

“The Lord Appears to His Disciples”

Easter Season 2022

LaPorte New Church Swedenborgian

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April 24

Scriptures

Psalm 118:14-24

John 20:19-23

Hymns/Songs

“I’ve Got Peace Like A River” 478

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NIZO57W0eE>

“The Strife Is O’er, the Battle Won” 290

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BeZVkRstr7M&t=3s>

“Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” 77

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Msyc6xr_CaE

Children’s Message

Psalm 118:14-24

- ¹⁴ The LORD is my strength and my song;
he has become my salvation.
- ¹⁵ Glad songs of salvation
are in the tents of the righteous:
“The right hand of the LORD does valiantly,
¹⁶ the right hand of the LORD exalts,
the right hand of the LORD does valiantly!”
- ¹⁷ I shall not die, but I shall live,
and recount the deeds of the LORD.
- ¹⁸ The LORD has disciplined me severely,
but he has not given me over to death.
- ¹⁹ Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them
and give thanks to the LORD.
- ²⁰ This is the gate of the LORD;
the righteous shall enter through it.
- ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me
and have become my salvation.
- ²² The stone that the builders rejected

has become the cornerstone.

²³ This is the LORD's doing;
it is marvelous in our eyes.

²⁴ This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

John 20:19-23

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Insight for Worship

Heaven and Hell 288-289 by Emanuel Swedenborg

"Heavenly or angelic peace occurs in us when we are attuned to wisdom because of the union of the good and the true and therefore we perceive ourselves as contented in God. However, as long as we are living in this world, that peace lies hidden in our depths. Still, it is unveiled when we leave our bodies behind and enter heaven, because then those depths are opened. Since divine peace arises from the Lord's union with heaven—and in particular with each individual angel by virtue of the union of the true and the good—when angels are in a state of love they are in a state of peace, because this is when the good within them is united to what is true. Much the same is true of us when we are being regenerated. When a union of the good and the true takes place within us, which happens principally after trials within spiritual battles, we come into a state of delight that arises from heavenly peace.

"That peace is like the morning time or dawn in spring, when, once the night has passed, all things of earth begin to take new life from the rising of the sun; the dew that falls from heaven spreads a leafy fragrance far and wide, and springtime's gentle warmth makes meadows fertile and instills its charm in human minds as well. This is because morning or dawn in springtime corresponds to the state of peace of angels in heaven."

SERMON: "The Lord Appears to His Disciples"

Welcome everyone to our new Easter Season of 2022. Also known as Eastertide, this special time of our church calendar lasts 50 days leading up to and including Pentecost Sunday on June 5. During the next 50 days Christians are led to take a close look at the amazing happenings of our Lord and His disciples immediately following the Lord's resurrection.

My focus with you this morning is on those exceptional words that the Lord uttered not once but twice during His first encounter with His forlorn inner circle of men, who were in serious need of help—and those words were, **“Peace be with you.”** As it turns out, those words as well as His commission on that and subsequent days contain for anyone serious about picking up the spiritual banner of Jesus Christ, what amounts to the first “mission statement” of the Lord's church on Earth. Let me read it to you again. He said:

“Peace be with you.” ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, **“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”** ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”**

My Eastertide message for you this morning will center on these points:

- 1) Spiritually speaking, what is contained with the Lord's powerful peaceful greeting to His men, which clearly meant a lot due to Him saying it not once, but twice in the middle of their distress?
- 2) It is essential that we hear, internalize and “digest” the Lord's commission as our own: **“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”**

To begin with, the reality of the condition of Christ's eleven men after the Sanhedrin and the Romans teamed up and brutally murdered their beloved Master on Good Friday, was that they were overwhelmed with fear and dread. Crucifixion is perhaps the worst form of capital punishment mankind has ever devised. It is likely that once they all believed that Jesus' ministry had been eradicated, those men were held up inside of the same upper room where they ate the Passover meal with the Lord, where Jesus instituted the Holy Supper. But rather than feeling unified and inspired, on that first Easter morning these eleven were lost and fearing for their lives. They were now terrifyingly aware that anyone associated with Jesus and His ministry could at any moment find themselves as targets of the Pharisees' fury. It is one thing to be in religious disagreement, but it is a whole other thing to be perceived as a major threat to

the well-being and survival of one's rivals. In short, the Lord's disciples were realistically afraid that just like Jesus, they would be next in line for crucifixion.

And so, Peter, Luke, John, Matthew, Andrew, James and the rest of them were not gathered in that upper room for religious and spiritual reasons. They were there locked in behind a bolted door stricken with terror and fearing for their lives. I can imagine them listening intently for any footsteps coming up the stairs, expecting a rap upon the door, which would have spelled their doom. But then, from out of nowhere, all of a sudden the risen and serene Jesus their Messiah was in their midst. He gave them the normal, everyday eastern greeting, "Peace be to you." But unlike what you and I probably would mean by saying these words, the message to the eleven disciples meant much more. It meant, "May you be saved from trouble," and, "May God give you every good thing."

Christ was standing before them with His fresh crucifixion wounds gaping before them. This tells me that He was not at all expressing a Pollyanna form of greeting. I believe He was telling them that for certain there are very threatening and deadly dangers we are dealing with on Earth—and, as God's children, we are born to not be enslaved to what may happen to us physically. Rather, we are born to be heirs of a very high calling, and so our Lord commissions us as well, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit." Our theology informs us that each name of God within what many call "the Trinity" are not referring to three separate Divine Persons, but rather they correspond to the Lord's Divine-Human Love-Wisdom-and-Power. He was telling them, in effect, find your life's contentment in me, in my eternal love-wisdom-and-outpouring Life!

And so, every morning my friends our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is sending us forth in His own infinite Love-Wisdom-and-outgoing-Power to help the Kingdom of Heaven to grow and live on Earth. God's life-force is the wind in our sails, in other words, or you might say, our Christian coat of arms has upon it these words: "Peace be with you," and "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." But what other secrets from Heaven lay deeper within these great words for you and I to hear and internalize every morning, when we consider the actual God-given peaceful influences from God in Heaven?

New Church Christian insights tell us that the Lord's peace grows within us when we are attuned to spiritual wisdom flowing from the union of what is good and true. This means far, far more than simply sitting down and reading a bunch of books where

all we are doing is increasing knowledge in our brains. What this means, my friends, is **choosing to have good-purposeful intentions to make a positive difference throughout my day, while longing for the knowledge of how I can get my positive goals done.** Said again, having a heavenly, peaceful mindset is about choosing intentions for a love of helping joining together with the means for getting good things done. When we freely choose such healthy, heavenly aims, this opens us up inside to **contentment in God.**

This simple but divinely powerful message flowing in through the Lord's now glorified Divine-Humanity is what Christ's focus was with His disciples on that first day of Easter. Christ's message here is of **TOP PRIORITY**. We are witnessing this morning what God's #1 message and commissioning was for the future core leaders of the newly birthed Christian Church, and that same priority exists for you and me now, every day!

And so I ask you, what are you basing your personal CONTENTMENT in each and every day? Are you, for example, basing your daily contentment upon whether you get your own way today? Or, perhaps, secretly wishing that my enemy at work, in Russia or on our City Council meets with defeat? Or, maybe, I am basing my day's contentment upon some aspect of worldly success? If I am choosing to base my life's contentment upon these shifting sands of natural concerns, then my life's contentment is **NOT CENTERED IN GOD.**

Am I basing my daily contentment on things that can suddenly shift and change like stormy weather? Or, will I choose to base my day's contentment on the principles of life that God stands for? Things like: 1) I know that the Lord is always guiding life toward long-term spiritual goals of eternal salvation, which operate constantly, no matter what tragedies may be happening. Or 2) We are all on the same team together, life is long and the Lord is leading us into lasting happiness. Or 3) Even the worst events in our lives are being used for our ultimate good, and deep within the fabric of life itself, we are all being divinely loved, supported and understood by a Divine Person who loves us without end---and because of all of these great truths of life, life as a whole is not only good, but VERY good.

But, while all of this is very real and true, we also need to bear in mind that some days will feel easier than others within the Lord's commission to spread His love and truth as we serve in life. For as we read above: **"...as long as we are living in this world, that peace [from God] lies hidden in our depths. Still, it is unveiled when we leave our**

bodies behind and enter heaven, because then those depths are opened.”

The bottom line for me is, God gave me my adult brain and intelligence for good reasons, which enables me to understand this playing field we are all on together. And so, just as those 11 disciples were led out of fear and anxiety at the end of Easter Day, out into the joy of serving God’s will again, we too can remember that these true stories of post-Easter attunement to God’s ways picture for us that Christ comes through our own fears and anxieties...yes, He comes through the locked doors in our own minds...bearing to us His many wounds, and still voices these glorious words, “Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, so even am I sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Amen.