

Peace Be with You
John 20:19-31
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
April 12, 2026
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There is a children's story titled, "An Almost Impossible Peace." It reads this way:

"Giants and dragons had been enemies for years on end, but they had learned a lot. They were no longer so foolish as to wage wars with terrible battles in which thousands died. Now, every year they held bowling matches instead. A giant against a dragon. Whoever lost would become the winner's slave. If a dragon won, he could use the giant's muscles for all that heavy lifting. If a giant won, he would have free flights and fire for the whole year.

"That is how they prevented their deaths and yet they hated each other more and more. Every year the winners were so cruel to the losers, in revenge for the times they had lost. There came a time when what mattered most was not winning the bowling match, but rather not losing.

"Yonk the Giant was the best bowler, and the most afraid. He had never lost. Many dragons had been his slaves and they were dying to see him lose so they could get their revenge. This is why Yonk was terrified of losing. Especially since last year's match, when he missed his first ever strike and decided that something had to change.

"The following year he won again. When he arrived home, his slave dragon feared the worst but Yonk had a different idea in mind.

"This year you will not be my slave. We will go bowling and I will teach you all of my secrets. But you must promise me one thing: when you win your match next year, you will not be cruel to your giant. Do the same as I am doing with you.'

The dragon gladly accepted. Yonk kept his promise and he spent the entire year without flying or warming himself with the dragon's fire breathing. The dragon also kept his promise and both did exactly the same every year afterwards. Yonk's idea became so popular that, within just a few years, many giants and dragons were spending their days bowling together. They forgot about their battles and cruelty and treated each other as play friends rather than enemies.

Much later Yonk lost his first bowling match but he was no longer afraid of losing because, by putting a stop to the enslavement of dragons, he had ended their hatred and sowed the seeds of an almost impossible peace... ([A short story to build a world of peace](#)).

While we might not often think in terms of giants and dragons, the reality is that when we think of peace, what typically first comes to mind is exactly where this story starts...with conflict. We talk about peace as the opposite of war. And, in light of that, we often act as if peace is present just because we aren't fighting.

But while the absence of war or conflict may be a place to start or may be one aspect of peace, the reality of peace is so much bigger...big enough to move enemies to being friends, big enough to end hatred and sow the seeds of something better...big enough to change the world.

And we see that in the post-resurrection story we heard in John today.

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Today's reading doesn't take place near the empty tomb as the one we heard last week did. Rather it takes place in a house, behind locked doors, with the disciples having heard from Mary Magdalene that she saw Jesus, but still filled with fear and wondering about what is happening.

It is there Jesus joins them. He joins them in the midst of their fear and their pain and their questions.

And as John tells this story, the words with which Jesus greets them are, "Peace be with you."

We could dismiss this as simply a common greeting, which it was. But, I suspect Jesus intended more.

Peace. In Greek the word is *eiréné*. This word, much like the Hebrew word *shalom*, means so much more than a lack of conflict. These words are closely linked in meaning and they are really a wish, an intention for wholeness.

That is how Jesus greets his friends.

In the midst of their fear and grief, he greets them with hope for wholeness.

In the midst of their questions and seeking, he greets them with hope for wholeness.

In the midst of all that will come next and their need to muster up the courage to leave the safety of the locked room and go out into the world, he greets them with hope for wholeness.

And think about that for a moment.

What happens when we feel whole? What changes when we are not focused on our brokenness or on what is lacking, but when we experience wellness, peace of mind, a wholeness from which we live? It changes everything.

But how do we get there? I suspect we can learn a little from this text.

Did you notice the movement of this story?

Jesus enters the room, where all of the disciples except Thomas are, and greets them with "Peace be with you." But he doesn't stop there. Instead, he breathes on them, offering the power of the Holy Spirit and the responsibility of forgiveness. He offers them the gifts that they need to move forward and in offering those gifts, he offers his affirmation of them.

A week later we are told they are again together in the room, this time with Thomas present. And again Jesus greets them, "Peace be with you." And while we modern people love to criticize Thomas' questions, his claim that he needs to see the risen Jesus for himself, Jesus simply offers Thomas what he said he needed. He meets Thomas where he is.

And our reading today ended with something many of us read right past...this idea that the stories written by the gospel writer are intended to nurture belief. But there is something important to note here. As Preaching Professor Karoline Lewis writes, "Belief in John is never a noun, but always a verb, and believing in Jesus is to be in relationship with Jesus" ([Resurrection is Relationship - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)).

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How do we get to wholeness?

Perhaps we do that through relationships. Through a relationship with Jesus, a relationship of companionship, a relationship that guides the way we live our lives, the intentions from which we live.

Perhaps we do that through relationships with other people...by meeting other people where they are and letting them meet us...by offering what we have that they need and receiving from them what we need...by celebrating and sometimes even revealing to one another the power that is already within us.

After all, it is in life-giving relationships where we can see more clearly, where we can find our way forward together, where we can learn to set down our weapons and live from love.

There is a children's book by Annette LeBox titled *Peace is an Offering*. That book ends this way, "Peace is a joining, not a pulling apart. It's the courage to bear a wounded heart. It's a safe place to live. It's the freedom from fear. It's a kiss or a hug when you've lost someone dear. So offer a cookie. Walk away from a fight. Comfort a friend through the long, dark night. Sing a quiet song. Catch a falling star. May peace walk beside you wherever you are" (Annette LeBox, *Peace is an Offering*, New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, Published by the Penguin Group, 2015).

Peace...shalom...*eiréné*...wholeness.

After the resurrection, as the disciples prepared to continue Jesus' work, this is what they needed. They needed to begin from a place of wholeness and with the intention of wholeness for the world. Jesus wasn't sending them out to war with the world or to attack their enemies the way Jesus had been attacked. Rather they were going to show a different way.

That is the way from which we are also invited to live. A way of wholeness, a way of peace, a way that meets others where they are and that invites others into our lives as well. A way that is about joining, not pulling apart...a way of comfort and courage and love. May it be so.