

Peace be With You

Luke 24:36-48

I want you to imagine something with me. Let us place our selves in Jesus' slippas. Imagine all of your friends—every one of them-- abandoning you. You are arrested, carried away, falsely accused, tried and convicted, and then sentenced to death. Then, after your death, you have a chance to see your friends again. What would be the first thing you would say to your friends? "Where were you?" You left me to die! What happened? Why did you leave me?

Now instead of **that** imagining, let us imagine Jesus seeing his friends for the first time as in our scripture today. What is the very first thing he says to them? That's right, "Peace be with you." Wow. Can you imagine a heart filled with so much aloha, so focused on being pono, so filled with mana and grace that you offer peace to those who abandoned you to die?

Let us pray together: "O dear God of peace, teach us the peace that filled Jesus. Teach us to be so filled with aloha that even death does not make us angry, so filled with aloha that even abandonment by humans does not shake our love, where love conquers death and maluhia, or peace, guides our every footstep. Teach us, O God, the ways of Jesus. Amen."

If **you** came back and talked to the disciples, what would you say? Would you scream, "I told you so!" Why didn't you listen to me, you knuckleheads? You said you would follow me, and at the first sign of trouble, you scatter like cockroaches when the light is turned on! These are all very human responses to what happened to Jesus. But instead, Jesus returns to the disciples in love, deeply concerned about the disciples and their fears, and offering peace in their profound grief and guilt. Of course they all felt bad about leaving Jesus at the cross. Of course they felt terrible that they ran to save their own hides. We can't point at the disciples and say **we** would have done anything else but what they did. Only one person ever faced the cross without fear and in deep and total peace. Only one person trusted God even in the darkest shadows of the deadliest valley of all. Only one person fully knew God would **never** abandon them, even unto death. Only Jesus knew.

Everyone else fled. But not just the disciples. We would flee, too. We all run, we all deny Christ when times get tough. We all fail. But that is not the point here. The point is, what do we do **after** we fail? What do we do when we abandon Jesus in panic? How do we respond when the dust clears, when the sky fills with light, and when we see the tomb is, in fact, empty. Now what?

Peace be with you, Jesus says to the frightened disciples. They rub their eyes. Can this be? Is this a ghost? What is happening? Jesus immediately picks up as if nothing happened. Peace, brothers and sisters. Peace.

What a strange thing for Jesus to say. The disciples are locked in a room terrified for their lives. They are deeply grieving Jesus' death. They are filled with guilt and horrified they turned into cowards so quickly. And without a blink, without even the smallest hesitation, Jesus offers the peace of God which passes all understanding to them. Don't be afraid, Jesus says. Be filled with God's peace.

Think about this means. Jesus has forgiven them completely —Jesus is the one who suffered but **he** is worried about them. Jesus has granted forgiveness and grace and has offered them peace. Their world is chaos—the Romans would kill them if they knew where they were. And Jesus offers them peace? Doesn't Jesus understand the terrible predicament they are in? Peace Jesus? We need an army. Peace? Really?

Yes, really. **Peace**. Forgiveness. Aloha. Grace. Salvation. What could this mean to the disciples? Their world is filled with immediate danger, and yet Jesus offers them peace. This is not the peace of a quiet pasture filled with little lambs or a secluded ocean beach with only you and God in prayer. This is peace in the middle of a big fat mess where people are dying. Jesus offers the peace of **internal** trust and confidence in God. Peace of inner tranquility even when the world is burning on fire and filled with hate.

What kind of peace is this that does not depend on external circumstances? What kind of aloha is this that through Jesus loves the disciples even after they were such traitors just days before. What kind of vision of a pono world is this, where Jesus offers peace in the middle of the worst time and failure of their lives?

This is peace beyond understanding. Peace that comes from within. Peace built on love and trust in God, regardless of the external circumstances. This is the peace of Jesus.

The early Christian martyrs knew this peace. Gandhi knew this peace. The Buddha knew this peace. This is the peace of trust and confidence in God. Jesus knew this peace, and it enabled Jesus to look his murderers in the eye as they were nailing him to the cross and forgive them. The peace of God enables Jesus to look at the weary disciples and forgive them and love them and want God's peace for them.

Peace be with you, Jesus said, to them **and to us**.

What would this peace look like right now in **our** world? Today we are celebrating Earth day. This peace would hold all the earth as sacred, treating every rock and plant and animal as sacred before God. This peace would teach us to view the controversy on Mauna Kea with love and aloha and concern for **all** voices. Christ's peace is available always and during every time where there is anger or conflict. There is always your way and my way, and then there is Christ's way, the way of aloha and peace. The peace of the way of Christ that leads to life everlasting. Peace is treating one another and the 'aina (eye-na) with respect and honor and deep aloha. Peace is respecting every inch of every ahupu'aha as vitally important, whether honoring the shoreline or the tallest peak. Peace is placing the good of all before our personal good. **That** is Christ's peace. The peace of God that passes all understanding is loving the Lord our God with all of our heart and all of our souls and all of our minds, and then loving one another just as much as we love ourselves.

The Hawaiian people have known for a thousand years how to claim this peace of God. They treated the land well, with sustainable practices that respected the seventh generation to come. They never fished until the fish were ready, they never raided the land so that nothing was left. They lived in harmony with the land and sea and water and with each other. The Hawaiians can teach the world much on this earth day, but we must claim the peace of God and hold aloha higher than being right or forcing our will on others. Let us send the peace of God to those on Mauna

Kea. Let us send the peace of God to the homeless and hungry and poor. Let us send the peace of God to one another, even when we fail one another and sin and fall away from aloha. Let us be like Jesus, who greeted the disciples not with anger or scorn or scolding, but with maluhia, peace, and aloha, love. Peace always works to be pono, righteous and balanced.

Peace begins not out there, but **here**, within each of our hearts. This is the way we follow Jesus to peace everlasting.

Aloha ke Akua, and Amen.