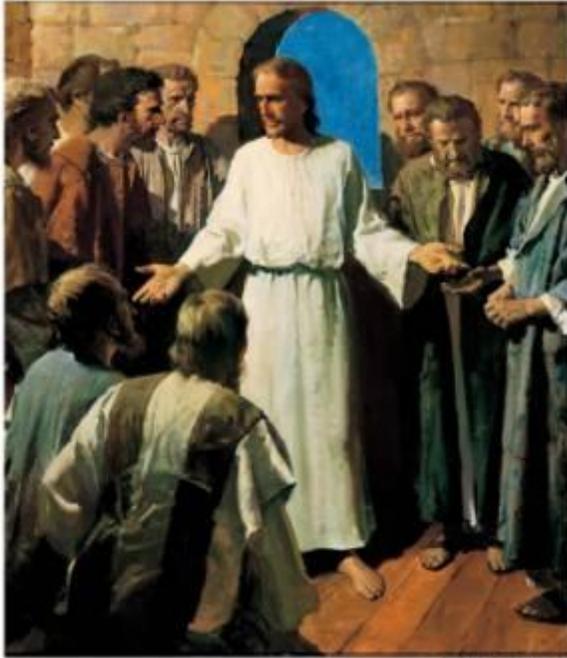


“Peace Be with You” Service Prayers for the Second Sunday of Easter April 11, 2021



ST. JOHN UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
10207 Lincoln Trail
Fairview Heights, IL 62208
Telephone 397-6323
Secretary – Judy Hartman
Rev. Rosemary Captain
Prayers and Liturgy by Rev. Thom Schuman
Organist – Sharon Banjavcic

WORDS OF WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: “Jesus Shall Reign” Dorothy Wells

***CALL TO WORSHIP:**

The Word of life spoke:

reminding us not to be afraid.

The Word of life reached out:

**to touch us in moments we are
almost overwhelmed with uncertainty.**

The Word of life walked out of death's dread tomb:

through the days in which we live.

so we might walk with hope

***PRAYER OF INVOCATION:**

Tomb Emptier: just as you raised Jesus out of the shadows and fears of that lonely grave, so you come to call us forth from the fears which surround us, to fling open the doors of our hearts which have been locked by this pandemic.

Walker through doors; you stood in the middle of your friends in the very place where they huddled in worry on the first night of Easter. as you stood in the middle Come among us now, wherever we find ourselves on this day of celebration, to remind us that death no longer keeps us from our life with you.

Breather of Peace: come and strengthen us with your gentle grace, so we may go into all the places to be with all who are afraid, to serve all who, today, need grief-shattered hearts mended, to breathe peace and life into everyone we meet this day. Amen.

***CALL TO RECONCILIATION:**

We are reminded over and over of God's gracious forgiveness. But we still find it hard to believe, don't we? And however afraid we are to let go of our old ways, God continues to offer us new life. So, join me in confessing our fears and doubts, especially in these days, to the One who is eager to make us whole.

*** PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS:**

In the brain fog of these weary days, we not only have trouble finding words of hope and life, God of Grace, we have even more trouble turning words into actions. We continue to struggle to be one in heart and soul, as we choose sides, listen to conflicting voices, and turn our backs on those who are different. And with such great grace poured out on us, we tend to hoard it, rather than sharing it with those around us.

Forgive us, God of love. Forgive us, that we would rather stay behind the locked doors of our fears, rather than go out into the light of the future you offer to us. Fill us with healing and grace as we offer our brokenness to you, that we might be made whole. This we pray, as we proclaim Jesus Christ as our Lord and our God.

Silence is kept

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

This is the good news of old, as well as fresh as today: God comes into our lives, to lead us out of fear's shadows into the life God offers to us.

This is the word we have heard; this is the voice we hear; this is the grace which is ours: God is faithful, forgiving us, and making us whole. Thanks be to God! Amen.

GLORIA PATRI: (Music only)

SCRIPTURE: John 20: 19-31 ¹⁹ It was still the first day of the week. That evening, while the disciples were behind closed doors because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, Jesus came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. When the disciples saw the Lord, they were filled with joy. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I am sending you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you don't forgive them, they aren't forgiven."

²⁴ Thomas, the one called Didymus, one of the Twelve, wasn't with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord!" But he replied, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, put my finger in the wounds left by the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't believe."

²⁶ After eight days his disciples were again in a house and Thomas was with them. Even though the doors were locked, Jesus entered and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here. Look at my hands. Put your hand into my side. No more disbelief. Believe!" ²⁸ Thomas responded to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus replied, "Do you

believe because you see me? Happy are those who don't see and yet believe."

³⁰ Then Jesus did many other miraculous signs in his disciples' presence, signs that aren't recorded in this scroll. ³¹ But these things are written so that you will believe that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son, and that believing, you will have life in his name.

MESSAGE: "Peace? Really?"

You may remember that each of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John relates the passion story differently. None of the authors were eye witnesses to the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. The Gospels were written around 40 years after Jesus left this earth. The authors wrote from what they had learned from others, such as eye witnesses or story tellers. Each author had their own agenda and "spin" on the story. So, don't be surprised when you see differences in their stories of the passion of Christ.

Our scripture text for today begins when Jesus suddenly appears to the disciples and other followers after his resurrection. Those gathered are behind locked doors. They're fearful conduct indicates that they do not believe the report from Mary that Jesus is alive. Their behavior is controlled by "fear of the Jews" rather than by the knowledge of the resurrected Lord.

Jesus' greeting, "Peace be with you," was a conventional greeting of the time, but also speaks to the disciples' present fear. Jesus fulfills his promise of the gift of his



peace (as can be read in chapter 14 verse 27). The disciples are to live not according to fear but by Jesus' gift of peace. To prove to them that he was the Christ, he showed his hands and his side. The disciples' joy, like the end of Mary's weeping in verse 16, fulfills Jesus' promise of 16:20-22.

Jesus' repeated greeting "peace" has new meaning now that they disciples have recognized him "as the Lord". His words echo the words of his farewell prayer, "as the Father has sent me, so I send you" (see 17:28). However now Jesus commissions the entire faith community to continue the work God sent him to do. The gift of the Holy Spirit is a part of this commissioning. This fulfills the promises of the Spirit in the farewell discourse in chapters 14-16.

Notice all the promises that Jesus is completing. Are the disciples still afraid? Maybe some what, but they might have new fears. Jesus has given the disciples and us a new commission. We are to continue Jesus' work of making God known in the world.

How do you feel about that commission? Yes, we have the Holy Spirit to help us yet it can be frightening. We just need to remember that Jesus continues to say to us "Peace be with you." Or as we would say today, "you've got this!" Amen.

MUSIC: "In the Garden" – Austin Miles

Flute/Piano Duet (Stacie and Sharon)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

God of all deeps and all high places, be present to us in our low days and our days of exaltation. Hear our prayers for those who are now experiencing letdown and fatigue, who

are trying to regather their energies and regain their perspective on life, who are looking for new directions and true goals.

Heal the sick. Comfort the sad. Prod the lazy. Quiet the overzealous. Rest the weary. Strength the weak. Give hope to the despairing.

We rejoice in our fellowship with you, God our Father, and with your Son, Jesus Christ. We give thanks for the word of life revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. To you, Fatherly, Brotherly, Sisterly, Motherly God, be ascribed all glory and light and no darkness at all.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

THREE-FOLD AMEN: (Music only)

INVITATION TO SHARE: Thank you for sharing.

DOXOLOGY: (Music only)

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

There are so many in need, so many who are afraid, so many who are lonely - so may you take our gifts, Loving God, and use them to bring food to those who hunger, hope to those who struggle, comfort to those who mourn,

and peace to all. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

Let us go forth, walking in the light of God.

We go to share the good news of life to a world which struggles with a pandemic.

Let us go forth, serving in the light of Christ.

We go to unlock the doors of fear, to bring hope to all in the shadows.

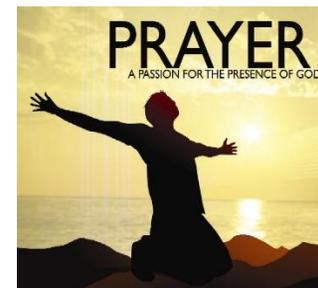
Let us go forth, living in the light of the Spirit.

We go to share healing with the broken, to be a community to the lonely.

POSTLUDE: "O Happy Day"

video by the Hope Children's Choir

(c) 2021 Thom M. Shuman



PRAYER LIST: We pray for the health and well-being of all affected by the pandemic and we especially pray for:

Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Becky Ballard, P.J. Bennett, Nelson Libell, Joe Knapp, Danny Ballard.