



Easter 2-April 11, 2021  
Baltic and East Nidaros Lutheran Parish  
John 20:19-31

## “Again in the House”

-Sermon by Pastor Randall J. Questad

Grace and peace to you from God our father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

*A week later his disciples were again in the house.*

*And some of you are back in this house one week after you just heard the proclamation that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. Jesus has overcome death. Jesus is alive. Just as he had told them. The young man who was in the tomb told the three women that Jesus had gone ahead of his disciples to Galilee. Jesus was present here last week in his word and in the sacrament of Holy Communion and Jesus has returned this week to deliver you from fear and into faith by speaking to you again today.*

*The first half of the gospel for today, up to verse 26, takes place on the evening of Easter morning. Jesus who arose from the tomb, but no one had seen yet, begins to make his appearances to those who were afraid. On that evening, Jesus appears to 10 of his disciples. He had to appear to them. They were not looking for him. He had not received an invitation from them to join them at their house for supper. Jesus knew better than to knock on the locked door of the house to see if they would let him in after identifying himself. Even though these followers of Jesus had quit following him on Good Friday, Jesus had not given up on them and he went looking for them. These disciples were like Jonah who had gone the other way when he was told to preach to the people of Nineveh. Jonah's resistance to preach forgiveness to the people of Nineveh didn't stop God's persistence for finding Jonah and sending him to do what he had been called to do and Jesus persisted in finding his fearful followers until they were equipped to preach forgiveness to others.*

*Jesus' first task when he arose from the dead was not to find different disciples to replace those he first called. Instead, Jesus went to find the disciples that he already had chosen to make confident preachers out of them. These disciples were hidden as deep in this house on that night as Jonah was in the depths of the big fish that had swallowed him. But nothing was going to deter Jesus from making disciples out of these frightened fishermen.*

*Mark tells us that the disciples were hiding because they were afraid of the Jews. This certainly was true. These disciples witnessed what happened to Jesus. Peter was specifically identified as a follower of Jesus by a bystander on Good Friday when he denied knowing Jesus three times. Words that Jesus had spoken to them before his crucifixion were ringing again in their ears like, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” They had to wonder if following Jesus leads to death by crucifixion, their better choice was to live in fear than to die.*

*But the one who appeared at the house they were hiding that evening had not come to scare them more. It was Jesus himself, who came and stood among them. Jesus didn't appear and waited for his disciples to confess to him that they had denied and deserted him. Jesus broke the awkward silence first and said, “Peace be with you.” Jesus forgave them before they repented. It was after he forgave them that Jesus showed them his hands and his side. And what did the disciples see when they looked at the scars in Jesus' hands and side? They saw a reflection of their sin that was now*

taken from them and it was now on Jesus. Seeing the wounds of Jesus that they caused was their confession of guilt and shame.

The elderly man in the hearing aid commercial on tv is pretty clever. Before he gets his hearing aids he honestly cannot hear his son tell him that he loves him. But after he receives the hearing aids and can hear clearly, he still pretends that he cannot hear and makes his son repeat "I love you". To which the elderly man replies "I heard you the first time. I just wanted to hear it again."

The disciples weren't hard of hearing or pretending that they didn't hear the son of God tell them "Peace be with you." The risen son of God knew that they needed to hear Jesus repeat, "Peace be with you." And to seal the deal of his pronouncement of forgiveness, Jesus breathed on his disciples and they received the Holy Spirit. Now that they had been forgiven, Jesus gave them the authority to unlock the fears of others by forgiving their sins which we now call the Office of the Keys. They were now going to be sent out of the locked house to find other followers of Jesus who were living in fear and were waiting to hear "Peace be with you" from these now forgiven followers of Jesus.

There may be someone who is waiting to hear this good news from you. You too hold the office of the keys. Jesus knew that the disciples and Peter specifically were waiting to hear that they were forgiven. However, on the evening of Easter there were only ten of the twelve disciples present when Jesus came and stood among them. Judas as you recall had betrayed Jesus and we are told that he had repented for what he had done. He gave the money back that he had received for betraying Jesus, but Judas was never absolved of his sin. That still leaves one disciple who wasn't present to see Jesus and hear him say, "Peace be with you."

The second half of today's gospel shifts the attention to Thomas and what happened a week later. The disciples were again in the same house and this time Thomas was also present. Thomas as you may recall has received the label of "Doubting Thomas" although the whole group of disciples could have been given the label the "Doubting Disciples". The others had already seen the marks of their sin on the body of Jesus when Thomas was absent. Jesus had also chosen Thomas to spread this word of forgiveness to others. So, Jesus appears again, in the same house, with many of the same people present as the week before, but this week Thomas was also there to hear the same words from Jesus that the other disciples had heard a week earlier. The other disciples didn't leave the room to just let Thomas hear Jesus speak to him. They acted like the elderly man in the hearing aid commercial who welcomed hearing the same words again as if for the first time.

The other disciples send a message to Jesus that Thomas had not believed what they had told them. Jesus went to find Thomas just as he did to the other fearful doubting disciples. Jesus now appeared to Thomas and said, "Peace be with you." Then as Thomas was looking at the wounds he had made in Jesus, Jesus delivered him into faith by telling him to put his finger in his side. It was then that Thomas did even more than the other disciples by confessing his faith by saying, "My Lord and my God".

John tells us that what happened when Jesus was in the house of the disciples and when he was again in the house a week later was recorded so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and through believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus has done the same for you today. He has returned to this house to remove any fears that you may have about where Jesus went after he arose from the grave. Jesus is again in this house to declare to you that he has defeated sin. He has overcome the grave. Jesus has overcome all barriers between you and him with his resurrection from the dead and come and stood among us again today. Jesus speaks to you again today, "Peace be with you." Amen