

Series: "Things He Heals - Stations of the Resurrection"
Sermon: "Week 3: The Disciples' Fear"
Text: John 20:19-20

Core Observations of the Text:

1. **Jesus stands in the middle:** The last time we met this phrase "in the middle" it was in 19.18, when John wrote that Jesus hung on the cross in the middle of two thieves. Now, John is signaling that these disciples had done something criminal - instead of boldly standing with Jesus, they had buckled and cowered and fled. Yet, Jesus greets them not with condemnation, nor does He wait for them to make their apology. Though not mentioned in the sermon, the conclusion to verse 20 implies that their joy arises in response to the joy Jesus takes in seeing them.
2. **Jesus announces peace:** Jesus' words to the disciples were a customary greeting, and one that He had spoken to them just three days before (see John 14.27 and 16.33). Here, Jesus is announcing it over the disciples as a community ("y'all") and not merely over them as individuals ('each of you'). Gerhard von Rad, an Old Testament scholar, wrote an extensive study that showed that the Hebrew word "shalom" always refers to communal peace.

Questions to ponder and apply:

1. **False substitutes to God's peace:** The sermon mentioned that we are tempted by the easy solutions ("astroturf peace!") to peace, which are sometimes good and right but are not the full gift Jesus alone can give. Which of these are especially tempting for you: security, niceness, pursuit of ideal circumstances? This week, draft a one sentence prayer, asking Jesus to help you press beyond these substitutes.
2. **The body of believers:** The peace of Jesus comes through the disciples to one another. How has Christ's peace come to you recently through the church community?
3. **The presence of Jesus:** The only way to be at peace with God is to be in the presence of the Resurrected One.

Notes: Gerhard von Rad's study of the Hebrew word "shalom" (= peace) is in the Kittel's Theological Word Dictionary (1935), volume 2.