

Jesus gives us “peace.” *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your heart be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.”* (John 14:27)

This morning, I invite you to come to the Lord’s Table, taking Jesus’ body and his cup. Jesus invites us to come to him. Come and reach out your hands to take his body. Let us hold the risen Christ in our hands and make him the center of our lives. Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed.

April 1, 2018

**Peace Be With You**

John 20:19-31

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

“I think, therefore I am.” In other words, “I doubt, therefore I exist.” Do you know what this sentence means? Descartes, a French philosopher, mentioned this sentence in his *Pansé*. This phrase becomes a very important concept in Idealism of European philosophy. According to Descartes, doubting or critical thinking is necessary in philosophical thought.

I agree that critical thinking is an important practice in study from literature to science. But unfortunately, I am not a doubting person. I didn’t have a chance to learn critical thinking in schools. Education in Korea requires students to input knowledge as much as they can. So we listened to the teachers’ lectures and took notes during the class. We studied a lot at school. During high school years we went to school 8:00 am and studied there until 10:00 pm. In spite of many hours of study, we didn’t have many chances for discussions at school. We just memorized and input information of all subjects.

But when I studied in the United States I realized that I needed critical thinking in my classes. Without a critical thinking I couldn’t get involved in the discussions. Professors asked us to have critical and creative thinking in discussions and in writing papers. During my study in the United States, I developed myself to have more critical thinking.

Doubting is a necessary process in our ordinary life. It makes possible many great discoveries and inventions, so our life becomes more enjoyable and easier. Archbishop Desmond Tutu is always reminding us that “Doubt is not the opposite of faith. The opposite of faith is indifference.” Dealing with doubt is a fundamental fact of human existence and faith.

In today's Gospel reading we find a classic doubter, Thomas. Thomas had not been with the other disciples when Jesus first appeared to them after the resurrection. And when they told him about Jesus' resurrection he did not believe it. *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands,"* he said, *"and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand in his side, I will not believe it."* (John 20:25) If Thomas had been an American, he would have been from Missouri. Do you know why? Because Missouri is the "Show Me" state.

Anyway, we cannot blame Thomas. Like Thomas, we want some evidence, particularly when they are telling us things that seem impossible. Thomas would not believe until he himself saw the marks on Jesus. Jesus appeared again to the disciples a week later and said to Thomas. *"Put your finger here. See my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."* (John 20:27) Even though doubting/critical thinking is a helpful practice for academic development and our lives, it could be a stumbling block for our faith.

There is another stumbling block for our faith. It is fear. In today's gospel reading the disciples were fearful of Jews. They were hiding from Jews. And, ironically one of the Jews they feared was Jesus. Think about it. They knew that one of their members had betrayed Jesus. Others had denied him, ran away, and abandoned him. Even though when the women returned with the amazing news that Jesus was not dead, he had risen, the disciples initially refused to believe them. When they heard the good news from the women, they might have initially felt ashamed, anxious, and even afraid.

The Jesus they had betrayed, denied, and abandoned, was now alive, walking around, and might possibly be coming to see them. So they were hiding away behind closed doors with fear and anxiety. However, Jesus understood their anxiety, their shame and fear. His first words were, *"Peace be with you."* (John 20:21) Jesus

reassured them. *"Don't worry, I'm not angry. I'm not upset with you. It's all right. I'm not holding a grudge."*

It often feels hard to come before God, to pray to Jesus. Like the disciples, we hide away from God and others behind locked doors. We are unwilling to come out from walls of our guilt, worry, and anxiety. And we are unable to approach God. But our brokenness is no barrier to God's love. God will come to us. As Jesus assured his disciples, he assures us as well. Jesus is in our midst in spite of all our efforts to keep him out. Jesus stands among us, not as our accuser, our prosecutor, but as one who loves and understands us, who assures us, *"Peace be with you."* We need to leave the locked room of our anxiety and come out into the world.

Our ministry is to help people escape from their locked doors of doubt and fear. We need to help each other to come to Jesus without doubt or fear. Our ministry and our worship would be an instrument for helping and supporting one another and sharing the grace of God experienced in our lives.

Many of us come to church and reach out to Jesus for healing. People come to church and see Jesus through us. If people cannot see Jesus here, Faith Church, and in us, where else can they honestly turn? I hope our church can be a community of sharing and caring through our worship service and ministry. There are many people who need our hands. There are people who really want to come to church to worship God, but they are reluctant to come to church by themselves. They need our hands and help. Let us help them out. Let us support and pray for those who need help.

Jesus came to the disciples who were in fear. Jesus came to Thomas who was in doubt. He encouraged his disciples and empowered them. They became witnesses of the risen Christ, spreading the gospel all over the world. Jesus today wants to encourage and empower us.