other. We can be “at-one.” That is good news! And yet, there are things that get in the way of us truly experiencing this peace Jesus offers- there are doors that shut out peace- as so clearly displayed in our reading today.

Fear is the first door that shuts out the possibility of peace. The disciples are locked away in fear. What holds you captive? Where do you feel trapped? What are you afraid of? All of us have our rooms where we hide away our worries and concerns, our fears and anxieties.

Jesus can easily enter those locked rooms. Jesus can come and offer peace and breathe on us the gift of His presence. Will we accept his offer? We hold tightly to our fears, longing for safety and security. But this isn't a story about safety and security- it's a story about peace, and that's a different thing. Jesus breathed on the disciples saying “Receive the Holy Spirit.” He breathed on them. I don't know about you, but when I'm afraid or anxious or feeling trapped- breath is the thing I lack. It can feel like there is no air in my lungs, that I can't get a deep breath, that I can't get an easy inhale. Jesus breathed on them. He offered them what they didn't have- breath, peace, Spirit. And then

he said “As I have been sent, so I send you.” Jesus sends them out of the room- freeing them from the fear that locked them away.

Then Jesus says something that seems out of place- he talks about forgiveness and the power to forgive sins and retain sins. I used to think Jesus was giving the disciples authority in this statement, but I think he might simply be stating a fact relating to our ability to know peace. We can forgive sin or we can hold onto the hurt, pain, and injury caused by sin. Forgiveness allows for peace. Our lack of forgiveness, our inability to forgive, robs us of peace. Our need to blame, punish, and hold grudges is the second door that shuts out peace. Now, “forgiveness does not erase consequences or negate justice.” -Theologian Yung Suk Kim insists. “It involves offering grace and mercy, with genuine repentance and justice from those who have wronged others. It is following God’s example of love.” Forgiveness opens the door for peace not only in our relationships, but in our hearts. “My heart is glad, my soul rejoices, my body also rests secure.” Peace.

There is something significant that Jesus does in this appearance to the disciples, as well as later when he appears to Thomas. Jesus showed them his wounds. Even in the resurrection, Jesus still had scars from the nails and the sword that pierced his side. He let them touch them- Jesus told Thomas to put his hand in his side and his fingers in the marks on his hands. Jesus invited the disciples to touch his wounds. Scripture tells us “By his wounds we are healed.” Might healing be our peace? Our unwillingness to touch the wounds of Christ

is another door that shuts out peace. And here's what I mean by that: we are far more comfortable with a risen Jesus, triumphant and glorious, than we are with a risen Jesus who still bears the marks of death, who still carries the wounds from the violence done to him. But this is the Christ who chooses to suffer with us, who knows our pain, and who also reminds us of the damage humanity inflicts on each other. Might knowing the woundedness of Christ help us show Christ our own wounds? We can share our own scars with Jesus and find healing, find peace. We can confess our sins and know forgiveness. And as we do, we will know "a new birth into a living hope," as First Peter tells us. We can know healing; we can know peace when we touch the wounded Christ.

Last door. I would rather not label this last door doubt, but that is the word we're given in Jesus' interaction with Thomas. I wrestle with that word "doubt" because I think most of us have a relationship with our questions about Jesus that can last a lifetime. Even in our belief, we still have questions we come back to time and time again. But maybe that's different than doubt, maybe our questions keep us pursuing God. Maybe our desire for understanding keeps us longing to know God. Doubt can shut the door on peace when it keeps us from relationship with Jesus; when it becomes a refusal to believe the witness of our trusted friends; when it manifests as an ultimatum like "I won't believe unless..." Jesus tells Thomas gently, "Do not doubt, but believe." Doubt is a door that shuts out peace when it shuts out Jesus. Because Jesus is peace.

Jesus is able to walk through every door that shuts out peace in our lives, just as he did for the disciples. Just as he did for Thomas. Jesus says, “Peace be with you.” It is much more than a greeting. It is a desire for you to be whole, to have all the essential parts of your being- heart, soul and body, joined together with Christ, for you to be at-one with God and others. “Peace be with you,” Jesus says. And we are invited to breathe deep the presence of the His Spirit, to know the power of forgiveness, to touch his wounds and share our own. We are given everything we need to be at peace when we believe in the One who is our peace, even with our questions, even when the world is in chaos, even when we cannot see what’s next. Open the doors. Then we will be able to say with the psalmist, “My heart is glad, my soul rejoices, and my body rests secure” because the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus makes us whole, makes us at- one. Peace be with you. Amen.