

Fear is an interesting thing. Dictionary.com defines fear as “a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc., whether the threat is real or imagined; the feeling or condition of being afraid.” Maybe what makes fear so intriguing is the myriad reactions it causes in us. Really you can run the whole gamut. Fear can either motivate, petrify, debilitate, cause you to lash out irrationally, or inspire you. And that just scratches the surface. In the bible we have countless examples of fear. Fear at God’s presence, fear of one’s adversaries, and don’t even get started on the relationship between fearing and loving God.

In today’s gospel, the disciples are gathered together, still trying to make sense of what they have heard and seen. You could say they were afraid. You could say they were confused. Then before they know what is going on, Jesus is standing in their midst. Doors locked? No problem. Walls in the way? No worries. And you thought they were filled with fear to start the day. Considering the probable look of abject terror on the disciple’s faces, Jesus says, “peace be with you.” You know, I have a hard time believing that “peace be with you” would have helped diffuse the situation for me. But what can you do?

Think for the a moment about the last time you were gripped with fear. How did you react? How far off did peace seem from where you were situated? Jesus offering of peace was meant to be a comfort but I also believe a challenge. He followed this right up with, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?" You'd think he would be a bit more patient and understanding given the circumstances. The more I think about it though, Jesus needed to be firm with his disciples. He knew what was riding in the balance.

Understandably, the disciples were shell-shocked, still reeling from the terror they had just experienced. Jesus offers them His peace, you know, the peace which passes all understanding because he knew what the other option was. The disciples still had the image of Jesus, off in the distance, hanging on the cross fresh in their mind. It wasn't going anywhere soon. I can relate, as I am sure most of you because 20 years ago this morning the image of a listless child in the arms of an OKC firefighter still haunts me.

Standing in the student union over on campus as we had just arrived from Tulsa for a percussion ensemble competition, I remember feeling shock and disbelief. I remember thinking to myself there was no way that

could be just 65 miles south of where I stood. I remember sitting down completely oblivious to everything and everyone around me. Alone in a crowd scared out of my mind.

It may seem a stretch to bring this up as I was only peripherally affected by the the bombing that took 168 lives and injured scores more. But the more I think about it, the more time I spend reliving those memories and recapturing those images that shook this state, and the country for that matter, to its core, the more I realize the importance and significance of Jesus' impatient greeting of peace.

His disciples had holed themselves up, in fear. We easily erect walls around ourselves and our loved ones when we are threatened or hurt, afraid. We keep others out, probably because we have no idea how to engage when we are on the defensive. Or we lash out, meeting fear with fear, violence with more violence, hatred with more hatred. Whether we are sorting through the rubble of our Murrah buildings, our World Trade Centers and Pentagons, even our Furgesons, or trying to face whatever the new day brings we have a choice between peace and fear. Isn't this the Easter message? Isn't this what resurrection is all about?

When the Father of all creation raised his Son, our savior, from the dead the rules changed. That act destroyed the dominion death held us under. Death no longer has the final word. So when Jesus greeted his friends, offering them peace, he not only opened the door for new life in and through Him, he opened for them the opportunity to be bearers of that peace, that Good News. It is the peace and love of Christ that encourages the disciples out of their fear and isolation and into the world as bearers of Christ and his Good News. That is the power of the resurrection.

The power of the resurrection was evident on this day 20 years ago and the days, months, and years that have followed. As the countless emergency responders joined forces with doctors, nurses, the FBI, FEMA, search and rescue specialists, people wanting to help in any way they could, including our diocesan Cathedral staff, we witnessed the resurrection. In the outpouring of love and support via prayers, well-wishes, blood drives, countless donations, donations of time and counseling services for young and old alike, we witnessed resurrection. Much has been made about how we rallied together in the face of such tragedy and horror, what we commonly refer to as the "Oklahoma Standard." And this is true, but I would take it a step further. Locally, it

may be known as the Oklahoma Standard, but I would argue that above all, it is the resurrection standard.

The risen Lord comes to us, bringing light to our darkest nights. He easily navigates the walls and barriers of fear we ensconce ourselves in. He brings us peace. He brings us love. He brings us life. In honor of the 168 who were killed, and in hope that we can see the resurrection in our daily life and in our trials and tragedies, please join me on page 833 in the Book of Common Prayer:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen*