

Second Sunday of Easter [a]

Trinity Lutheran, Alamogordo

April 12, 2026

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." ²⁴ Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these 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.

In the Name of Jesus.

Everything of Jesus is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins.

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, it was, he said, for "the fulfilling of all righteousness." The fulfilling of all righteousness into Jesus who was baptized means that he will make every sinner righteous, he will justify every sinner. So, after Jesus is Baptized, John the Baptist announces him as, "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" (Matt. 3:15)

Everything of Jesus—his teaching, his miracles, his eating and drinking with sinners, his suffering and death—all is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins.

But in this morning's text, we see Jesus entering a room where everything is ordered toward fear. The eleven Apostles have locked themselves in a room, our text says, for fear of the Jews. (John 20:19)

The word "Jews" here does not refer to race or ethnicity—after all, the Apostles are all Jews. Jesus is a Jew.

The word "Jew" here refers to a doctrine, it refers to a theological party. It is the party of the teachers of the Law. It's those who want to control people with the Law, make everyone act right. When you have people being put under the teaching of the Law, you do not have the forgiveness of sins.

So we see that the eleven have locked themselves in a room for fear of those who hold sinners under the Law.

But these Apostles in the locked room belong to the Lord. They bear his Name. They are already clean because of the word he has spoken to them (John 15:3).

So, why are they in fear of the Law?

For that matter, why do we find ourselves in fear of the Law, almost as if we would like to lock ourselves in a room so that others couldn't hold our sins against us?

These Apostles belong to Jesus, they bear his Name, yet, at the same time, they live in their flesh. This is the doctrine that we are simultaneously sinner and saint, or sinner and justified. St. Paul gives us this when throughout his letters he speaks of the old man and the new man. This is each of us as we are righteous and a sinner at the same time, holy and profane. Sinful by our life of flesh, righteous by our life of faith, both at the same time.

The Apostles are in the locked room for fear of the Jews—that is, for fear of those who, as a theological party are the teachers of the Law and are known by the name "Jews".

Here, then, is the problem: the Law locks under fear. God's Law exposes the sinful flesh. The Law accuses the Old Adam and brings guilt and shame.

Even in the Church now—since we are all living this life of flesh and at the same time our life of faith—even in the Church now a terrible temptation comes to the Old Adam, the sinful flesh. It is the temptation for us to use the Law even against one other, holding onto sins, keeping people locked in fear.

Where we are living in our sinful flesh (which is at all times, until we are with our Lord), we are, according to our Old Adam, living in a locked room of fear. Fear which is worked by the

teaching of the Law. The sinful flesh, the Old Adam, controls the room, and the doors are locked.

Jesus enters the room.

How he enters this room with the Apostles we need not speculate. All we need know is that the room is locked, it is filled with 11 scared men, and Jesus appears in the midst of them.

What will he do in a room ordered toward fear?

When he enters, when he speaks, the room ordered toward fear is now being ordered toward the forgiveness of sins.

So what do we see in this room of fear when Jesus enters?

We see the gift of peace. This is peace which flows from the Throne in Heaven and the verdict of justification spoken there (cf. Zech. 3:1-5). Jesus brings this verdict of the justification of the sinner from Heaven down to Earth, for the sinner to hear. He brings peace.

When Jesus enters the room of fear, we see the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is he who “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on Earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith,” as we learn in the Catechism.

We see, when Jesus enters the room, the forgiveness of sins.

The forgiveness is delivered into the ears of the sinner. The sin is forgiven, released, it no longer belongs to the sinner.

Into this room of fear, Jesus brings the gift of faith. Faith is the negation of fear. The fear brought by the accusing Law is replaced by the faith worked by the Gospel which frees from sin.

It is not just in seeing Jesus in the resurrected flesh that chases away fear. For what if Jesus were to come in the flesh, resurrected, but he comes for retribution?

The resurrection of Jesus is not good news simply by the fact that it demonstrates that God has this power of life. The good news, the Gospel, is that he came in the flesh *for grace* (John 1:16-17). He was resurrected *for us*. He came into the room to speak forgiveness. Faith receives that gift.

The room of everything ordered toward fear is now the room with Jesus in the midst. It is now a room ordered *toward the forgiveness of sins*.

Jesus spoke forgiveness in that room with the Apostles.

The Apostles did not stay in the room. Jesus sent them out: ***“As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*** (John 20:21) The gift of the forgiveness of sins (and thus the gift of the Holy Spirit and of faith) is sent out into the world of sinners.

The Word of the crucifixion and resurrection is proclaimed. This is Jesus gathering sinners into the Church, the resurrected One building his Church by the Gospel.

For the sinner, the forgiveness of sins gives the resurrection of the body. As the Small Catechism gives it,

“Where there is the forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.”

[Small Catechism, The Benefit of the Sacrament of the Altar]

This is the Church: a room of sinners, living in fear according to their sinful flesh, but at the same time living in forgiveness and life according to their life of faith.

The Church is a room full of sinners gathered to the Word of Jesus absolving them of all sin, justifying them before the heavenly throne.

The Church, then, is this family of sinners not only being forgiven by the Word of Jesus, but also, then, turning to one another with the conversation and consolation of the Gospel, building up one another in the gifts of Jesus.

Everything with Jesus is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins.

Therefore, everything in the Church is ordered toward the forgiveness of sins. As the Large Catechism gives it,

“everything in the Christian Church is ordered toward this goal: we shall daily receive in the Church nothing but the forgiveness of sin ... for we are in the Christian Church where there is nothing but continuous, uninterrupted forgiveness of sin.”

[Large Catechism, II.55]

In the Name of Jesus.