**Sermon- 2nd Easter- Apr. 18 & 19 2020**

**Title: “Fear and Boldness?”**

**Texts: Acts 5:27-42 & John 20:19-31**

**Prayer**

**Salutation**

**Bridge**

 **The doors are locked. The disciples are behind them cowering in fear. Then, out of nowhere comes this, “Peace be with you!” Jesus just pops into the room like He’s been there with them the whole time. It must have been like someone today saying, “Surprise! Here I am!” It most certainly startled them. But almost immediately, it gave them joy to see Him. He had popped in for a purpose. He knew it was time for their graduation of sorts. They had been with Him for three years now, learning, watching and somewhat understanding. But now it was time. Time to put all of this education to use. Time for action. But they had no direction. And they feared. They feared like we do. Like when we get out of college and don’t know how to apply for that first job and put that practical knowledge to work. Or when the government tells you that you must stay in or you might get sick or make others sick. Or when the rulers want to arrest you for assembling because you are a Christian and follow Jesus. So, you hide in fear. What do we have in common with the disciples? At times we have no *peace*. We all are fearful!**

**Law**

 **But let’s back up a bit. The Resurrection had occurred. They thought that, because it was so unbelievable or possibly knew from what they had heard that Jesus was alive and had come back from the dead, but He wasn’t there. Where was He? He had told them He’d meet them in Galilee, but what was taking Him so long? I can guess as to what some of them might be thinking. They had abandoned Him! They ran away in fear! Was He mad at them? Would He leave them to be arrested and thrown in jail for being His followers? Had He abandoned -*them*? These days, you know what fear can do to you! You can conjure up all kinds of scenarios in your mind and in the end, rarely are any of them true. We worry about all the things He told us not worry about, food, clothes, and death. But indeed, Like us, they had all sinned. All but Peter had run away. However, we all know what Peter had done in the courtyard. He had denied Jesus three times before he ran away. And here they sat, wondering what to do next. They thought they were in a bad pickle. They knew that the wages of sin are death! Unfortunately, they didn’t know how good they had it before this Passover had begun.**

 **Sounds familiar. Today, we think *we are* in a pretty bad pickle. Here, right after the Passover and Easter. Things have changed in the past thirty days- so *dramatically*. We didn’t know how good we had it before this Passover, did we? From a purely economic point of view, we have lost much. And it may get worse. For some, it is a test. A test to see if they were truly thankful to God for His good gifts, or if they had taken them all for granted for so many years. It is also a test to see that if things get worse, we abandon Christ like many might. Some, I dare say, already have. They’ve lost much. They could lose everything. What will people have faith in if the whole economy ends up in the dumper? Will they lean on the government hoping for checks each month forever? Or will they come to realize that God provides and lean on Him should times get worse? Not to mention the fact that we are all locked in our homes and unable to worship together!**

 **But here, Jesus stands among them saying, “Peace”. No wonder they were glad! However, He doesn’t say what I would have said. He’s much nicer than I would have been. I’d have said, “What in the world are you doing sitting here? Get out there and start telling people the Good News!” But they were still afraid! They thought they might die. Sound familiar? So gently, like the Good Shepherd He is, He leads them to their purpose saying, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” And then to make sure that they understood that He forgave them He did something miraculous; He gave them the Keys. Not to one, but to all the apostles and thus, to the church. He breathed on them the Holy Spirit and said, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” They must have been amazed, shocked thinking, “What is He saying? I have the power of God to forgive sins?” Tell me, how would you react to that if you heard it? Would you go out and start hearing confessions? I doubt it. This was very new. Unheard of, and in fact, Jesus was almost stoned for saying such things about *Himself*. They had accused Jesus of blasphemy because only God can forgive sins. Only God can do that. But they knew that He had forgiven THEM and that’s what was important to them at that particular moment. Like all things they had learned from Jesus, this, too, must have taken time to sink in, that the church, could now give the reassurance of the forgiveness of God through men. As if Jesus was saying it to each and every one who confessed. Wow! We are set apart my friends. Different than those that do not believe. For in Christ there is forgiveness, and no where else.**

**Gospel**

 **This encounter all took place in our Gospel reading for today. Before the Lord forgave Peter on the beach. Before the Ascension into heaven. But then, our first reading from Acts. Well hold onto your seats! It tells us about a whole different kind of men! No longer are they cowering in fear behind locked doors! Wasting time picking a new Apostle to replace Judas! Pentecost had taken place. Suddenly, the power of the Holy Spirit to understand and use the gifts He provided from Jesus made sense! And they knew what they had to do. They knew they should rely on God for all they needed. They asked for boldness by prayer. And God, by the power of His Spirit, when they were arrested and questioned, gave them the words and strength they needed. They came out boldly! They had been arrested by the High Priest and put in jail but miraculously released by an angel that night who told them to go and preach the Good News to the people at the Temple! Can you imagine that? The power of God filled them by the Spirit that day and they did as the angel had said, no matter what the authorities had told them. That they couldn’t tell of Jesus or meet together or give Him praise! It could have been deadly! But now, they are arrested AGAIN! And they took them to the High Priest once more.**

 **Of course, the High Priest scolded them saying, “We charged you not to teach in this name, yet you here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man’s blood upon us.” Guilty conscience much? The High Priest knew what he had done. Peter, who had feared and run away before, said boldly, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, (from the dead) whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree. God exalted Him at His right hand as a leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him.” Peter proclaimed the Good News of the Peace of forgiveness through Christ to his captors, the rulers and the Sadducees, right then and there. “NO FEAR!” as they say. Only boldness, right in the face of the kingdom of this world. Of course, they knew they had to obey the laws of their rulers, but this went to a much higher level, for to obey them would mean that they would not obey God. WE, too, must boldly obey God rather than men. How? Like the disciples, in the Peace of Christ.**

 **And here the text ends. I wish it didn’t for we would see what happened as a result of this admonition by Peter of the rulers of the Temple. But for today, the comparison and contrast of the account in Acts and the account in the Gospel are outstanding! One account of fear of the world, government and death, and another of forgiveness and boldness in the Peace of Christ! In Peace we learn that fear does not stop death, but it stops life!**

 **“Peace be with you”. Jesus said it to those He loved in that room that day. He knew their Fears. He knows ours. So, before He left this earth, He reassured us that His Peace would be with us by the power of the Spirit. He reassured us the He would be with us always, until the end of the age. Have no fear! He came here to this earth with a purpose. He purposely walked to Jerusalem. He purposely took our sin upon Him when He knew no sin. And He purposely died on the Tree so that our sin would be washed away by His innocent blood. Finally, He rose from the dead, and proclaimed that Good News which now brings the world—Peace! We who have this peace are very blessed. We go out in boldness and with Jesus by our side. There is no fear with Him here standing in our presence saying, “Peace be with you!” Amen.**

**May the peace of God, which surpasses all our understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**