

John 20:19-31
Easter 2C 2019
Jesus Doesn't Stop There
Pastor Lauren Dow Wegner

This past Tuesday,
After we all returned to Grace from a Holy Week and Easter
break,

I was teaching the 7th grade religion class first thing in
the morning.

And I said, "Happy Easter!"

To which several were quick to reply,
"Um, Easter was Sunday. It's over."

You can imagine the liturgical calendar lesson this pastor
delighted in giving them,

Explaining that Eastertide is actually 50 days,
And that Easter is a season that continues until
Pentecost in June.

They had a reply for that, too:

"Then Easter break should be that long, too!"

No, my friends, Easter isn't over.

Far from it.

Jesus reveals that to us time and time again,

And as we gather this week after that Festival of Festivals
last Sunday,

We hear of a couple of appearances of Jesus.

Appearances in a locked room.

Appearances to disciples who believe,

And to those who are skeptical.

We hear of Jesus drawing near.

Having been raised from the dead is miracle enough,

But Jesus doesn't stop at that.

God doesn't stop at resurrection.

There are appearances to make,
There is proof to be shared,
Seen,
Touched.
Jesus goes right to the disciples.
He goes right into their locked room.
And he says,
“See.
Touch.
Believe.”

But that’s not all Jesus says.
In fact,
The first words Jesus says to the disciples are,
“Peace be with you.”
He says this twice,
And then he says,
“As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

A nice missional line,

A short and simple blessing.
Except if we are sent as Jesus has been sent,
Then it’s not so simple and nice.
God sent Jesus to suffer and to die.
God sent Jesus to be about a very different way of living--
A shocking way,
A deliberate, and radical, and disruptive-to-the-
status-quo way of living.
If we are sent as Jesus has been sent,
Then we are sent into that way of living,
Into that way of suffering,
Into that way of dying. . .
And of rising with him.

There's only need for one Savior,
And that's Jesus Christ.
But when the Savior comes to show us his hands and his side,
Breathes the Holy Spirit of peace over us,
And says we, too, are sent as he was sent--
Then we can't ignore that we have been
caught up in his life and death and mission.

Our first reading from Acts gives us a glimpse of just the kind of
thing Jesus' sending words led to:
Just prior to our reading,
The apostles have been in prison.
God frees them from prison,
And now they're getting a talking-to from the high priest,
who warns them,
"Don't teach in this man's name anymore."
Immediately after our reading today,
It is noted that the council is enraged,
And wants to kill the apostles.
No one likes what these apostles are saying, doing, or teaching.

And still. . .
The apostles proclaim what Jesus has done,
And they bear witness to these things,
And a bit later,
They rejoice to be suffering for the sake of
Jesus' name.

Because as God sent Jesus,
So Jesus sends us.
And as Jesus suffered,
So will we.

This morning we celebrate the baptism of (8:30) Preston Charles
and (11) Emily Hart.

And while we gaze at his/her sweet baby face,

And smile at his/her sweet baptismal gown. . .

While we bask in the goodness and light and innocence of
this little one,

And the gift of God making Preston/Emily new and
holy and righteous in God's sight. . .

We also are acknowledging together that in those waters is a
mission,

A call,

A sending.

Preston/Emily, with his/her new identity as "child of God,"

Will also be marked with the cross--

An identifier on his/her own body that connects him/her
to Jesus's body.

Jesus' sending is connected to his hands and his side.

"As the Father has sent me,

So I send you, Preston/Emily," Jesus says.

"As the Father has sent me,

So I send you." (all)

Following the senseless and violent shooting at Chabad
synagogue in Poway, California yesterday,

Rabbi Goldstein,

The leader of this congregation,

Who had been shot in the hand himself,

Stood before his congregation to finish his
Passover sermon.

He said,

"We are strong.

We are united.

They can't break us."

United with our Jewish sisters and brothers,

Along with all of our sisters and brothers in this world,

We remember that the forces of this world cannot break us.

And that Christ has sent us to stand against those forces that try to.

"So I send you."

As we welcome new members into our Grace family this morning-

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Babies baptized,

And adults who are affirming their baptism as they join the life of this community,

We celebrate that each of our baptism days is a victorious day,

But it is also a day that marks our lives for holy and righteous suffering.

When we are washed in these waters, we are washed in Jesus' death and resurrection.

And the death part is real--

We just lived it last week.

The resurrection has won, but it is won through death.

When we receive the gift of Christ's body and blood here at this Table,

When our hands hold Jesus' broken body in them,

When our lips taste Jesus' poured-out blood,

We are sent.

Sent as God sent Jesus.

Sent as a body of Christ over which death has no hold,

But a body that will still encounter suffering and death.

We eat it.

We drink it.

It's part of us,
Because it is Christ.

But while death is part of our story,
While suffering is part of our story,
These are not our whole story.
Jesus holds out his hands and his side,
Deadly wounds that now bring life.
Jesus holds out his hands and his side,
And he gives us peace.
And he sends us out,
As he has been sent,
To suffer,
To die,
And to rise.