

John 20:19-31

Some of the best things in life,  
The biggest gifts,  
The most significant stuff. . .  
Cannot be seen.

And it's not because our eyes aren't powerful enough to see it,  
Or that it's too small for our eyes to see.

It's actually too BIG,  
Too vast.  
Too much for our eyes to take in.

Joy,  
Love,  
Awe and wonder,  
Forgiveness and reconciliation.  
Peace.

"Peace be with you."

These are the first words out of Jesus' mouth as he enters the  
locked room where the disciples have holed up in fear.

"Peace be with you,"

And he shows his hands and his side.

He gives the disciples something to see.

Proof of his bodily, real, and resurrected presence.

"Peace be with you," he says again,

"As the Father has sent me,  
So I send you."

He breathes on them,

And through that breath,

Lets loose the Holy Spirit among them,

And among us.  
Jesus then calls us to forgiveness—  
    “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.  
    If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”  
Immediately connected to the Holy Spirit’s presence—  
    Something we cannot see—  
        is another unseen gift--  
        the call to forgiveness.  
The Holy Spirit is bestowed,  
    And forgiveness is the way of life.

The peace of Christ is joined both to visible and invisible things.  
We have this really wonderful mix of gifts from Jesus—  
    Those we can see,  
        And those we cannot see.  
        Even in this very room.

Today we are gathered one week after the great Easter Day  
celebration,  
    A celebration of a resurrection that we did not see.  
Not once last Sunday did Jesus walk down this aisle and stand here and  
greet us. . .  
    In human form.  
But we believe in that which we cannot see—  
    A God who created and formed the world and each of us,  
        The Son of God who was raised from death,  
        A Holy Spirit who is breathed out and at work among  
        us.  
We believe in that which we cannot see,  
    And the unseen bears much power.

If we could see the moment that this plain water in an ornate basin becomes the holy, flooding waters of salvation today for Dean and Ayden at their baptisms. . .

Then baptism wouldn't quite be the same.

Or if we could point to exactly what is different about these boys once they are dripping wet and marked with the cross,

If we could see something visibly different in them,

Then baptism might not hold quite the same meaning or power.

Today, for Dean and for Ayden,

Sins are drowned,

Life is made new,

And yet they won't look much different to us.

But they will be.

If we could see the moment that Jesus enters the bread and the wine at Communion,

Or describe in detail the way and the means through which bread and wine becomes body and blood. . .

Then this Meal wouldn't quite be the same.

This Meal might not draw us week after week.

Today, we receive Christ in bread and wine,

Sins are forgiven,

Life is made new,

And we won't look much different.

But we will be.

We are.

We believe in that which we cannot see,

And truly,

if we could point directly to the Holy Spirit,  
Or put our finger on forgiveness,  
Or hold joy in our hands,  
Or box up peace and send it where  
needed. . .

These things might lose a bit of their  
mystery,

And perhaps even their power.

Some of the greatest gifts simply cannot be seen.

“Peace be with you,”

Jesus says,

And then, to Thomas,

Who needs to see,

Jesus holds out his hands,

Inviting Thomas to see, touch, and believe.

The peace of Christ meets us where we are,

And brings us what we need,

When we need it.

Thomas wasn't left to wonder and to doubt. . .

Jesus came and gave him something to see.

The peace of Christ is both seen and unseen,

Both obvious and mysterious,

Both here and everywhere.

As we live into this Easter season,

Perhaps sensing already the “Alleluias” of last Sunday growing  
faint in the noise of the world around us,

“Peace be with you” are Jesus' words for us.

And along with those words,  
The gift of whatever it is we might need to  
believe—  
    Seen,  
        Or unseen.