

**Easter Matters**  
John 20:19-22  
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The very first Easter did not take place in a crowded worship space filled with singing and praising. On the very first Easter the disciples were locked in a house. Instead of *sheltering in place*, they were *shaking in place*.

Because they were friends with Jesus, it was dangerous for them to go out. On top of that, they were filled with fear. They wanted to believe the good news they heard from the women that morning, but it seemed too good to be true. Could Jesus really be alive?

They were living in a time of despair and discouragement. If they left their homes, their lives and the lives of their loved ones might be at risk. Did a miracle really happen? Did Jesus really rise from the dead? Could this time of terror and fear really be coming to an end?

Huddled in this house, the disciples dared to believe that hope was possible, that God's love and peace were more powerful than an epidemic of anxiety.

Do you know what the most frequent exhortation in the Bible is? It's not "***love one another***" or even, "***love God***." The most common command is some variation of: "***Do not be afraid***," appearing some 365 times, one for every day of the year. It's comforting to know this charge is often followed by, "***for I am with you***."

Don't let anyone tell you Easter is cancelled this year! Instead, it's possible to encounter the living Christ more profoundly while locked in our homes than if we were able to gather in our worship center!

Easter matters because it changes everything. Without the resurrection of Jesus, we'd still be stuck in our past sins, we'd be powerless over our present problems and we'd be filled with fear about the future. But everything changed when Jesus rose from the dead.

No, Easter cannot be cancelled and hope cannot be quarantined!

Let's give our attention to God's inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word. Listen to John 20:19-22: "***<sup>19</sup>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.'* <sup>20</sup> *When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.* <sup>21</sup> *Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.'* <sup>22</sup> *And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'*

One of the results of the resurrection is we no longer have to live in fear. We could say it like this: *When in dread, remember Jesus rose from the dead; He will come near when we are quarantined with fear!*

We're going to discover four ways to have Jesus come near when we're filled with fear.

**1. Embrace His Peace.** Take a look at verse 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.'"***

The disciples were afraid because their leader had been arrested and crucified as a revolutionary. Generally, if your leader has been killed, the authorities would be looking for you, too. On top of that, the body of Jesus was missing and since the religious authorities didn't have it, and the Romans didn't have it, the thought was the disciples were the likely culprits.

And so, they've barricaded themselves in a room. The word ***"fear,"*** or *"phobos"* in Greek, means to be *"alarmed, frightened and in terror."* It carries with it the idea of *"flight."* Maybe they were planning how to escape from Jerusalem without being seen.

As we've been going through this coronavirus crisis, fear and anxiety are at an all-time high. Some of us are struggling to sleep while others are experiencing panic attacks. A recent study shows many are having "pandemic dreams" described as vivid, weird and horrifying. One person dreamed she had called an Uber, but a hearse showed up instead.

A headline in USA Today this week summarizes it well: *"Coronavirus interrupted our lives. Now it's invading our dreams."* One expert in dreams says the most universally common dream is one where a person is being chased. The pandemic

has put a twist on it: “*Now what people are dreaming of in these chase dreams is something faceless...something really hard to identify, something that’s unknown.*”

One person put it like this, “*My dreams are dreams of being a refugee, of an exile...I am running from something and I’m running to something, but I don’t know what that running to is.*”

Another study shows how people are running to “virus vices” to cope with stress and uncertainty. Experts warn this will have a long-lasting impact in our society.

- Alcohol sales are up 55%
- Marijuana use is increasing
- More people than ever are watching porn
- We are binge eating and exercising less
- Domestic violence is skyrocketing

If you need some support, Edgewood’s Celebrate Recovery ministry is still meeting via Facebook Live sessions on Friday night and devotionals during the week. If you want more information, send an email to [info@edgewoodbaptist.net](mailto:info@edgewoodbaptist.net).

In the midst of their high anxiety, Jesus suddenly stood among them and said, “***Peace be with you!***” Somehow in His resurrected body, Jesus was able to come through locked doors. Notice the plural “***doors,***” which meant they had likely locked the outside gate and the door to the room where they were huddled. But nothing could keep Jesus out.

Luke 24:37 tells us they were not only afraid of the authorities, they were also “***startled and frightened***” when Jesus appeared. Instead of blasting them for bailing on Him, Jesus blesses them when He says, “***Peace be with you!***” I’m reminded of Psalms 103:10: “***He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.***” Isaiah 57:19 offers the promise of peace to those who are close and to those who feel far away: “***‘Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,’ says the Lord, ‘and I will heal him.’***”

This greeting of peace has a much deeper meaning than “*what’s up, guys?*” In the Jewish culture, the word *shalom* is a state of wholeness and harmony that is intended to resonate in all relationships. When used as a greeting, *shalom* was a wish for outward freedom from disturbance as well as an inward sense of well-being. To a people constantly harassed by enemies, peace was the premiere

blessing. In Numbers 6:24-26, God gave Moses these words to use when blessing His people: ***“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace.”***

The New Testament describes at least three spheres of peace:

- *Peace with God* – that’s the *vertical* dimension. Romans 5:1: ***“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** This word can also mean, “to be set at one again.”
- *Peace of God* – this takes place *internally*. Philippians 4:6-7: ***“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”***
- *Peace with others* – when we have peace *with* God and we experience the peace *of* God, we can then extend peace *horizontally*. Matthew 5:9: ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God.”*** Notice Jesus didn’t tell us to be “peacekeepers,” but instead “peacemakers.” This could be translated as “peace workers.” It takes effort to bring conflict to an end. My guess is you’ve had some conflict in your family this past week.

Jesus offers you peace today but it’s different than the peace the world offers. Our culture says peace is the absence of *something*. That’s probably what the disciples were thinking as they tried to lock out their worries and concerns. But Jesus provides peace as the presence of *Someone*, even when we’re in the middle of a mess: ***“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”*** (John 16:33).

Don’t miss this connection – *peace comes from the presence of the Prince of Peace*. This peace extends in three dimensions.

- **I can be at peace with my past.** Some of us really need to hear this because getting past the past is easier said than done. Friend, whatever is lurking in your past can be forgiven if you ask for forgiveness. Allow His peace to bring wholeness as you claim the promise of Psalms 103:12: ***“As far***

*as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*

- **I can be at peace with my present.** What are you worried about right now? The virus? Your health and safety? Your family? Your finances? Your job? Jesus came to **“bind up the wounds of the broken”** (Isaiah 61:1).
- **I can be at peace with my future.** Many of us are fretting about the future. Ask Jesus to give you His peace so you can stop worrying. Psalm 30:5: **“Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.”**

I like how Paul Tripp says it: *“Peace does not come from your distance from trouble, but rather from the nearness of your Savior!”*

Do you want this peace or are you content to cower in the corner? Don’t lock yourself behind thick walls. Instead, embrace the perfect peace He offers you.

*When in dread, remember Jesus rose from the dead; He will come near when we are quarantined with fear!*

**2. Examine His Proof.** Not only does Jesus call us to embrace His peace, He also invites us to to examine the proof of His resurrection in verse 20: **“When He had said this, he showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.”** The word **“showed”** has the idea of *“presenting and exhibiting.”*

Jesus showed them His hands, they saw the scars from the nails, and they could see where the spear had sliced through His side. They heard from Mary and the women, they listened to Peter and the two guys from Emmaus, but now they could examine the proof for themselves.

Reflecting on this event years later, John writes this in 1 John 1:1-2: **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life.”** Think about how their senses were involved: They *heard* with their ears, they *saw* with their eyes, and they *touched* with their hands.

The way to forsake your fears is to examine the proof that Jesus is alive. Christianity is not just a system of rules and regulations. Nor is it a fairy tale. It’s

a relationship with the living Lord Jesus. When the disciples examined the proof, they were “*glad*.” One translation says they were “*overjoyed*.”

This is actually a fulfillment of what Jesus said before He died in John 16:22: “*So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you*.” Since Jesus is alive, you and I can have joy that will never be jettisoned. We can be like the people described in Isaiah 25:9: “*Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, that He might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; let us be glad and rejoice in His salvation*.”

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Jesus not only gives us peace and proof; He also calls us to His purposes. We’ve been given confirmation *and* a commission.

**3. Engage in His purpose.** Recognizing His followers are still fearful, Jesus once again declares in verse 21: “*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you*.” His peace is given *so that* we will engage in His purposes. He saves us in order to send us. The word “*sent*” means to “*be dispatched*.” In Luke 24:47-48, Jesus adds: “*And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things*.”

The disciples are given a message that cannot be kept in a locked room. Likewise, we can’t get too comfortable within the walls of a church building or our own homes or apartments.

This week I saw an ad on Facebook for a t-shirt that I liked: “*The church has left the building*.” The gospel is to go out, not stay in. Someone put it this way: “*Christianity doesn’t simply put out its sign and say ‘come.’ Christianity puts on its shoes and goes*.”

The first use of the word “*peace*” in verse 19 was to quiet their hearts. The second “*peace*” was given to prepare them for a fresh statement of their purpose as initially given in John 17:18: “*As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world*.”

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**4. Embody His Presence.** Are you feeling overwhelmed? Me, too. That's why these next words in John 20:22 are so important, "***And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'***" Jesus not only commissions us, He gives us the Holy Spirit as our companion so we can embody His presence and do the job He has for us to do. We have an assignment and we've been empowered to accomplish it.

Just as God's breath made the first creation, so likewise the breath of Jesus makes the new creation. The words of Jesus in John 16:7 are about to be fulfilled: "***Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.***"

It's fascinating to see how these fearful followers who were huddled in a house were transformed into bold proclaimers of the gospel. Have you ever wondered how they went from frightened wimps to faithful warriors for God?

Two major things happened.

- They were convinced Jesus had risen from the dead and the resurrection is where fears go to die!
- They were controlled by the Holy Spirit and He will give them constant comfort.

### **Summary**

As we conclude, let's summarize what we've learned: *When in dread, remember Jesus rose from the dead; He will come near when we are quarantined with fear!*

1. **Embrace His peace.**
2. **Examine His proof.**
3. **Engage in His purpose.**
4. **Embody His presence.**

We've been walking through the Book of Acts during our weekend services at Edgewood. In all the sermons and speeches recorded in this book, there are two truths that are consistently and clearly proclaimed: *resurrection* and *repentance*. The resurrection of Jesus Christ demands the response of repentance.

Geoff Ashley writes: “*The Apostles witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. They claimed to have seen, touched and heard from a man risen from the dead...the evangelical church does not like to talk about repentance but unless we understand how bad we are, we will never understand how good God is...if Jesus has risen from the dead, then that historical fact is sufficient evidence that He is who He said He was. And if He is truly Lord and God, He has every right to claim absolute rule over every life...He has the right to tell you what to do...the good news of Christ’s resurrection demands a response of repentance.*”

This is clearly seen in Acts 17:30-31: “***The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead.***”

There were three responses to Paul’s sermon that are still very common today.

1. Response #1 is found in verse 32. Some were *contemptuous*. When they heard about the resurrection, they rejected it.
2. A second response is found in the last part of verse 32: Others were *curious*. Their appetites were whetted, and they told Paul that they wanted to hear more. They were reluctant to do anything right then.
3. Verse 34 gives us the encouraging news that a few were *convinced*. It’s always just a few who will receive.

Many will *reject*. Some will be *reluctant*. A few will be drawn to *receive*. What about you? What’s your response to the resurrection? Are you ready to repent and receive the salvation offered by the resurrected Christ?

God made human beings to reflect His glory and to have a relationship with Him. But when Adam and Eve sinned, they plunged the whole human race into depravity and death. As a result, we are separated from God and in desperate need of forgiveness. Out of love for us, God the Father sent His Son Jesus to become the substitutionary sacrifice for our sins by dying on the cross in our place. His death was full payment for all our sins and the shedding of His blood satisfied God’s righteous and holy wrath. Jesus took the punishment we deserved and He was raised on the third day for our justification.

The only way to be saved from your sins and rescued from hell, is by trusting in

Christ alone as your Savior. The Bible talks about the importance of repenting of sin before you can receive the Savior. Are you ready right now to turn from your selfishness sinfulness and trust Christ as your Savior and Lord?

Ron Hutchcraft says, “*Jesus walked out of His grave so He could walk into your life.*”

Jesus entered that house without using the door but He won't come into your life unless you open the door to Him. Actually, in John 10:9, Jesus said: “***I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.***” The only way to be saved from your sins is to go through Him!

*Instead of shaking in place, you can find shelter in God's grace!*

Easter matters but it must matter to you. You can demonstrate that it does by getting saved right now. If you're ready to repent and receive Jesus Christ, would you close your eyes and pray this prayer?

*Jesus, I admit I'm a sinner. I repent by turning from how I've been living and trust what You did on the Cross when You died in my place, shedding Your blood to pay the price for all that I've done. I want to be at peace with You. I believe You died on the Cross and rose again on the third day, showing Your victory over sin, Satan, death and fear. Now I receive You into my life. I open the door to You. Save me from my sins. I want to be born again. Now give me resurrection power to live the rest of my life for You and under Your leadership so that I am no longer controlled by fear. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

If you prayed that prayer, tell someone about it and then email us at [info@edgewoodbaptist.net](mailto:info@edgewoodbaptist.net).

It's customary in churches around the world to end their Easter services with an affirmation that Jesus is alive. Even though we're not in a church facility, we can still say it in our homes. Here's how it goes: I'll say, “***He is Risen!***” and you respond with, “***He is risen indeed!***”

***He is risen! He is risen indeed!***

May God be with you until we meet again.