

Introduction

- I wonder what its like to **live under occupation**:
 - whether its images of Iraq or Afghanistan and the American and British occupations there
 - or the much less benign images of Israeli troops occupying the Palestinian territories...
 - or many other examples back through time...
- I wonder what it feels like to be part of what is going on there, to be stuck in the midst of it all:
 - as someone swept up in events in some ways beyond your control...
- To be a normal resident of an occupied town:
 - what does it feel like to be living in such conditions?
 - you haven't done anything wrong, yet there is always the fear of troops coming through the door;
 - I remember being struck a few years ago by a tactic Israeli troops use in their occupation - sometimes the troops will come to check a row of houses; they start at one end, and rather than going out of each house and on to the next one by the street, they will sometimes just **punch a hole in the wall into your neighbours house** and go that way, to avoid sniper fire!
 - you must always be in a **state of fear, of tension, never able to settle to your normal business...**
- For different reasons, **that was the situation the disciples were in**:
 - themselves innocent of any crime (as Jesus himself had been);
 - yet with the fear of what the authorities might do - main reason authorities had dealt with Jesus was because of trouble he was stirring up; reasonable that they might try and "take out" potential successors to Jesus...
- And so we find them behind locked doors, afraid, hardly what you'd call **"at peace"**

Shalom!

- What's your picture of peace?
 - the empty countryside of this image?
 - the quiet coffee and chance to think?
 - (both are wonderfully attractive!)
 - but notice that the images, the pictures, are images of solitude and escape...
- Back to the passage, the disciples not at peace, and in steps Jesus
 - **literally out of thin air!!**
- What he brings is **PEACE**
- **"Peace be with you"** was the standard Jewish greeting of the day; nothing unusual about it; a bit like saying, **"Hi, how are you?"** when you are really just greeting someone;
 - more convention to it than meaning, normally.
- **Here there is more to it than that**:
 - partly that's emphasised by the fact that Jesus **repeats himself....** "No, listen guys, I'm not just saying hello - **PEACE** be with you!"
 - partly its also emphasised by the **strangeness of the situation**: he was killed a couple of days before; he's just walked through locked doors/solid walls...
- Jesus is using the normal greeting, **"Peace be with you"**, in its truest, fullest sense:
 - the Hebrew word translated **"peace"** is **"Shalom"**; you've possibly heard it used in sermons or some songs? (**image of baby hand**)
 - it is a tremendously rich word, **full of vibrancy and wholeness**; to the Hebrew mind, peace is much, much more than merely the absence of conflict;
 - **shalom is wholeness, richness, everything at its best, everything as it should be**;
 - shalom extends to **relationships, to priorities, to physical provision** (food,

shelter...)

- Jesus is saying, "I'm not just here to say 'Hi!' - I'm here to bring you **Shalom**"
- It's the same peace/shalom of which he talked to the disciples in the upper room on the night before he was crucified, 72 hours before:
 - that's that tremendously comforting passage from John 14, often read at funerals...
 - *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27)*
- The risen Christ comes to bring that shalom peace - to us too!
 - **and he does so, not by separating us away from trouble but by entering into relationship with us**

But what does that actually mean?

- my life, your life is not always one of "wholeness, richness, everything at its best, everything as it should be"....!
- if Christ has given us Shalom, what does that mean?
- To answer that, notice something remarkable about this passage:
 - Jesus says "**Peace be with you**" three times in this passage - twice on the first Easter evening with the disciples, and again when he comes again a week later to speak with Thomas.
 - on both these two occasions, very closely tied to his declaration of peace to them, Jesus draws attention to something:
 - **his wounds!! (image of nail)**
 - his hands, his side, the nail marks, the spear wound in his side...
- In other words, Jesus is saying, "**The peace that I bring is that peace that was won on the Cross; that was won as I received these wounds that scar my body, even after the resurrection.**"
 - and that peace is not just a warm fuzzy feeling, a nice relationship with people round about us;
 - no, it is the beginning of a relationship with the Heavenly Father, creator and sustainer of the world, starts us on the journey to the full shalom of heaven;
 - **out of step with God we can have no shalom;**
 - in step with him we enter into its benefits, and begin to enjoy the first-fruits of them.

Analogy:

- Think of a time you've fallen out with someone, especially someone close - brother, sister, parent, child, husband, wife... **(image: couple argument)**
 - you love them but right now you feel like you hate them!
 - you want to let go of the anger, whatever the issue you've fallen out over, but at the same time you don't!
 - **you are not at peace! you are not experiencing Shalom!**
- The only thing that will begin to bring that feeling of peace is **reconciliation in the relationship.**
 - for every one of us, our most fundamental problem is that we are out of step with God; we are sinners;
 - it may not be the most obvious problem, may not be the one we feel, but nevertheless the most important!
- We can't experience God's shalom unless we are reconciled to him:
 - and that comes through trust in **Jesus who died on the cross** (wounds) **and who rose again** (speaking to the disciples)

Thomas and his Doubts

- We need to take a step of faith **(image: Thomas/doubts)**
 - need to actually come to the point of entrusting ourselves to Jesus;
- Notice that Jesus doesn't condemn Thomas' doubt - he invites him to move on from it, to take the step of faith...

Analogy:

- Flying... I hadn't flown as a child; first time was on a business trip when I was working in computing; colleagues around (couldn't look wimpy!);
- element of trust in getting onto that plane - maybe had doubts about how air could hold up tons of metal and lots of people!! Couldn't get head round how it could be - but got on the plane!
- we may even suddenly have doubts mid-flight (catch a glimpse of land below, or something...); we are still airborne!
- Jesus was inviting Thomas to take that step of the will and get on the plane.

Conclusion

- As conclusion in vs.30-31 makes clear, that's the point:
 - coming to believe in, put our trust in Jesus - that he is God's sent one, that he is the Son of God, that he did die and rise again - and so receiving life in his name, full life, whole life, **shalom!**
 - Jesus came and met with the disciples - and invited them to place their trust in him... and know peace!