

**“Through the Locked Door”**

A Meditation Preached by The Rev. Jennifer Cameron  
April 19, 2020 – St. Columba Presbyterian Church, Belleville

**Hymns for Worship Video – April 19, 2020**

“Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee” Vv. 1&5 #367 in the Book of Praise

Jesus, the very thought of Thee,  
With sweetness fills my breast;  
But sweeter far Thy face to see,  
And in Thy presence rest.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou,  
As Thou our prize wilt be;  
Jesus, be Thou our Glory now,  
And thru eternity.

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“Jesus, Stand Among Us” All Verses #452 in the Book of Praise

Jesus stand among us, in your risen pow'r  
Let this time of worship be a hallowed hour

Breathe the Holy Spirit into every heart  
Bid the fears and sorrows from each soul depart

Thus with quickened footsteps, we'll pursue our way  
Watching for the dawning of eternal day

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**Scripture Text: John 20:19-31**

<sup>19</sup> *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"* <sup>20</sup> *After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

<sup>21</sup> *Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."*

<sup>22</sup> *And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

<sup>24</sup> *Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"*

*But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."*

<sup>26</sup> *A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"* <sup>27</sup> *Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."*

<sup>28</sup> *Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

<sup>29</sup> *Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

<sup>30</sup> *Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

## **Meditation**

There is nothing rational about the Easter story. Generally speaking, people don't come back from the dead after they've been in the grave for 3 days. We don't find angels sitting in cemeteries telling us where to find a risen body. The dead do not tend to greet people in gardens. They don't give instructions to tell others they're on their way to meet their friends. In our experience, when a physical body has died, it stays that way.

And yet, this is what the Gospel says happened on that first Easter morning. Not just one Gospel, but all of them. And there are witnesses to corroborate the story! Give thanks to God for that, because as irrational as it all sounds, it is true. Faith isn't in the habit of being rational. It is defined by the letter to the Hebrews as:

*being sure of what we hope for,  
and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11:1)*

The Gospel reading today is another one of those stories that defies logic, and yet here it is as it tells the story of Jesus appearing among his disciples who are secured behind locked doors. Jesus suddenly appears in their midst, with the doors still locked, in all of his very real, resurrected glory.

How amazing! How did he do it?

People don't suddenly appear in locked rooms without disturbing the locked door.

He didn't climb in through the window.

This isn't some kind of super-hero mutant movie where people have strange powers to do such things. This is Jesus – a real-life flesh and blood person.

Of course, he did just rise from the dead.

And he did just walk out of a tomb after three days of having been laid to rest.

So his power to appear in a locked room shouldn't really surprise us – or his disciples.

He is the Son of God, after all... And there it is. The explanation for his power to do miraculous things. He is the Son of God.

God incarnate.

Emmanuel – God with us.

His power is inexplicable except for one thing – he is the power of God revealed to the world in human form. We cannot possibly explain or understand how this all happened, because we cannot explain the power of God. If God has the ability to raise someone from the dead, then that same person miraculously appearing in the midst of the disciples that day really shouldn't surprise us.

But we would have been surprised too, had we been in that locked room.

God has infinite ability to surprise us. His power is so beyond human definition, explanation, that we are constantly surprised at what our God has done, or is doing, and will do in the future. Try as we do, we simply cannot attribute human understanding to God's work.

There is still uncertainty about how the earth was created, humans appeared, and how earthly things have evolved over the aeons. There are things about the human body that are still a medical mystery. Situations take shape in our lives that make no sense, but they come together in ways we don't expect. Prayers are answered in ways we don't understand. What we call coincidences happen and they change our perspective or make our path clearer, or simply serve to amaze us. As much as science, medicine and philosophy have advanced our understanding of life, there is much that remains a mystery.

God remains a mystery.

The resurrection is a mystery.

Eternal life is a mystery.

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

If Jesus can rise from death, he can certainly appear behind a locked door. He did it among the disciples that day. He suddenly appeared in a variety of ways to his uncomprehending friends before he left this world to be with the Father. He still does it. He still is unhindered by the ways we try to lock ourselves away, shut others out, and keep ourselves to ourselves. He breaks through our doubts so that we declare with awe, my Lord and my God!

Like Thomas, we are vulnerable to doubt, even when we believe in God's power to do the impossible. But Jesus is able to overcome that doubt and remind us, again and again, that we can trust him to be amazing;

To work a miracle;

To be with us;

To be the Saviour he knows we need him to be.

It's just that we sometimes can't imagine how it can happen. We worry about things over which we have no control. We play the 'what if?' game with ourselves to the point we can become afraid to take risks or try something new because we don't know how it will turn out. We fear the unknown. Yet Jesus appears in the midst of all of that and says – blessed are you when you do not see and yet believe.

And you know what? When we hear that from Jesus, however it may come to us, we remember that we must trust him, that we can trust him, to break through the locked doors of our hearts and minds. He will take the burden of worry and care from us, even when we are clinging to our need to have control over whatever worries us.

When my son was leaving for college I was a wreck. I was sad that my first child was heading out on his own. I was worried about him. I was afraid for his safety in the big city. I was worried about his ability to stay on top of his classes without being under my watchful and loving supervision. How could he possibly function without his mom?

And then Jesus broke the lock of worry that had attached itself to my heart and mind. And Jesus surprised me. After I stopped keeping facial tissue companies in business, I realized I was worrying over things about which I could do nothing. I was worried about a kid with more self-confidence than I could ever hope for. I was worried about a kid who is a natural leader, not a follower. I was worried about a kid that had not let go of his faith in God to protect and guide him. And I realized that I could let go of that worry, because God had not let go of my son. Or me. And when my boy did need his mom's help with decisions, he could talk to me without my freaking out that he was in trouble – which he wasn't.

I trust God to do the same when our other son leaves for school. I'll let you know how I do when the time comes!

The risen Christ surprised his disciples when he appeared in their midst behind locked doors. They were locked in fear, sorrow, disappointment. Jesus appeared among them and said 'Peace be with you.'

And it was.

Thomas was hiding behind the locked door of disbelief, doubt. Jesus appeared once again and said 'Peace be with you.' And Thomas was surprised. But Jesus persevered with his wary friend, broke through the locked door of doubt and showed him the truth. His truth. And Thomas believed.

We believe because Jesus has broken through the locked door of death and emerged in the full glory of God. We are those who have not seen – we weren't there – and yet we believe. We believe because Jesus repeatedly breaks through our doubts, fears, worries, anxieties, saying 'Peace be with you... my peace be with you.' And when those locks are broken, his peace enters in.

It isn't rational. We aren't meant to understand how it all happened for us to believe it all happened. The mysteries of faith are what make our faith what it is...

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

God's power to bring life from death, peace from anxiety, faith from doubt, is not meant to be understood by human standards; it is meant to be embraced by human hearts. It is meant to be trusted because it is trustworthy.

It is meant to be at the heart of our faith, because it is the heart of our faith.

Thanks be to God for the power of the risen Saviour to break through our locked doors, and give us peace. Amen.