

Almighty God, through your written word and your spoken word, may we know your living word, Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Now if I said 'Peace be with you'... you would say 'and also with you'

Those are words which we hear so often, they can become a bit habitual. A bit of an instant response. And that's not necessarily a bad thing - that's the reason we have liturgy, so that we can relax into our church services, so that we can switch off parts of our minds so that we can switch on parts of our hearts and souls.

But, rather than glossing over these words, I want us to stay with them.

Verse 36... While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you".

The disciples 'were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost'.

Now, don't forget in this point of Luke's gospel, so far the only people who have actually seen the risen Jesus are the two people on the walk to Emmaus. So this, tonight's reading, is the resurrected Jesus' big debut.

And of course the disciples are startled and terrified. Wouldn't you be, if your leader of three years died before your very eyes, you knew he was laid in a tomb, and yes those pesky women have told you that you do not look for the living among the dead... but here's the proof. Here's the real deal.

So of course you're startled and terrified.

And the fact that he has to show them all he's not a ghost is wonderful, isn't it? Because somehow Jesus being a ghost would make more sense?

At least there's precedence with a ghost, at least you know what to expect with a ghost. And yet, here is Jesus, not a ghost, but resurrected.

He eats, showing them that he isn't some spirit, but still flesh and blood. He's so Jesus, he's still so himself, that he still has his wounds.

We are told, he shows them his hands and his feet. And while the text doesn't explicitly say that the wounds are still there, they must be, because why else would Jesus be showing his hands and his feet to help the disciples identify him, unless there were still the marks of the nails?

So here is the resurrected Jesus, still with the wounds of his torture. He still has the signs of his death, that was all about shame and ridicule and pain. And if he has flesh, and bones, and can eat, doesn't that make you wonder, do the wounds still hurt? Are the nerves still working, so that he can only walk through pain?

And yet, and yet! The first thing he says is 'Peace be with you'.

This man, this god made man, who has suffered through torture and agony and death, the first thing he says, the first thing he does, is to bring peace into the room.

The most wounded of us all, being the first to bring peace. The one who would feel entitled to revenge and retaliation... proclaims peace

And if you're sat there thinking 'Well, Pip, he was talking to his friends, it's easy to be nice to your friends and want them to have peace', let's look further on.

Verse 47 - 'repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed...to all nations'. Now, the disciples need to wait for Pentecost before they are sent out, but that is what the resurrected, wounded Jesus wants for all nations... repentance and forgiveness of sins.

He wants grace to abound, so that everyone of all nations, might come back to God, wiped clean of their sins, in harmony with their god and their neighbours.

As the most wounded person there, he wants peace the most.

And isn't that our God in a nutshell?! While us humans wound each other, and want revenge, and we want others to know exactly how much that hurt, and the instinct to make others feel as hurt as we are... Jesus comes in, wounds on display, and calls for peace.

Imagine the world today, imagine the politics of the world today, if that was the mentality used. How quickly God's kingdom would break in, if, when we are wounded, we were the first to say 'Peace be with you'.

So, my friends, when it comes to saying the peace on Sundays, when we're at that familiar bit of the liturgy that rolls off the tongue so easily... please don't forget what a revolutionary thing it is to say. Please don't forget that what the world needs the most right now, are wounded people saying 'peace be with you'. And I pray, that we will always be those people.