

Who Lives, Who Dies, Who tells your story? Some of you may recognize this line from the Tony winning Broadway musical Hamilton. It tells the story in the intricate wordplay of rap - the life of Alexander Hamilton and those who closely surrounded him.

Quickly the country became swept up in the fast pace story, witty characters and the interwoven plotline. And those of us who fell in love with the musical, fell in love with the fact that it's our story. It's part of our country's story...And the musical taught us that we have a story worth telling. Not all of us will become Alexander Hamiltons, or presidents of the united states, but we are ordinary just like Hamilton was, and we too live a story worth telling.

A story of the gospel reflected in very ordinary human lives. A story of people who lost their best friend, teacher, and messiah-he was the one to change everything, he was supposed to be the savior for all the people. ...and they were afraid...so afraid that they locked themselves in a house out of fear...

We can't just leave our story at Easter Sunday and call it a day. Because there is so much more after that. Today's Gospel is part of our story to the deepest core because we too have experienced what the disciples are experiencing, we too have had tragedy strike and in turn our belief in the promises and the teachings of Jesus are suspended until we have proof.

Until we touch the holes in his hands, and his feet. Until we size up his scar on his side and he breathes on us... recognizing resurrection in front of us is sometimes so hard to believe...

Its so hard that even when Mary Magdalene comes to the disciples and tells them that she has seen the risen Lord. And instead of them excited to continue Gods mission they were charged with, we find them hidden away and cowering out of fear.

And the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews

What if it wasn't just the Jewish leaders they were afraid of...What if their best friend, their messiah, their teacher, their mentor that they had walked alongside for three years and told them all that was to happen and charged them with tasks a mission and at the core of it to believe in him, and he died...the one person that they didn't want to let down...is deadand they have no idea what to do next.

They had failed him miserably. Judas betrayed him, Peter had denied him three times, the rest had deserted him...and maybe just maybe, the last person the disciples wanted to meet that evening was Jesus, risen from the dead to confront them with their failures.¹

And maybe the last person we want to see is Jesus to confront us with our failures. In our complicities, in our participation in systems that go against all that Jesus has taught us.

And oh how we fail as beautifully as the disciples do. We could easily replace Judas' name, or Peters with our own. Because their failure isn't just theirs. Their story isn't just theirs to hold, it's ours.

And so we hide behind locked doors out of fear of being confronted by the living God.

Fear is a powerful human emotion. Fear can paralyze us, make us feel sick, cause us to go to great lengths to avoid a situation at all costs. Fear causes us to listen to the other voices in our heads telling us what is in front of us is anything but what it is.

I really fear spiders. And over and over again people tell me im bigger than them, that it's them who fear me, but My brain can't be rational in that moment, it's not thinking of the fact that i've never been harmed by a spider, or the fact that i've successfully relocated spiders and have survived just fine. Nope. I get caught up in my fear of the tiny creature and Forget all the things that I know to be true.

and when we slip into the tight grasp of fear, we are confronted with the reality of our humanness.

And the suckyness of our humanness is that we are a forgetful people.

How quickly the disciples forgot...

They forgot Jesus called them by name and the feeling they had when they dropped their nets, and their lives were changed.

They forgot how he raised Lazarus from the dead, and fed people with just a few loaves of bread and a few fishes.

¹ Johnson, Elisabeth. "Commentary on John 20:19-31." Accessed April 24, 2019. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1991.

They forgot how Jesus touched people and healed them, and gave them so much more than bodily restoration, but everlasting life.

And their fear caused them to forget one of the most important things he taught them. That he would come back to them, and rise from the dead.

They keep living into their story...They fell back into an old narrative. Some of them even go back to fishing, and some hide in fear, and they go back to their old story because it's what they know.

And here's why this story is important. Because Jesus shows up in the midst of their fear, doubts and failures to pull them into God's Story.

In God's story of love, and peace... Jesus first words to them in the midst of their hiding is not words of hostility and accusations and disappointment. Its not him listing off all the ways they let him down.

Rather it is with open arms he says *Peace be with you*. He comes right through our locked doors and appears to us to offer us peace.

Peace be with you, in hebrew *shalom*, is a biblical concept that is complex. A simple translation of it means, complete or whole. But more so that is in a state of completeness or wholeness. It refers to a person's wellbeing.

Amidst our complex relationships with people, sometimes things come out of alignment, and then our shalom breaks down, something is off, and your life is no longer whole. And so we seek to reconcile and heal broken relationships. And doing that is to bring about shalom. ²

Jesus is our prince of Shalom. "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and his name shall be called wonderful counselor, mighty god, everlasting father, Prince of Peace.*" (Isa 9:5)

The prince of shalom comes to the disciples, calms their nerves and offers them peace. Jesus rose from the dead and brings wholeness to the broken relationship between the disciples and himself, and in rising from the dead brings wholeness to the broken relationship between us and God.

² Collins, Jon. "Video: Shalom / Peace." The Bible Project. Accessed April 24, 2019. <https://thebibleproject.com/videos/shalom-peace/>.

As Jesus's followers we are called to create peace. And it sucks when we don't feel worthy of this.

When we doubt that God is in our midst, when we question God's presence in light of all the crappy stuff going on.

When we see people bombed , shot, starving, for no reason.

When we forget that who we are and what we do matters in this world. When we forget and forget and get pulled back into our story, one of just death.... And we forget about the resurrection.

Resurrection moments sometimes feel like they aren't tangible. That they are a figment of our imagination. But they aren't fake, they aren't an apparition. They are real.

That's why Jesus has them touch him, and breathe on them, so that they know he is real, flesh and blood, but also he's different he's changed.

When we encounter the living God we experience that change too

As a community of Christ we are called to remind one another of who's really telling the story.

Because like I said - we are forgetful people. . . and so from time to time we need another brother or sister to pull us back in to say, "You are loved" "You are claimed" "Death doesn't have the last say - God does."

"that those spiders - aren't as bad as you think they are" and Oh how I dislike spiders!

In just a little bit, we will have a chance to remind one another of the story. And in fact, say the very thing that Jesus himself said to his terrified disciples - "Peace be with you"

It's such a simple thing - Peace be with you - just four words but there's so much power within them. In four simple words we are wishing, declaring, hoping for God's shalom within one another's lives. We are calling one another back into that holy life - that Way of God that we are all called to live out - the way that we forget to live out. For we are called

To live among God's faithful people

To hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper

To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

To serve all people, following the example of Jesus

And to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.

In the midst of your doubting and fear, and being a follower of christ..

May you feel the presence and peace of Christ, may you offer that same peace to others, may you be reminded of God's story that is unfolding in with and around us everyday. And in passing the peace pull one another back into God's story again.

Amen.