

John 20:19-31

2nd Sunday of Easter

April 19, 1998

A family was murdered about a mile from where I lived. The father had helped coach my little league team. Every day my school bus rode by their house.

Each night from then on I double checked to make sure the doors were locked.

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

The doors were locked.

They too had heard about a murder. Jesus had been crucified. The authorities had committed this murder, killing Jesus.

The doors were locked.

How many times I hear people remembering the days that doors were not locked. We never locked our doors back then, they say. The world was safe.

What does it take to get us to lock up all our doors? One robbery, one murder.

I will keep locking my doors for years after one word of danger.

The doors were locked.

Jesus had been arrested.

The disciples were afraid, they locked the doors.

Mary Magdalene had already told them Jesus was alive.

She had told them all that he spoke to her when she saw him, outside the tomb. But they kept the doors locked.

Locked doors are no barrier to the risen Lord, Jesus.

Peace be with you.

He showed them his hands, his side. The marks of his love for them.

He told them he was sending them. As the Father had sent him he was sending them.

To empower them he breathed on them, his Holy Spirit entered them.

He gave them authority: "If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven, if you retain the sins of any they are retained."

"Only God can forgive sins." the Pharisees had declared. Now some fishermen and tax collectors would be acting on God's authority.

Then Jesus was gone.

Right away the sent ones witnessed. "We have seen the Lord!" they told Thomas.

He did not believe.

Do you think witnessing to Christ is easy?

Ten of them could not convince one. Though they were sent by Jesus, had his own Spirit, were given his authority, their witness resulted only in Thomas' doubting.

So where do we find them the next Sunday? Out in the highways and byways making disciples for Jesus? No, behind closed doors once more.

Jesus appeared again. Thomas believed.

Locked doors and failing witness, what a way for our Risen Lord to be greeted. After Mary came to them they might have opened all the doors, watching, waiting for Jesus.

And if they could not convince Thomas with their word, who would they ever convince?

Yet Jesus was not kept out by locked doors, not defeated by doubt.

One thing can happen and doors are locked. A single word spoken in anger and doors of love and understanding can be locked for years. A neighbor. A sister or a brother. a parent and a child. Doors can get locked.

What does it take to open the doors of our hearts and our lives to others?

~~Jesus raised from the dead did not cause the disciples to open their doors at first.~~

But just as death could not hold Jesus neither could locked doors keep him out.

What doors are locked forever in your life? What hopes are dead? What doubts and fears lock you up tight?

Jesus will break through.

Jesus can break through.

John said he wrote all the things about Jesus in this gospel so that you might believe and believing have life in Jesus' name.

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Will he take you out of all that locks you in and send you out as his witness?

Can Jesus who is risen from the dead do that?

You better believe it.