

Easter 2B, 2009

Text: John 20:19-31

Title: No Vacation for Jesus

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No vacation for Jesus. After a long, busy Holy Week, you'd think Jesus would take some time off. (After all, many pastors, and even a few lay people take this week off). After a busy Holy Week, you'd think that Jesus would want to relax a little bit and take it easy, You'd think that He would head back to heaven for some vacation time. Jesus should take some time off. Jesus should, but Jesus doesn't.

Jesus has just spent the last 33 years here on earth. He came down from heaven and was born as a baby in Bethlehem. He grew up and went through all the struggles and temptations of being a young person. When He was about thirty He was baptized and started preaching, teaching, and doing signs. People opposed Him at every turn. After three years He was arrested and executed.

Having gone through all of that, you'd think Jesus would have had enough. You'd think that Jesus wouldn't want anything more to do with this dreadful planet, and these awful people. After being killed here, you'd think that earth would be the last place that Jesus would want to be. Jesus should never bother coming back to this terrible place. Jesus should, but Jesus doesn't.

And the disciples... They had abandoned Him, betrayed Him, and denied Him. Why would He ever want to see this lot again? Why would He even bother with these folks? If Jesus comes back He should find a new group of disciples. Jesus should just let the disciples sit and think about what they've done. Jesus should. But Jesus doesn't.

Jesus comes back to see the disciples. Locked doors will not keep Him out. Instead of relaxing, taking a break, taking some time off, Jesus is back to work, and He begins with the same group of disciples. Won't Jesus ever learn?

As Jesus comes back to see the disciples, you'd think that He will lay into them. Let them have it. Jesus should scold them for not believing in Him and then hiding in fear. Jesus should. But Jesus doesn't.

Instead, Jesus greets the disciples with words of peace. His words forgive them for all the mistakes they've made over the past few days. Jesus' words calm their fears and fill them with His love.

Jesus has come to bring peace. His death brought peace between man and God. That's not just some abstract idea, it's not just hopeful words, but Jesus' death brings real peace. This peace is demonstrated by Jesus as He meets with His disciples. Jesus brings this peace between Himself and His disciples and restores this broken relationship. In case there was any doubt, Jesus shows them His hands and His side. These marks show the disciples who Jesus is and what He's done for them.

The result? The disciples are overjoyed. Before Jesus came, they sat in fear and silence. They were as good as dead. But Jesus comes into the tomb of this room and brings them peace and joy. With His words, Jesus breaths life back into the dead disciples, and once more they have joy.

I can't imagine the joy of seeing someone who has died and come back to life again. This is the joy of heaven here on earth. This is the joy that only Jesus can bring. That sort of joy can't be contained in one room, even with the doors locked. Jesus wants that joy to spread throughout the whole world. He wants you to experience this same joy.

How does this happen? How does the joy of this Easter resurrection come to you? Jesus sends His disciples out with this good news. Jesus says, "As the Father sent me, so I send you." Jesus sends His disciples out to bring the same peace and joy that He brought to them.

How do they do this? The same way that Jesus did- by pointing to the crucified Lord. Paul says simply, "We preach Christ crucified."

The job of any pastor is to point you to the wounds of the risen Christ. When you are filled with fear or grief or sorrow for your sins, when you are overwhelmed with guilt and remorse, the answer is to look to Christ. He has suffered and died for you, and was raised from the dead for you. There is no need to fear punishment for your sins, because Jesus was punished for you. Death cannot hold Him, and death cannot hold you either.

But the death and resurrection of Jesus doesn't do you any good unless you hear of it and what it means for you. So Jesus sends out His disciples and now His pastors.

It's too big a task for the disciples to do on their own, so Jesus fills them with the Holy Spirit. He breathes into them, gives them holy CPR, and makes them alive for the purpose of forgiving sins.

Just as they are forgiven, so are they to forgive. This is what the disciples are sent to do- to forgive sins. This mandate is carried out every week as the pastor speaks on Jesus' behalf, "I forgive you all your sins." This is what the disciples were sent to do. This is what pastors are sent to do.

Most pastors take this week off. They need time to recover from Holy Week. But not Jesus. Jesus does not take a week off. He doesn't rest or take a vacation. That same night He's still at work. Jesus begins by bringing peace and joy to the disciples. But He doesn't stop there. Jesus wants this peace and joy to come to you. You weren't there in the upper room that night, but you are here now. So Jesus sends his disciples out to you. Jesus sends pastors to you to forgive your sins and bring you peace and joy.

But there's a problem. Thomas is left out. Thomas was not there with the disciples. When the disciples give their report, Thomas doesn't listen. This is the disciples' first attempt at

evangelism, and it doesn't go very well. The gospel message is resistible. People can choose not to believe you.

After a week, the disciples are still hiding behind locked doors. They must be discouraged. Their first attempt at evangelism has gone terribly wrong. If Thomas, one of the disciples, won't even believe them, what's the use?

But Jesus comes once more. You'd think that Jesus would be mad at Thomas. Thomas blew it. Jesus should turn His back on Thomas and remove him from the group of the disciples. Jesus should. But Jesus doesn't.

Instead, Jesus loves Thomas. He comes for Thomas. He wants Thomas to believe. And so Jesus shows Thomas His wounds, as He had done for the others. And Thomas responds with the clearest confession of Jesus found anywhere in the gospels, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus loves Thomas and won't leave until Thomas has seen Him and touched Him.

Jesus wants you to have that same faith that Thomas had. Jesus wants you to confess along with Thomas that He is your Lord and your God. And so He has given you His gospel. John wrote all these signs that Jesus did in order that you, too, might believe- just like Thomas and the other disciples.

Most of the gospel is written in the third person. They're written about Jesus and what He said and did. They tell about the disciples and the crowds and how people back then reacted. But this verse in John 20 is one of the few times that the gospel speaks directly to you. "These things are written that **You** may believe."

This is the whole reason why John wrote His gospel. It's not just an historical record. It's not just a nice story. The reason John tells this story is so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

This is the reason why Jesus appeared to His disciples that first Easter evening, why He showed them His hands and side and breathed life into them. So that they might believe.

This is the reason why Jesus appeared to Thomas a week later and showed him His hands and His side. So that he might believe.

This is the reason why John wrote his gospel, that you might believe.

In all of these instances, Jesus is at work. Even though He's died and is risen once more, He's still not done. Jesus is still at work, and He's active here. He hasn't taken a vacation. He comes into this place speaking words of peace and breathing His Spirit into us. He gives us His body and blood in the Lord's Supper, and He gives us the gospel, that we might believe, and that believing we might have life in His name.

Jesus never takes vacation. He never takes a week off. Jesus comes here every week for you.