

“War and Peace”. (Luk 24:36- 47)

"The one thing that is necessary, in life as in art, is to tell the truth." (Leo Tolstoy)

* Today we joyfully gather for the celebration of the new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ; to Him we offer the glory, worship and adoration forever.

* Friends, normally after washing clothes with the proper detergent the used clothing come back to their original color and beauty. The same order might be applied to us as much as we would be renewed into a radical conforming to the Word of God in purpose, thoughts, and actions, (Eph 5:26-27).

Such metamorphosis should happily occur in us and, as a result of it, bring peace in our hearts.

* The Scripture says that 40 days beginning from Christ's resurrection up to his ascension to the Father were the days of exceeding revelations. Our text particularly says that having been together the apostles received new revelations. The risen Lord suddenly appeared to them. His coming into view was crucially important. There Jesus revealed his identity as the suffered and crucified God-Man in order to enliven the disciples' faith. The first words the apostles heard from the Lord were the words of common greetings among Jews; he said "Peace be onto you." While the people were perplexed by Christ's appearing and greeting with a mingled feeling of fear and joy, he showed his wounds and asked for food. After a while, he started to teach the Scriptures. He referred his sayings from the past to what is written about him in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms. He also assigned them to suffer the witnesses of his resurrection and promised help.

* When I thought over the Gospel message for today I was perplexed with a topic I need to preach about. I am sure that many pastors would take you on a journey throughout the Bible passages. You would rediscover the same prophetic writings in the Scripture that Jesus pointed out at the first day after Resurrection. Finding the OT prophecies about the Messiah and rendering their account towards Jesus in NT writings, you would be instructed in the teaching of the mystery of God's salvation. However, today I picked up another topic due to its significant outcome in our life. You probably know that a good sermon is one that tends to proclaim Gospel rather than to talk about Gospel. The good one is one that keeps your focus on practical usage of the Word rather than on the non-essential. Therefore bearing this task in mind, let's look for the treasure of knowledge, find it, and follow its recommendations.

* The Gospel says that the first words after Resurrection Jesus addressed to the disciples were the words of the traditional greeting widely practiced among Jews, even until now. It sounds like "Shalom alechem" in Aramaic, or "Peace be upon you" in English. Now, in the light of Christ's resurrection this greeting appeared to be the core of entire Gospel. It signifies the new relations between God and his elected. Truly in virtue of Christ's satisfactio vicaria God established a new covenant and doesn't count sins any more. "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more," says the Lord, (Heb 10:17) .

* As a matter of fact, we cannot separate ourselves from Adam and Eve's disobedience completely because our new nature still lives in sinful flesh. We are both, saints and sinners; and there would be no chance to survive from 'Goliath'(our sinful flesh) if there would be no Resurrection. A thousand thanks to the Lord for his victory above death and living hope through faith in Christ Jesus we are all became participants. As we gather around the means of grace, Jesus appears to us; standing here in our midst with the message of reconciliation, he says, "Peace be upon you." Jesus' voice transmits to a voice of your pastor when you receive an invitation for the Lord's table, "The peace of the Lord be with you always," he says. Holding on these words by faith as they come from the mouth of Christ himself you receive the public absolution of your sins.

* But wait for a moment; at first shake hands with other participants of the Lord's Table. It is worthy to notice that from the beginning Christians practiced a "Kiss of Peace" as a sign of love and forgiveness just as we pray: we forgive one another as we have ourselves been forgiven by God. According to the practice of the early church only those who received and gave "the Kiss of Peace" were welcomed to the Table. We may feel sorrow for the loss of the actual kiss of peace. Yet, whether by kiss, handshake, or words the Pax is given. It comes from the Lord and we receive and embrace it together with our amen.

* Thinking back to our text, after Jesus's appearing and saying "Shalom alechem," he also asked the disciples for food. It was common in the ancient world that if one shared peace he also shared food, (Lk 10:7). That was made by our Lord; his greeting of peace and table fellowship came together! Therefore when the kiss of peace is given and received the Lord invites us to his Table, there we take his very nature. The sacred meaning of the meal is beyond words. Only by the faith we accept Christ's body and blood as the Lord himself said. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, " Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you." And after supper he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, " Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." And God's peace descends upon us with a sensation of confidence, fearlessness and joy. Now there is peace in Heaven as well. God and humanity are united in peace. This peace is announced and taken effect since Jesus has risen from the dead. It has a tremendous effect enabling the baptized to accept and reflect God's love between each other.

* Friends, now let's think about common errors on account of "Shalom alechem." First, it is not the abstract notion or the artificial act of self-hypnosis; God's peace comes upon us as an effect of setting us free from our sins as well when our works are done in good and proper ways. This is a real peace ordained by God, (Isa 26:12). Second, we shouldn't be deceived by emotions we might comfort with; rather God's peace is the realization of active responses upon challenges of our discipleship. It might surprise you but God's Peace is also War. Certainly, those who have peace of God also have war with sinful flesh, devil and his agents.

(Rev 12:17) says, “Then the dragon became furious with the woman and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.” Therefore, if Christians make peace with their sinful flesh, then the flesh will attack Christians even up to the spiritual death; but if Christians make a war with this monster, then Jesus’ peace comes to them as a celebration one victory after another, (1Co 15:57). Friends, we need to be equipped for a great spiritual bumping, and there is no time for indecision, (Eph 6:10-12).

* “ Lord, now let you servants depart in peace according to your word, for mine eyes have seen your salvation, ...” This so called Nunc Dimittis belongs to Simeon who hold the baby Jesus in his wrinkled arms, (Luke 2:29-30). The prophecy according to his departure was fulfilled, now he was dismissed to death in peace. This is a remarkable consequence of God’s act in Simeon’s life, he felt not fear of annihilation. However, the prophecy according to us is not fulfilled yet. The battle with Goliath is in the past, today, and it is still ahead. Don’t miss a chance to be prepared for a battle and to make war. Remember, our power is in humbleness, meekness, readiness to forgive, and charity; but the dragon’s power is in our pride, arrogance, heartlessness to forgive and selfishness. Now upon hearing the voice of your Shepherd, “Peace be with you,” keep your heart open for this amazing Peace, (oh 14:27). His coming will be signified with a clean vision and a firm confidence in the Spirit. Let it be so. Amen

Beloved, “The peace of the Lord be with you always.”

Amen.