

THE FIRST 15

Wednesday, May 29, 2024

Today is Wednesday, May 29 and we are studying the Gospel of John chapter twenty.

OPENING PRAYER

In the morning I praise you, Lord. You are the Living God, holy and mighty is your name. All honor and glory is yours, my risen Savior Jesus, redeemer and friend. As a new day dawns I pause to seek your face. I quiet the cares of my mind, slow my breath and still the concerns of my heart. Come, show me what it means to live the Resurrection life. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

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!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."
John 20:19-23

REFLECTION

This week we peer into the empty tomb alongside the three women and the two disciples - Peter and John. The women arrived at the tomb early in the morning as the sun rose over the eastern horizon. After a miraculous day of unexpected happenings, evening arrives, the day is done and the sun is setting in the west. The disciples are afraid and have gathered together behind locked doors. Following her encounter with Jesus in the garden tomb, Mary Magdalene went and found the disciples. She told them she had seen the risen Jesus. She shared everything he had spoken to her and then unexpectedly Jesus appeared again.

Despite the locked doors, Jesus came to be with his followers. I consider the doors I have locked in my life. Doors that keep people out and doors that keep me in. Doors that separate and divide. Doors that are shut in fear, closed in grief, latched with cynicism, trapped in sin and locked tight because of the hurts of the past. Jesus walks right through all my closed doors to be with me. He brings me peace. Alongside the disciples I see the evidence of his love and compassion. I see where the nails were driven into his hands and where the sword pierced his side. Wounds that bled in love for me. Suffering endured for the sake of my sin. His anguish for my healing. His death for my eternal life.

I consider the emotions this passage evokes in me. Do I imagine my heart closing or opening to the presence of Christ in my midst? The presence of Jesus brings peace. Twice he says, "Peace be with you." Where in my life do I need to receive the peace of Christ? Where in my heart do I need to find his peace? Alongside the disciples, Jesus invites me to receive the Holy Spirit. I open my heart and invite the Spirit into my life and circumstances. As Jesus sent the

disciples, he is also sending me. Perhaps God wants to send me out to serve his kingdom at a new place or in a new way.

Ask: What doors have I erected to keep Jesus and others out? What doors might Christ be opening for me and where is he sending me to go?

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, I relinquish my fears and open the door of my heart to invite you in. Come and bring the peace that passes understanding. I am overjoyed by your love for me and your sacrifice for my soul. You are the love of my life and I invite you into the deepest corners of my heart. Where there is fear, bring peace. Where there is hurt, provide comfort. Where there is loneliness, offer companionship. Where there is disappointment, bring hope. Where there is sadness, bring joy. Prepare me, equip me and send me into the world to share your love, witness to your truth, serve the poor and help those in need. Amen.