

Easter II

“Peace be with you.”

The disciples of Jesus, out of fear, are hiding behind closed doors. They were not sure who this man Jesus was. They had followed him, they had listened to his stories, they watched how folks who came into his presence were healed; he purportedly even raised one man from the dead. But the authorities had come and taken him and they killed him, and who knows, we may be next on their list. What are we going to do; how are we going to defend ourselves and where can we go that we will be safe? Into that fear and uncertainty and anxiety comes, in some fashion, the presence of Jesus and he says to them, “Peace be with you” and their lives change.

I am not certain that if we could have taped the event that the disciples would have been of one mind as to what happened. They all heard, within the depths of their being, Jesus' words, “Peace be with you” and those words represented for them, God's presence and God's love, both of which calmed their fear, assuaged their anxiety and emboldened them to re-engage life. There are numerous passages in holy scripture that inform us of the significance of the Peace of God, and indeed we are told by our Lord that it is when we assume the role of peacemakers, we are most blessed.

The Old Testament understanding of creation states that in the beginning all was chaos and at a specific moment God breathed upon that chaos and brought order out of chaos which gave vent to peace and allowed all the creatures, including man, to be at one with one another. It is a grand allegory, but we soon learn that Adam and Eve and the snake could not stand God's peace; they wanted something of their own and they grasped for it and each of them in their grasping fell apart and this wonderful place called Eden disintegrated into chaos. The disciples came together in a room but in a sense fell apart because the core of life, God's presence, God's peace, God's love, seem to have disappeared. Their Lord was taken from them, but in a sense they had chosen chaos when they had denied and fled from Jesus two nights previous to this time.

God's peace and God's love is eternally present to us, but quite often out of fear or anxiety or the desire for self-preservation we make what proves to be the chaotic choice rather than the choice of peace. I do not believe any of us would say, "I want to choose chaos over peace." Yet each time we choose to place our needs and desires as the paramount impetus for our actions we are choosing chaos. My time is more valuable than yours, my family's needs are much more important than yours, the kind of person I am is more valuable than the kind you are; anything, anything that places us over against someone else, leads to chaos.

The peace and love of God becomes real when I am able to acknowledge that the first person who needs that peace and love is me. Chaos in my life occurs not because you have not yet accepted God's love but because I have not accepted God's love as a vital, viable force in my life. I cannot make you love God; I can pray that I will become more open to God's love, peace and will. The glorious thing is, if that becomes the prayer of each of us, there is the possibility that chaos will abate and peace might have a chance to reign because each of us desires it. A naïve notion, perhaps; but I know I am a whole lot healthier, I feel much better and more productive, when I am experiencing moments of peace within myself and with those around me than when I experience chaos. True peace is not docile passivity; it is life enhancing, life fulfilling, it is the ultimate healthy response to God's call upon our lives.

Amen