

John 20: 19-31
Second Sunday of Easter
April 12, 2026
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Thomas Merton was a twentieth-century contemplative, a Trappist monk, and a poet. He wrote a poem about Advent and Christmas that I'd like to share just a few lines from, and yes, I know it's Easter. "Into this demented inn / in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, / Christ comes uninvited." The inn is, of course, a reference to that famous locale that closed its doors to the holy family, sending them to a stable for the birth. And "demented" seems the right word to describe that strange moment in time when a fragile-egoed king was so threatened by the idea of a baby that he sent off spies and mercenaries. Christ came into the world in a crazed moment, full of violence, uninvited and unwelcome. He arrived unprotected and vulnerable as an infant in arms.

And today we hear twice over stories of Christ coming again uninvited into another demented inn. The first occasion just hours after Mary Magdalene's **mystifying** garden encounter, the first Easter evening. And then again, a week later, locked doors and all, Jesus comes and stands among the disciples. It is certainly another demented moment when the powers-that-be could not make room for a man telling stories and healing hurting women and men. The world around him crazed and fraught with accusations and misinformation; his own friends cowering and hiding. And as before, Christ arrives unguarded, vulnerable, in fact, still wounded from the violence inflicted upon him.

Intriguingly, the same announcement from the angels at his birth now comes from Jesus on this side of resurrection: *peace on earth, goodwill toward all; peace be with you, my own peace I give to you*. Into this demented inn with the quaking disciples, Jesus arrives. Perhaps he is uninvited because, in their various ways, none of them can quite imagine that it's possible for him to show up in their midst again (despite what Mary Magdalene told them). Or maybe uninvited because they can imagine that he'd show up but might come with pointed questions about their fickle behavior, their cowardice, their failures. Regardless, uninvited, into this demented inn, Jesus arrives offering peace.

Immediately, let's be clear about what he is not saying here. This is not the same thing as walking into a room where everyone is worked up and saying, "calm down." Because you know, don't you, that in the whole history of people saying "calm down," it has never actually made anyone calm down? Nor is the peace on offer here from Jesus a shaky cease-fire, fragile, and tenuous. It is not a temporary pause in the fight, merely allowing everyone to rearm. Rather, when Jesus says, "Peace be with you," the peace on offer sounds more like, "I see you, your fear and agitation, your trepidation about what comes next, and I offer you a way of harmony, of coherence. I offer you a different way of living with these wounds and with this wounded world."

It's likely that if you've spent some time in church, someone has explained to you that the words for peace in Hebrew and in Greek are much more than a simple absence of conflict. *Shalom*, the Hebrew word, encompasses well-being, the conditions of justice, and a sense of wholeness or completeness; and *irené*, the Greek, turns also on a wholeness, on a joining together of different pieces in concord. These visions of peace are robust and encompassing; they hold together disparate bits and pieces. And if we pay attention, we can see a little something of this holding fractures together even in these early moments.

You see, nothing of Jesus' arrival into the room denies the truth that the world is a place of strife and conflict; Jesus - even after the resurrection - still carries the marks, the scars of violence. None of that is erased; he has not changed the world we live in. But he is offering to change us, his skittish friends. He shows up to change the disciples, and to change us, or at least to offer the possibility of a changed way of living in the havoc of this demented world. What his peace offers is a rejoining of splintered parts. Christ's peace is a way for broken people to live in a broken world, and we learn from him that this way of living is with the tools of forgiveness and with a spirit of trust and with his generous blessing.

Jesus comes uninvited into their room, not bringing war plans, but wounds. He does not arrive with recriminations and accusations for their inadequacies, but with forgiveness. He does not huddle with them to plot his revenge tour, but to share his peace. He comes back uninvited into this demented inn to show them that life is more than resentment and rage. By arriving, he shows them how to repair their wrecked relationships and their broken hearts. By arriving, he shows us how we might use our woundedness not as a rationale to hit back but as a means to connect with others because, as it turns out, we are all scarred. By arriving, he breathes into the very places where they and we are holding our collective breath. Where they are frozen in fear, where we are clenched in anxiety, Jesus inhales and exhales, and reveals his most tender and vulnerable injuries, asking us to consider stepping toward him and each other, even reaching out our hands toward the scars.

It's possible, likely even, that in that room mistrust was growing and not just mistrust of the power structures that had turned on them, but also mistrust among each other - disappointment, jealousy, blame. It's possible, likely even, that in their minds the churn of self-reproach, of what ifs, of doubt, of second-guessing was overwhelming any other information that they could process, even the story of resurrection, especially the story of resurrection.

Does this mistrust, does this churn sound familiar?

It's possible, likely even, that you and I know a little something about that way of living in a land of wariness and weariness, living with the voices of doubt and anger and confusion swirling inside us, living with the fear that this is really all there is and all there ever will be. And into our demented lives, Jesus comes uninvited, saying something like, "I see you, and you can live in this shattered world in a different way. You can take the fragments and scars and make something whole again, even beautiful." Peace be with you.