

What Would You Do?

If Jesus were to suddenly, without warning, appear in church this morning, what would you do? What would you say? We would probably begin with a bit of skepticism. **“Is this really Jesus, THE Jesus that we’ve heard so much about?”** You might wonder if your eyes were deceiving you, if this was just a figment of your imagination. Is this for real?

Maybe the better question to ask is what would JESUS do, what would JESUS say to us?

Do you remember the last time Jesus saw those disciples and what they were doing?

The last time most of them had seen Jesus was four days ago, when Jesus was arrested. **What were those brave disciples of Jesus doing who had said along with Peter, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you” (Mark 14:21)?** What were the disciples doing?

They were running away from Jesus, not wanting to be associated with him. Their fear of being identified as a follower of Jesus had not diminished over the last couple of days especially after hearing and seeing what had happened to Jesus.

We heard, **“The disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders”** (John 20:19). They were afraid that what happened to Jesus might happen to them.

But now as Jesus stood in front of them, their fear may have shifted a bit. Instead of being afraid of what the Jewish leaders were going to do to them, **they might have been afraid of what Jesus would do or at the very least say to them.**

And we know what that’s like, don’t we? God knows everything about you, how does that initially make you feel at even the thought of having to stand before that all-knowing God?

Jesus knows what you have said to others, the lies and untruths you have spoken.

Jesus knows those times when we were afraid to be identified as a follower of Christ.

Jesus knows what you can do and what you choose not to do to spread the Gospel.

Jesus knows the motives behind the things that we do that on the surface look so good and helpful to others, but are actually prompted by sinful pride, arrogance or fear.

Jesus knows it all.

Now let me ask you again what would you do, what would you say, if Jesus suddenly, without warning, was standing here before you today?

Like Jesus’ disciples on Easter evening, it’s not so much about **what WE would say or what WE would do. What is most important is what JESUS says and what JESUS has done.** What were the first words out of Jesus’ mouth as he stood before these sinful skeptics? **“Peace be with you!” Peace? Really? Didn’t they deserve to be punished? Yes.**

Without a doubt that is what they and ever sinner deserve from a holy and just God.

But what the sinner deserves, Jesus has taken. That is the peace that Jesus announces – the peace of sins forgiven – peace with God.

After all, that’s why Jesus came into this world. Do you remember the announcement that the angel made on the night of Jesus’ birth? **“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests”** (Luke 2:14). Jesus came to bring peace to everyone. It required the perfect Son of God going to the cross and taking the punishment of our sins. Because Jesus has been punished in our place, we are forever free from sin’s punishment. **“I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).** What a truly profound thought that because of Jesus, God has chosen not to remember your sins. The God who knows all things, knows nothing of your sins. They are gone! Forever forgotten!

That is the peace that Jesus announced to his disciples on Easter evening, assuring them that they had nothing to fear from him – their sins were forgiven. That is the peace that Jesus announces to us, assuring us that we have nothing to fear as we stand before Jesus – our sins are forgiven. Jesus has called us to be his voice, to deliver the message of sins forgiven and peace with God.

The gospel of John gives us kind of a condensed version of Jesus’ appearance to his disciples on Easter evening, the four verses that you heard in our gospel lesson.

The gospel-writer Luke provides a bit of an expanded description of this account, 13 verses long in Luke 24:36-49, and Luke’s account provides some additional details. Right after Jesus says, **“Peace be with you”** Luke says that Jesus did two things.

First Jesus showed his disciples his nail-pierced hands and feet along with his sword-pierced side, and then Jesus ate some fish to prove that he was not just some type of spirit or figment of their imagination, but that it was really him, really there, with a real body.

Jesus could have easily said, **“Believe me! It’s me.”** But Jesus knew his disciples. He knew their doubts and fears and skepticism, and he gave them these additional assurances that he really was alive, that this really was him, that he really had done exactly as he promised.

While Jesus has not chosen to make personal, visible appearances to every Christian like he did for those disciples on Easter evening, Jesus has given us something that shows that he knows us so well, something that he certainly would not have had to give to us, but in his love he has chosen to do so.

He has given to us the Lord’s Supper, Holy Communion. Think about it. **We regularly hear the announcement of God’s forgiveness of our sins in our worship services. We read of God’s love and forgiveness in the Bible. In the Lord’s Supper Jesus has given to us something that we can see, something that we can taste, something tangible that assures of his love and forgiveness. He gives to us bread and wine and along with it in a miraculous way, the very body and blood that he sacrificed at the cross for the forgiveness of our sins.**

Through this Sacrament God announces to us, **“Peace be with you!”** Like Jesus demonstrated with his disciples on Easter evening, does Jesus know us or what? In the Lord’s Supper Jesus assures us that He really has done exactly all he has promised – that we are at peace with God. The Lord’s supper gives us spiritual energy that we need to deal with the fallen world.

The same is true when it comes to our Christian lives and the way that we interact with each other can , energize you or exhaust you. In our first lesson from Colossians 3 the Apostle Paul wrote, **“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”** (Colossians 3:15).

The peace of Christ is the energy for our Christians lives.

The peace of Christ, the message that you are forgiven of every sin because Jesus lived, died and rose for you, is what empowers all of those different Christian characteristics that the apostle Paul talked about in those verses.

The peace of Christ is what enables compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness, love and gratefulness. When we are struggling to show those things in our lives, the first thing to do is to check our energy source. Are we as Paul tells us, **“Let[ting] the message of Christ dwell among you richly”** (Colossians 3:16)?

Is the message of Christ’s forgiveness something that we are hearing regularly?

Is the message of Christ actually something that we think about as we consider in the decisions we make in what we will and won’t do?

Is the message of Christ something that we are growing in as we read our Bibles and grow in our knowledge and understanding of who our God is, what our God has done for us, and what our God wants for us?

When we are continually being refueled by the peace of Christ, it takes control our hearts, our minds, our attitudes and actions. My life and my relationships need to be reflecting the heart of Christ – putting the Lord first and others second, freely forgiving, selflessly serving, trusting my Savior and his will for me. Yes, the peace of Christ frees us and fuels us to live in gratefulness to our Savior.

I’m not sure what I would say or do if Jesus suddenly appeared here in church this morning. But I thank God that we do know what he would say to us. Like those disciples on Easter evening he continues to say to us, **“Peace be with you!”** May that peace of Christ free you from fear and fuel you to live in gratefulness to your risen and living Savior. Amen.