

Voices: Unlock the doors

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“When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (John 20:19)



Trevor Brown The day must’ve blown by like a whirlwind. Somewhere between Mary’s discovery, the disciples own experience and the appearance of angels, you might’ve thought a new hope would be breaking in already. You might think the alarming news of an empty tomb would’ve caused more of a stir in the disciples than this. But apparently, by day’s end, fear still was prevailing. So, they locked the doors.

Some might have been afraid of Jesus himself. After all, if he were alive, he probably would have a thing or two to say about those who abandoned him. Guilt and shame at their own failure might have given some of the disciples a reason to fear rebuke from the Teacher. Some of them probably were relieved to lock the doors, embarrassed by their own disloyalty. It’s also likely their fear of how others would perceive them made it all the more convenient to make sure the deadbolt was set. They were more than content to seek protection, confinement, insulation in these moments.

Focusing inward



Fear and terror have a way of doing that. They send us spiraling into sometimes-unmanageable self-preservation in search of security. For any organization, fear has a way of turning the focus inward. Between the fear and uncertainty of how the outside world might react and the unsettling idea of who might be interested in coming in, the disciples sat huddled behind locked doors.

But all their fearful whispers stopped when a familiar voice came from the center of the room.

“Peace be with you,” Jesus told them twice.

Jesus knew the chaos of these events and the struggles and stresses of life are real. But from the beginning, God’s voice has been one that brings peace in the midst of chaos, hope in the midst of uncertainty. As we peer into the confused and lifeless huddle in this room, we see what we are prone to be. Like the disciples, we are prone to succumb to fear, and when we are driven by self-preservation, we rarely are beacons of hope or makers of peace.

Jesus comes in

Jesus has a way of appearing in the moments I’d prefer isolation, appearing in the places where I’d rather him stay out, breaking through the doors for which we’ve given fear the keys. The problem is this new resurrection reality, the one we—like the disciples—were joyously astonished by on Easter morning, calls us to more. It calls us to better. So quickly after

Easter, too many followers of Jesus will return to locked gatherings where there is a growing fear of what's outside and an absence of energy toward bringing outsiders in.

Fortunately, locked doors or not, Jesus comes in.

He comes in to the place where we're most comfortable and sends us out the doors we considered bolting shut.

He enters, by his power, into our fear and hiding and beckons us to see that sin and death will not, in fact, have the last word.

He breaks through our locked doors of isolation and binds together the community we let fall apart.

He offers purpose to a people who became purposeless.

He brings peace into the room that reveals our own strife.

He calls us to open our eyes when we've shut them to the chaos outside.

He appears amidst our doubt and empowers us with faith.

Unlock the doors

It will not be sufficient to sit idly. It will not be adequate to prevent others from venturing in. Locked doors, as tempting as they may be, serve only our kingdom, not the kingdom of the risen Lord.

The disciples did not have to duplicate Jesus's achievements, but they were called to implement them. This is why they needed this new breath of God, this new wind of the Spirit that came from the mouth of Jesus himself. To a confused and rebellious world, they would be the heralds a new reality.

God is, again, breathing new life into all the world, healing once and for all the brokenness and rebellion of those who would believe.

Our reasons for locking the doors are many, so the calling that forces them open must be heard again and again: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

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