

Grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The most common reaction from the disciples to the resurrection of Jesus is fear.

Sometimes fear is that unsettling feeling that arises when something bad is happening. I think of the mental health issues affecting many, especially young people, as a result of the current lock-down...the 23% rise in excess deaths in the area of heart, lung, cancer and Alzheimer's in the past 12 months...the increasing number of suicides...the number of small businesses that have been devastated by the lock-down, and due to the riots that have desecrated cities.

But, the fear expressed by followers of Jesus to His resurrection is different. I call it Resurrection Fear, a temporary unsettling sensation just before the awareness that something truly good is happening. The reaction of the women at the empty tomb in Luke 24 is an example:

*While they [the women] were perplexed about this [the empty tomb], behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel.⁵ And as they were **frightened and bowed their faces to the ground**, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? ⁶ He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."⁸ And they remembered his words, ⁹ and **returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.***

Resurrection Fear is the leading edge of something truly good. Matthew 28 describes the emotions of the women and what they did after receiving instruction from the angels at the empty tomb:

*⁸ So they [the women] departed quickly from the tomb with **fear and great joy**, and **ran to tell his disciples.***

Resurrection Fear is among the emotions followers of Christ experience when they are called to partner with Jesus in His mission.

In the winter of 2007-2008 Dorothy and I were in Boca Raton Florida where I served as Interim Pastor while they called a Senior Pastor. I had my own Resurrection Fears about that Interim. A gifted vicar was asked by a confirmation student to officiate his grandfather's funeral. His first question of me was, can vicar officiate a funeral. My answer, "yes, of course." His second question was "What do I do when I get to their home?" My answer was, "You will know when you get there." I saw Resurrection Fear in his eyes. When he returned he said, "That's the best advice you could have given me." Vicar Steve is now Senior Pastor at St. Paul in Boca Raton.

I share this story for you to recall your counter story of how Resurrection Fear, mixed with other emotions, was a leading edge to something really good...like marriage, birth of children, vocation, discipleing another believer, etc.

In John 20, our gospel for this week, we see the disciples in a temporary lock-down for fear of the Jewish authorities, and Philip, in a temporary state of un-belief because he's not seen the risen Lord.

In the midst of lock-down fear and unbelief, Jesus appears and says: *Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, even so I am sending you.* Lock-down fear became Resurrection Fear, and Resurrection Fear became Resurrection Peace, and Resurrection Peace became the missionary zeal that propelled the gospel throughout the millennia so that in 2021 we can say together: Christ is risen! He is risen indeed Alleluia!

Now, I believe the disciples wanted their own Resurrection Fear to be part of the Resurrection story, to understand that Resurrection Fear is a useful emotion in the mix of proclaiming the Risen Christ to an unbelieving world...God's eternal plan to *"bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth."* [Eph. 1.10]

So, here we are, 21st century believers, through whom the Risen Christ proclaims *"Peace"* to a locked-down and conflicted world, replacing the worldly fear with the *"Peace that passes all understanding that keeps hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*

The last word Jesus spoke to His disciples in the Upper Room that first Maundy Thursday was: *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have **peace**. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.* John 16:33

Who needs to hear Jesus words *"**Peace** be with you"* from your lips in this troubled world? Who would you add to that list today, thinking, "Yes, I need to reach out to that person with the **peace** of the Lord."?

Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

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