

PEACE

Luke 24:36-48

We have two small, red, wooden blocks to keep the two front windows open. They're important because the sash windows on this glorious old farmhouse we call home don't work like they used to. The blocks were a gift a few years back at Christmas and allow the breezes from the valley to blow up through the house. They proclaim, not surprisingly, in white block letters: PEACE.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." This story in Luke's gospel is not the first resurrection appearance of Jesus after the women found the empty tomb. He has walked as a stranger on the road alongside two disciples who only recognised him when he blessed and broke the bread. Then he vanished. Now he stands amongst the gathering of disciples and friends with his greeting of peace and they are startled and terrified. Once Jesus has shown them his hands and feet, they respond with joy, but are disbelieving and still wondering. So he asks them for something to eat. We're not told how the gathering responded after that; maybe we can imagine that they listened in awe and wonder while he opened their minds and hearts. They were witnesses, Jesus reminded them, witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus, the bringer of peace.

What does it mean to be witnesses of the resurrection? We weren't there amongst that gathering and yet, our joy when we celebrate Easter morning each year is rich and real. We celebrate that the life that we know in Jesus, the light of the world, could not be extinguished, even by death. We celebrate that this light continues to conquer all kinds of darkness even when we are afraid and doubting. We celebrate that our wounded, crucified friend is present with us, we live in him and he lives in us. Resurrection is about restoration and regeneration, renewal, rebirth, renaissance, comeback... it's about witnessing irrepressible, mysterious life in what we thought was barren, impassible death. When truth breaks through. When forgiveness is offered and accepted. When people's eyes and hearts are opened. When reconciliation is a lived experience and broken stories are acknowledged and broken lives are mended.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." What is the peace that Jesus brings? I wonder if it is a resurrection peace. A peace that is spoken into our terror and suspicion, into the chaos of wars, chemical weapons, bully boys, greed and guns and offers a way to life, not an exchange of death. This peace is about the restoration of relationships, with God who loves and knows us, with our inner self, and with each other: our sisters and brothers of all nations, creeds, color, race and sexuality. This peace that comes from the mouth of the resurrected Jesus is a peace that binds together what is broken, a peace that refuses to be contained, a peace we can witness in our lives and in the world around us. The peace that Jesus breathes is a peace that fills our hearts with joy, even in the midst of our fear and confusion.

We all long for peace. Christmas cards use those words from the beginning of Luke's gospel, 'peace on earth'. It's a prayer that we keep praying and will keep on praying until we can live in peace with all people. As followers of Jesus we are called to be makers of peace. As followers of the risen Christ we are called to believe that peace is possible; that resurrection happened in Jesus and longs to happen wherever darkness and death try to have the final destructive word. We are called to be witnesses to that resurrection peace that brings life, joy, healing, restoration of relationships and that offers us a way of holding open the windows and allowing the breath of the Spirit to blow into our world, our homes and our hearts.

Peace be with you,

Rev. Jennie Gordon