

OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH

2nd Sunday of Easter

John 20:31

Iowa City, Iowa

April 3, 2016

“The Waiting is Over”

JJ

What comes to mind when I say “Waiting Room?” You may see yourself in a doctor’s office or a hospital—waiting for an appointment, waiting for results, waiting for a loved one to get out of surgery. You don’t know what the results will be. Prepare for the worst. Hope for the best. That is what some would say. There are a lot of emotions involved when you don’t know what comes next.

The disciples were in a “waiting room” of a different sort. They were waiting for results, you could say, but their hopes were very limited. “Prepared for the worst” might describe their mindset. Here’s what they knew: their leader, their friend and Savior was dead and buried. They had heard rumors the tomb was empty but they had no evidence of that and they had not seen Him, though some said He was alive.

They were waiting—waiting for evidence; and while they waited, they experienced many emotions: FEAR. The fear of arrest and possible execution; the fear of an unknown future. GUILT. They had failed Jesus in recent days—denying Him, fleeing from Him, failing to pray with Him when He needed them most. DOUBT. Particularly Thomas who doubted Jesus could be alive.

Do those emotions sound familiar? We have our share of fears: Fear of change. Fear of the unknown. Fear of failure. Fear of speaking our faith out loud. Fear of speaking the name of Jesus to another person. Fear of a terrorist attack. Fear of this year’s presidential elections.

We carry our share of guilt: Like the disciples, we have failed our Lord in many ways—passing up opportunities to share His love in word and deed, following the voice and opinions of society and this world instead of God’s voice, joining the world in not taking sin seriously, thus diminishing the value of the cross to us.

We entertain doubts at times and insist on needing some proof before we will believe God’s Word and promises.

For those first disciples their “waiting room experience” became something amazing as Jesus came into their midst and spoke four beautiful words: “Peace be with you.” As He showed them his wounded hands and side, He was speaking to their fears; He was speaking to their guilt; He was speaking to any doubt they had. They were transferred from the waiting room to the “overjoyed room” as they realized Jesus was very much alive, all His promises were true and His Word could be completely trusted.

Thomas, however, was the exception. He was still waiting, waiting for evidence. He got what he was looking for a week after the other disciples; but Jesus said to him and the rest of the disciples: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

Thomas did make his powerful confession: “My Lord and my God!”

So, where are you right now? Are you still in the “waiting room?”

Some of us are still waiting. We may have doubts; we may be waiting for more evidence, like Thomas. So what do we have right now?

“...these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

WRITTEN. WORDS.

Jesus told the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16); in the end, Lazarus goes to heaven and the rich man to Hades. The rich man pleads with Father Abraham to send Lazarus to his 5 brothers “so that he may warn them, lest they come into this place of torment. But Abraham said, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent. He said to them, If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead. ”

WRITTEN. WORDS.

Letter writing is really a lost art these days, which definitely dates the following story that is told of a couple who was separated for several months. In each other’s absence, what they did was read each other’s love letters. Though they were not together in person, the words conveyed the truth, the reality of their love for each other.

WRITTEN. WORDS.

Some have called the Bible God’s love letter. What does He say to us today? “Peace be with you.” These words spoken to those first disciples still carry great power for us today. Jesus’ ‘Peace be with you’ speaks to our guilt, our burden of sin. Some of us are still in the “waiting room” of guilt—waiting for forgiveness to come our way and wipe the slate clean. We have those nagging sins, some very old memories of deeds done in the past, those current evil thoughts and words that seem to be cemented in our minds. Lord, when will You come and help me wait no more for the forgiveness I so desperately need?

And Jesus says, “Today I come to you...Take eat this is my body, take drink this is my blood given and shed for you...FOR YOU...for the forgiveness of your sins. Wait no longer for forgiveness; Peace be with you!

Jesus’ ‘Peace be with you’ speaks to our fears. Some of us are still in the “waiting room” of fear that just won’t go away—the unknowns, the ‘what ifs’ of life have us paralyzed. And Jesus says, “Today I come to you and assure you I am with you always to give you strength in the midst of life’s fears and uncertainties. Wait no longer in fear; Peace be with you.

The message of Easter is that now we are empowered to move from the “waiting room” to the “witnessing room” of life, sharing the good news of forgiveness, the good news of peace in the midst of doubts and fears. The waiting is over. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! O Holy Spirit, empower our witnessing in the name of Jesus, who lives to bring us peace for today and for eternity. Amen.