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## In Nomine Iesu

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The Third Sunday of Easter 2009

Luke 24:36-49

**While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”**

Luke 24:36

**Shalom Aleichem. Peace be with you.**

Today’s Gospel opens with Jesus standing in the very midst of His huddled disciples, showing up out of nowhere, and greeting them with a standard, everyday Jewish greeting: **Shalom Aleichem. Peace be with you.**

Whenever you would hear that greeting from someone, you would automatically respond by saying, “Aleichem Shalom.” So let’s try it and use it throughout the sermon: **Shalom Aleichem. Aleichem Shalom.**

That’s how the disciples should have responded to that greeting—just as you did. But instead—says Luke—they were **startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.** They had walked and talked with Jesus. They had broken bread with Him and paddled a fishing boat with Him. There is no indication that He “looked” any different than He had before, and yet—as Jesus stood among them in His risen, glorified body, they were so preoccupied with their own “how can this be!” fear that they failed to recognize Him. It was, after all, a whirlwind sort of day—that first day of the week. It started off with the report of the women who went to His tomb and did not find Him. It was followed by the reports of Peter and John whose footrace to the tomb had brought them to the finish line of the great “Ah-ha!” – and then the hurried reports of the Emmaus walkers whose eyes had been opened wide—

Wow—this was all too much for the disciples. What were they to think?! Quite frankly, how could think with such monumental upheavals of life?! Added to that, the religious authorities and government heavy-hands were still “out there” and a very real threat!

The disciples were huddled together. The doors were locked as John tells us in his account of things. Surely, too, the curtains were drawn tight. And then Jesus shows up—just shows up: **Shalom Aleichem**, He says and they don’t say anything. They failed to recognize Him. They just couldn’t move past their fear.

That’s what happens to us, too, whenever we can’t step out of our fear. Fear makes us see only ourselves, our futility, our weakness. It strips us of the ability to see and believe the

great and awesome surprise—the unexpected out-of-this world gift of God’s doing. **Startled and frightened**—this just can’t be—oh no—it’s only **a ghost**.

And you know what—if it would have been only a ghost, you and I would still be locked in the prison of our paralyzing fear, we would still be in our sins, and we would be the most miserable and deluded of all people!

**Shalom Aleichem!**—says Jesus. No ghost talking here! **Shalom Aleichem**. The crucified and risen Christ shows up with peace—peace in His very word and peace in His very body. Listen again to just what He says and watch what He does:

*Jesus said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at My hands and My feet. It is I myself! Touch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, He asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” They gave Him a piece of broiled fish, and He took it and ate it in their presence.*

**Shalom Aleichem.**

Jesus shows up. He steps into the prison of our fear. He seeks and finds us wherever we are huddled and hiding. He comes speaking and bringing and being, **Shalom. Peace.**

He Himself is our peace. The very punishment that brings us peace was laid upon Him. Everything that wars against us and against God, everything that unsettles us and locks us into worst nightmares of our lives, Jesus put a stop to – in His own body, by His own holy life before God in our place, by His innocent suffering and death according to the Father’s will in our place, by His battle with the devil and with death, and by His triumphant resurrection from the grave. In our place. For us—and for our Shalom, our Peace.

He speaks His Word of peace and death’s drumroll is silenced. He speaks His Word of peace and Satan can accuse us no more. He speaks His Word of peace and no longer do our sins separate us from Almighty God. He speaks His Word of peace and the Father calls us children—His children—and heirs of everlasting life.

When our hearts condemn us, Jesus comes Himself. He gets real with us, downright “in-our-face” personal. In, with, and under the real stuff of bread and wine, Jesus feeds us in His Supper with nothing less than His very Body and Blood. No ghost-stuff here. No imagination. No wishful thinking. After all, **a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.**

When our hearts condemn us, Jesus shows us His hands and His side and feeds us His Body & Blood and the condemnation wilts under the sunshine of His love and mercy.

And just as He did with His disciples there in that room, so also does He do with us: He continues speaking His Word to open our minds. That's what the Word of Jesus does whenever we hear it or read it or recall it: It opens our minds so that we can step out of the prison of our fears and doubts and step into His promises – promises made sure in the reality of His bodily resurrection from the grave.

**Shalom Aleichem** says Jesus each and every time we encounter Him. **Shalom Aleichem** He says as He comes into our room, our chapel, our hallways, our homes, our hearts. **Shalom Aleichem.** It's not just wishful thinking on His part or some kind of otherwise useless Hallmark card sentimentality. No—Jesus, the Son of God, risen triumphant from death's grave speaks and brings and is God's perfect peace given to us...given for us.

In a little while, as we prepare for His Supper, you will hear the words again: “The peace of the Lord be with you always.” Don't let these words slip idly by you.

Rather, as you hear those words, and speak back the response, you can be sure of this: You can be sure that very peace of Jesus Himself—the peace that He would give you from His cross/tomb—the peace that this world cannot give—that very peace He gives to you. It is yours. And it is yours ALWAYS.

**Shalom Aleichem. Aleichem Shalom.**