

## Jesus is not in lockdown

### John 20:19-31

I thought I would share with you some words from a Pastoral Letter from Bishop Justin and Bishop Ellie. *'Christ is risen! We hope and pray that you have experienced the nearness of Christ over the Easter weekend. This year the words of John 20:19 are so real – "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"*

*This year many of us have sat in anxious social isolation, in our locked rooms. But our Easter story reminds us that Jesus is not in lockdown – that He breaks through the walls that divide to bring peace.'* We re-imagine the resurrection of Jesus to understand that Lockdown does not inhibit his ability to be at work during this pandemic.

Three powerful words to hang on to.

1. **Peace.** He always offered peace when he came into their Lockdown. There are many things that Jesus could have emphasised when he appeared to his disciples. It is notable that the consistent message he offered was one of peace. Not only that, he offers it not once but twice. We are all facing Covid 19 but many have additional storms to weather as well during this time. For some it is the increased anxiety of knowing that their age makes them particularly vulnerable. For others underlying health issues are a worry. For others economic hardship has been added to the equation. For others the bubble isolation adds additional stress to relationships that were particularly vulnerable prior to this.

We may be facing the "perfect" storm, but Jesus offers the perfect peace. It is not a peace from God; some trickle feed we get – just a few drops to keep us going. We are told in Phil 4:7 that it is the "peace *of* God". What we receive is of the very nature of God. It is a peace that is given during fear and anxiety not apart from it. It is the peace that finds Jesus sleeping in a boat in a storm while the disciples are terrified.

This peace cannot be understood apart from the resurrection. Belief in the resurrection and experiencing this peace go hand in glove. I encourage you to receive what is being offered to you.

2. **Hope.** *As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! (v20)* The one thing the resurrection does is turn our normal understanding of life and death on its head. This pandemic tells us that in many cases death is having the final say. The resurrection says – death you think you have won but you haven't. The pandemic will end. We will be scarred by it but there will be new life beyond it. It was a scarred Jesus that stood in their midst.

I suspect that there is a deep connection between joy and hope. The one will strengthen the other. Reach for both.

3. **Power.** I was lying in bed this morning half asleep thinking about this sermon when a thought occurred to me. We are very conscious of being in Lockdown now but have many lived for years in spiritual lockdown? That the power of the resurrection and its application to our lives and through us to the lives of others is somehow blocked?

It is a powerful affirmation of Jesus belief and trust in us that he says: *“As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you”*(v21). Same God, same mission, same call. Jesus calls us out of our locked room where we tell ourselves that we are not good enough, don’t know the Bible well enough, don’t pray as much as we could or should and I had a row with my kids/spouse today so how on earth could Jesus possibly use me?

Paul grasped this and clearly wants us to grasp this when he wrote to the Ephesians (Chapter 1) and said this: *“<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms.”*

I cannot give you three easy steps as to how this works out in your life. All I can say is that it will lead us out of the spiritual bubble where we feel safe and secure and feel that we have our spiritual journey under control. Ask God where the nudge is for you to step into some resurrection adventure!