

Rev. Dan Welch Easter 2 4.11.21 Text- John 20:19-31 "The Power of the Voice"

[Slide- Human Voice Has Power] "Okay, Google, what's the weather

forecast this weekend?" "Hey, Siri, call Mom." "Alexa, set my alarm for 7:00 a.m." Did anybody's phone out there pick up what I just said and respond?

On Friday, I was practicing my sermon out loud and as soon as I said, "Alexa, set my alarm for 7:00 a.m.," my Alexa device thought I was actually talking to her and she said "Okay, setting alarm for 7:00 AM tomorrow."

The point is human voice has new power! We don't have to type with our thumbs anymore. We can talk to our devices and they will do what we ask. Or at least that's how it is supposed to work. Sometimes little glitches happen like the one I just mentioned and another funny one that also happened last week: I was running late to get home and give Rebekah a ride to work. She texted me and these words showed up on my Apple Watch: "Mom's going to drive me to work." I then SHOULD have said to Siri, through my watch, "Text Rebekah: 'I'm almost home,'" but instead I just said the words, "I'm almost home" it was then that Siri answered me and said, "Indeed, you are!" Like Alexa, Siri thought I was talking to her!

[Slide-Star Trek] Having conversations with a computer though is

the sort of thing that was just science fiction not too long ago. At a time when most of the information that went into a computer was on paper punch cards, Captain Kirk and the crew of the USS Enterprise talked to a computer as they Trekked their way through the galaxy. And now we *all* can talk to the computer. We can ask Alexa to play any song we could ever want on Amazon Prime or dictate to our word-processing program to type a letter without having to touch a keyboard. We can ask Siri a long-division question like “What’s 1, 012 divided by 5?” and get the answer without touching a calculator, let alone a pencil and paper. By the way, the answer is 202.4. Thank you, Siri! What’s more if you like to bake you can call up a recipe in the kitchen through Google without dirtying a tablet screen.

[Slide-Sea Lions] Yes, God created the voice to have power. When sea lions gather in large colonies to raise their young, hundreds of pups will swim out into the water together and come back together. Once on the shore, they find their mothers by listening for the distinct sound of their mother’s voice. In time, all the young find their way back to their own

mothers.

Easter is, among other things, about the power of the voice. On this Second Sunday of Easter, the risen Lord Jesus comes to us to speak His peace into our hearts so that we may speak that peace to the world.

[Slide- 3 pics of The Women, the disciples, and Jesus] This is what we read in this morning's Gospel. After Mary and the other women told Jesus' disciples they had seen the Lord, the disciples did not really believe. By the evening of the day, the disciples are behind locked doors, like a little nest of rabbits afraid of the wolf that might be looking for them. This is the Church at its absolute worst. Hunkered down, huddled together, letting fear rather than faith control their every thought and action.

Then suddenly, Jesus comes and stands among them. John says the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. But in their joy not one of them apologizes for his behavior over the last few days. No one says he's sorry or that they should have done better or that they should have believed the women. Perhaps part of the reason is they don't get a chance to say *anything*. [Slide- Peace be with you.] Instead, it's Jesus who speaks

the first word. And just as was the case at the sound of God's voice in creation, the sound of Jesus' voice creates something wonderful and new: "Peace be with you," he says (v 19). This is not a wish or a hope. It's His *gift* to them. "Peace be with you," He says, and there is peace and joy.

This was the whole point of what Jesus had just been through. And now the disciples are just starting to realize it. Jesus' death on the cross was to reestablish the peace between God and man that had been shattered when we first sinned. Sin will always stand as separation, conflict, between two parties. In sin, we live for ourselves, not for the other. In sin, we cannot be in harmony. In sin, we could never be with God, because His holiness cannot be in relationship with unholiness. But by taking our sin to the cross, Christ removed the separation and reconciled us to God, bringing us back into peace with Him.

[Slide- 3 pics of Jesus with Thomas] The whole scene repeats a week later when Thomas, finally, is with the disciples. The doors are still locked, but Jesus comes again. He speaks the same words. "Peace be with you." Rather than scolding, Jesus encourages Thomas to touch and see the

wounds. “Do not disbelieve, but believe” (v 27).

Even though two thousand years have passed since that first Easter evening, the church still struggles to get out from behind locked doors and into the world. While we might not fear suffering the same cruelty as Jesus suffered on the cross—the fear that kept the first apostles locked up—there is as much to be wary of in the twenty-first century as there was in the first century. [Slide- “Just” phrases] How easy it is to keep quiet when we hear a relative or friend ridicule the church for holding to so-called “old-fashioned beliefs” about marriage or when a classmate or co-worker tells an inappropriate joke and we don’t raise any objection. These are only small in comparison to bigger fears we might have about how quickly the culture of our world is turning against God and us, His people.

The temptation is to focus all our attention on our fear and let that fear paralyze us. “Just go along to get along.” “Don’t disagree with anyone, even when it is clearly wrong, because we don’t want to be ridiculed.” “Yes, we may reason, God has put His commandments in place to help us to live lives that are pleasing to Him and that benefit everyone, but we don’t

want to seem like we're forcing our beliefs on others, so we remain silent or just want to close ourselves off from the outside world. "Just be nice."

[Slide- Door and Lock] Our reading today from John 20 is not about how the world locks its doors to the Gospel, but how the Church locks itself away from the world. The ironic thing about the disciples' locked doors is that they weren't really keeping out soldiers looking to crucify them and they weren't keeping out friends and relatives who may have wanted to ridicule them for following Jesus; there is no record of either of those things happening. The One they were locking out was Jesus. They locked out the word He had so clearly spoken to them about dying and rising again, and in locking out that word, they locked out Jesus. When fear becomes our focus, we fall into the same trap; we lock out the Lord, who time and again tells His Church, "Do not be afraid!"

Jesus will have none of it! The securely locked doors are no problem for Him. If the grave could not keep Him in the ground, their padlocks and boards would not keep Him outside the room where they were gathered. And so, He comes and stands among them and among us and speaks His

word—a word that brings the very thing it says: Peace be with you!

[Slide- 3 Phrases] This is Jesus' word to **you** this Second Sunday of Easter. "Peace be with you." "Peace, your sin is forgiven!" "Do not fear the world. I have overcome the world. Peace be with you." That word comes to you and me today, with exactly the same power as it came to those first disciples on the first Easter and to Thomas a week later. "These [words] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (v 31). In His word, Jesus comes among us today, and we experience the power of His voice. He doesn't just tell us about peace, but He actually speaks peace to you and me. As Luther puts it, "As soon as He said it, it was done" (AE 12:32).

[Slide- Baptism, Pastor, Bible, Altar] Jesus spoke His peace to you in the water of your Baptism, where you were joined to his death and resurrection and you died to sin and rose to new life (just as we saw God do for little Elsie this morning!). That peace is spoken to you every time you return in repentance to your Baptism, and He says to you through your pastor, "I forgive you all your sins." That peace is spoken to you at His

table, where in, with, and under bread and wine, He comes through space and time to feed you His body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins and to lift from you your fears. There His voice speaks peace. “This is for you,” he says, “for the forgiveness of sin.” And we leave the Lord’s table at peace, ready to go into the world.

“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you” (v 21). The Lord cannot be bound; His word will not be bound; and His followers do not live behind locked doors. He sends us out into the world, but we do not go empty-handed.

[Slide- Cross, World, Peace be with you] He breathes His Holy Spirit upon His disciples, and to His Church, He hands the keys to the kingdom of heaven. “If you forgive the sins of anyone they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld” (v 23). And with that, we, like those first disciples, are sent to the world to be the voice of peace. Our voices, our human voices, become voices of power, not because they are louder, wiser, or more entertaining than other voices, but because through our voice, Jesus Himself speaks.

Long before there was a Siri, Alexa, or Google, there was the risen Lord Jesus, speaking to and through people like you and me, so that all who are locked behind doors of fear, sin, sickness, and even death itself might hear His word: "Peace be with you."

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen.