

The house was nearly one hundred years old. The boy charged with taking care of his younger brother and sister was sixteen. He was afraid. I know, because it was I. I laid in the bed and listened to the sounds, the cooing of an old house after a day of sunshine and heat. I could not turn off my ears, every ~~sound~~ <sup>I was certain</sup> creak and groan ~~of that old structure~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~I was certain~~ <sup>was</sup> the house's response to the ~~sight~~ <sup>was</sup> of an intruder, an enemy come to harm and to rob. My eyes searched the darkness for what was not there. I wanted sleep, but <sup>my</sup> fears held me captive. I prayed, Jesus keep me safe until morning, until the light comes again. <sup>Finally</sup> Sleep came, and he did ~~keep me safe~~.

They were not young boys, they were men with calloused hands and biceps thick and <sup>hard</sup>. Once ~~they had~~, just a short time before, they had boasted of their courage, Armed with swords they had been ready to fight any foe. God was on their side, they knew it, were sure of it. But ~~their~~ <sup>Jesus</sup> ~~master~~, their Lord would not let them fight. Jesus trusted in the power of his Father, not in weapons made by man.

Now these men ~~who~~ had been his disciples were huddled together in a locked room. They had believed Jesus when he spoke of the power of God, but now they believed even more what ~~they had seen~~ some of them had seen with their own eyes. Death. Jesus was dead. If Jesus, God's own son was not safe in this world, what would happen to his followers.

They locked the door, and listened for the sound of death, coming for them.

I guess that can happen to any of us, young or old. Fear can take life right ~~of~~ away from us so that we listen for death and have no peace or rest. Our eyes search the darkness for what we cannot see, for events that have not yet been. Most all of us know something of this fear, some among us know nothing else.

But into that prison of fear Jesus came to his disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."

Death did not own Jesus, he who taught them to trust in God and not in weapons was not a fool. God is faithful, his power <sup>was</sup> stronger than the cross constructed by Rome, stronger than the <sup>hatred</sup> of the Jews, stronger than even death. Peace be with you.

Then Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you."

The house is quiet, the whole family is asleep. Suddenly I am awakened by screams of terror. In my sleep, my child has seen a vision of the darkness. I am here, It is all right, I say. I am here, It's all right. And with my words and my presence the power of the vision, the dream of darkness, is broken. ~~Jesus said,~~ Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me even so I send you.

A congregation is gathered in worship. One comes bearing in <sup>his</sup> ~~his~~ body an enemy called cancer. Another has come troubled because temptation has ~~lead~~ led to sin, and she fears the pain and the heartache that will result. Two who sit here side by side, share a house, and a life, but no longer any love. Many walk through that door searching an unknown future for what life will be without the husband or wife, parent or child that has died. Some come, their minds filled with numbers that declare that they will lose the farm or business they have worked so long to own. <sup>so many</sup> ~~all~~ are like <sup>new</sup> a boy, ears listening, eyes straining in the darkness to see that intruder that come to hurt and destroy. And some have seen that enemy, and are crying out like a child caught in her nightmare.

<sup>Jesus says to you word of peace</sup> ~~Peace be with you, say. Maybe we give it little thought. Maybe a great deal. Peace be with you, say. To prisoners locked in by their fears~~ <sup>Peace of God that overcomes all human understanding</sup> ~~you say, Peace be with you.~~ God takes the very words of Jesus and puts them into our mouths. Peace be with you.

~~Jesus said,~~ "As the father has sent me even so I send you."

From here we will go out into the world with this same word of peace. When death comes to the neighbors house, then you to whom Jesus has spoken his word of peace go there to share it. Your arms are the very arms of God as you comfort and say to the sobbing one, "It's all right."

*for us*

As the Father has sent me even so I send you.

You are those sent by Jesus. Into a world that knows the darkness so well, the peace and power of God so little, <sup>but sends you</sup> ~~you are sent~~. To feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to embrace the lonely, to be the ambassadors of the only Son of God, <sup>from that</sup> our living Lord, this is your calling.

One day there shall be no more locked doors, no more boards creaking under the weight of the intruder, no more children screaming in the dark night. Jesus, <sup>whom</sup> ~~God~~ God raised from the dead, is our promise <sup>of that new day</sup> ~~that it will be so~~. Live in his peace.