

Dear Friends,

JOHN 20: 19-20

We are locked down. They were locked in. We are accepting the government guidance in order to keep ourselves safe and to give the NHS a fair chance of helping people through this crisis. They were locked in because they were afraid.

It was the day of the resurrection. Mary Magdalene had brought news that she had seen Jesus alive. How could they believe that? Anyway, what mattered now was their own survival. Jesus had suffered terribly. They were terrified that as his followers they could be next. So, they kept inside with the doors of the house locked. They were afraid.

Maybe there's more to their fear. As the companions of Jesus, they had thought that they were a big deal. They had boasted of all that they would do, of how they would lay down their lives for him. But instead they had run away and saved their own skin. They had hoped for more from themselves. If Mary's nonsensical story were true and Jesus was alive what might he say to them. Would he condemn them for their failure? Would he find others who would be better friends? They could not blame him if he did. Perhaps it would be better if they kept themselves locked away. They feared that they were not good enough, that they were disappointing people.

Then Jesus came and stood among them. Strong walls and locked doors cannot keep him out; tombs and heavy stones cannot keep him dead; and the defences we put up cannot stop his love from flooding us.

And he says "Peace be with you". This was the ordinary greeting which lots of people used all the time. With Jesus it had become particularly meaningful. He had said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

He had not come to condemn them, to remind them of their failures, to tell them that they were disappointing and no good. He had come to them, as he comes to you, so that they might live not by fear but by the peace that he gives.

Now they were no longer afraid, although every day they would have to remind themselves that they were no longer afraid. Now all the sadness was gone and as Jesus had wanted their joy was complete. Now Jesus could give them their share in the work they would do with him. Now they were ready to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

God bless you,

Tony