

Easter 1 (2026)

A single word which sums up the life and mission of Jesus Christ is **peace**.

It was the first word out of His mouth when He appeared to His little band of followers on the evening of that first Easter Day.

And, again, this single word sums up the entire life and mission of Jesus.

Consider, for example, what the angelic host told the shepherds at His birth:

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

Also consider what the Apostle Paul says about peace in Ephesians 2:17:

“[Jesus Christ] came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.”

The thought here being that God’s goodwill and blessing – His peace – was embracing the whole world, the Jewish world, yes, but also the Gentile. All were being called into one family and fellowship. The old hostilities between tribes and groups were being taken out of the way.

Let’s go back now and look at what happened when Jesus appeared in that locked Upper Room.

I want to suggest that there are at least four layers of meaning to Jesus’ salutation of peace.

First, ‘peace’ was a common greeting used by the Jews. *Shalom* in the Hebrew tongue might be compared with our ‘good morning’ or ‘good afternoon’.

Yet, surely Jesus meant more by this word than a mere greeting.

Remember what all but two of the disciples had done following His arrest. They had fled.

Peter did not flee, but he did something even more dastardly. He denied he even knew his Master, not once but three times.

The disciples then must have heard Jesus' greeting of peace with a sigh of relief. Instead of recrimination, they received a word of grace. A word which said: "We're still friends!" Upon hearing this word, we are told they were glad.

But the significance of this word goes further still. Secondly, it speaks of God's plan of rescue accomplished on the cross.

Think back to those early chapters in Genesis when God's good creation project went off track . . . when humans rebelled and as a

result found themselves cast out of the garden, expelled from the life of paradise.

At that moment, it was as if a wall had come down between them and their God and Creator. They found themselves in a state of alienation.

Jesus' proclamation of peace in the Upper Room signaled that this state of alienation was over. Hostilities had ended.

It didn't take President Reagan saying "Mr. Gorbachev, "tear down this wall!" to bring it about either. No, God Himself tore it down.

It was God who took the initiative in setting matters right.

Fellowship between God and humans was restored by the sinless Son of God taking our sin upon Himself on the cross and suffering in our stead. This is our peace.

As a result, we can now call God Father and can come boldly into His presence with all our needs, knowing He cares for us.

Thirdly, the peace Jesus proclaimed in the Upper Room speaks of a believer's future destiny. Death for the Christian is not a question mark but an exclamation point.

In the Bible, death is seen as going hand in hand with human rebellion and sin. But on the cross, death, man's greatest foe, was defeated.

The resurrection on Easter morning is the guarantee that this actually happened.

Jesus' resurrection should be viewed as more than a one-off miracle.

Using an illustration from nature, it should be seen as the first daffodil that bravely sticks its head up through the snow.

That daffodil is a sign that many more daffodils are coming . . . that the thaw of winter is about over.

So it is with the resurrection of Jesus. It is a sign that the order of sin and death is over. A new order is emerging.

At Jesus' Second Coming, what happened to Him will happen to His people. They too will receive bodies of a different order, ones that won't conk out, need joint replacements, glasses, hearing aids and pacemakers.

Neither will these bodies have the same constraints as our present bodies . . . remember how the locked doors to the Upper Room could not keep Jesus out.

These bodies will have continuity with our present bodies but not absolute identity.

Jesus was more than a phantom spirit. The scars on his hands were still visible when He appeared in the Upper Room.

He could be handled and touched . . . and on another occasion ate fish with the disciples on the shore on the sea of Galilee. But His resurrected body was different. It was of a higher order.

What's true of Jesus is true of all who have died and risen with Him in baptism . . . all who are united to Him in faith. Fears over our final destiny should not assail us. Peace, perfect peace is ours.

Finally and fourthly, the peace Jesus proclaimed in the Upper Room is closely linked to His abiding presence.

In today's passage, we have a foreshadowing of Pentecost. Jesus breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit.

Let me suggest that breathing on the disciples points back to something that happened at the dawn of time.

Remember in the Genesis account how God breathed into the nostrils of Adam, a lump of clay, and he became a living soul?

Well, we see something similar going on here. God's new week of creation is beginning, and you and I are part of this new beginning.

“In Christ, new creation,” Paul will go on to tell believers in 1 Corinthians 5:17.

What this means in real time is that the mistakes of the past don't have to define or defeat us.

Why? /// We are new creatures. We may not be what we ought to be or want to be, but we are on our way. He has breathed on us. His presence

through the power of the Holy Spirit is what makes transformation possible.

And so, as we have seen, the peace which Jesus proclaimed in the Upper Room points us in at least four directions.

It was greeting. It speaks of God's plan of rescue for the human race accomplished on the cross. It points to what our attitude should be concerning our future destiny. And finally, it speaks of Jesus' abiding presence with His Church in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the peace of which Jesus speaks? /// You can.

You may not be able to change what is going on around you, but you can change your mental attitude.

When you find thoughts of fear arising . . . when you are feeling lonely, anxious or

overwhelmed, here is your prescription: Say, either out loud or to yourself – your choice -- the words of the 23rd Psalm.

And when you get to that line that says, **“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil”** really bear down on those words. Take them on board in your life.

It is traditionally thought that David, the great King of Israel, wrote these words. Jesus, the Promised One out of David’s line, brings them to their great telos.

In closing, I want to share with you something C.S. Lewis wrote well over half a century ago. It was at the time the atomic bomb was gripping men’s hearts with fear.

As I read his words and come to references to the atomic bomb, I invite you to insert your

concerns and fears. Here is an abridgment of Lewis' wise counsel:

“The first action to be taken in our present crisis is to pull ourselves together.

“If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies, but they need not dominate our minds.”

To Lewis' words, I would add a few of my own:

Let God's peace, the peace which comes through the cross and empty tomb, be the only thing to dominate your mind.

Receive it from the lips of the Saviour. Live it out in the world. Share it with every anxious soul you meet . . . in the post office, at the grocery store, with those at the gas pump, with those with whom you communicate online.

Peace, a word for all seasons, but especially one for our trouble-filled world today.

Let the word go forth: **“Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”**