

A PASSAGE TO NEW LIFE

Community Sunrise Service Cocoa Beach

Dr. Fred Fourie ~Easter Sunday, April 16, 2006



Dear Friends, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, earlier on we listened to the resurrection story as recorded in John's Gospel. Let us now also listen to another verse in the same Gospel – **John 20 verse 19**: "When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

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Christ is risen! It is a very good morning indeed. God has taken a world in need of shaking up and has turned it upside down. The

cries to crucify, sounds of dry and hollow spirits, have been replaced by "Alleluias," the life songs of a forgiven people. The death-dealing cross on which Jesus suffered has become a tree of life-bearing fruits of forgiveness. The sealed tomb is now the symbol of liberation. A living Christ reveals the loving power of God. Christ is risen! It is a very good morning to worship with joy and to give glory to God. It is a very good morning indeed.

The message of Easter is not always easy to understand and especially younger children can get confused by all the traditional doings of Easter. There is the gem of a story about a group of four-year olds in a Sunday School Class. "Does anyone know what today is?" A little 4 year old said, "today is **Easter Sunday**, because Jesus rose from the grave" The teacher exclaimed, "that's fantastic, wonderful!" but the little girl kept on talking "**but if he sees his shadow - he has to go back in for seven weeks!**"

The apostle John wrote: "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace be with you.**" The first Easter sermon recorded in Scripture consisted of only four words: "**Peace be with you.**" That was Jesus' primary message to them. "**Peace** be unto you." **Peace** -- that is a prized commodity in any age. **Peace** for our hearts. **Peace** for our families. **Peace** for our world. Those were the first four words of the first Easter sermon: "**Peace be unto you.**"

After these events, a radical change occurred in the lives of the disciples. They became what they never dreamed they could be. Just as we may not be able to see the wind, but we can see it having its impact on the trees, so can we see the effect of the risen Christ on these downhearted and thoroughly defeated disciples!

Christ will have the same effect on our lives--if we would only let Him. **You see,**

the tragedy of our lives is that many of us want to have simply a casual relationship with Christ. We want to know Christ is there--just in case we have an emergency-but we do not want to share our lives with Him.

There is a story about a plow that was sent to Africa some years ago. It came into the hands of a primitive tribe in the interior of the continent. The people had never seen such an instrument before. **Not knowing what to do with it, they set it up in their fields and worshipped it.** Each day they would interrupt their work for prayers. The **plow was designed to cultivate the soil** and provide food. However, instead of being used as a means of deliverance for the people, it became an added burden in their lives. For many, that is where their faith stands. We believe with our heads that Christ is alive, **but He does not live in our hearts.** They miss the joy of resurrected living. They are like those disciples with the curtains drawn and the doors barred -- living troubled and uncertain lives. It is to them and us that Christ speaks those words — **"Peace be unto you."**

Today, you and I again need that calming self-assurance that only Christ can give. **"Peace be unto you."** Is not that another way of saying, **"You are loved? You are of priceless value."** It would be astounding how satisfying our lives would be if we could believe that. The great need that many of us have today is not only to believe in Christ, but also to know that Christ believes in us.

How we feel about ourselves can make a difference. Christ says, "Peace be unto you. I love you. You are of priceless value to me."

Those first **disciples** did not remain **disciples**. After they experienced the reality of the living Christ they became **apostles**. A disciple is one who sits at the feet of a great teacher. An apostle is one who is sent to tell the story. Many of us would be content to spend our lives as **disciples**, but never as **apostles**. The first Easter Sermon is once again ringing in our ears this morning! Listen to the other part of the message: "Peace be unto you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

Christ's plan for the peace of the world is centered in God's people. That is us! If the world is to have peace, then we must be **makers** and **messengers** of the **peace** that only Christ can give.

Peace be unto you -- Is there someone here on the beach this morning who has not experienced the peace that Christ offers? Come on out into the sunlight. Let God's love flood your heart and your soul this day. **Celebrate new life in Christ today.** Peace be unto you! Face tomorrow -- go tell the world, "He lives, he lives, Christ Jesus lives today! You ask me how I know that he lives? He lives within my heart!"

**AMEN**