

Sermon for April 12, 2026 – Easter 2

John 20:19–31 (EHV)

Theme: Shalom Aleichem!

- 1) Jesus' Easter greeting to us.
- 2) Our Easter greeting to the world.
- 3) Through faith, this greeting is more than a wish.

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you.” ²² After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the Twelve, the one called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples kept telling him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.” ²⁶ After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” ³⁰ Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Shalom Aleichem!

This common Hebrew greeting means: Peace be with you! The Hebrew word for “shalom” involves far more than the English word “peace.” It includes ideas of wholeness, prosperity, health, safety, unity, and, most importantly, a restored relationship with God. Wishing someone “shalom” has been the Jewish greeting for thousands of years.

However, when Jesus appeared to His frightened disciples after His resurrection and said, “Shalom Aleichem! — Peace be with you,” He was not just offering them a polite greeting. He was declaring a comforting truth made real through His life, death, and resurrection.

Let us consider the peace Jesus won for us, under the theme: **Shalom Aleichem!** 1) Jesus' Easter greeting to us. 2) Our Easter greeting to the world. 3) Through faith, this greeting is more than a wish.

Part 1: Jesus' Easter Greeting to us.

Our text begins:

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together behind locked doors because of their fear of the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Many of the disciples had already heard reports that Jesus was alive. But it all seemed so unlikely, so surreal, that they struggled to believe their eyes and ears. While hiding in a locked room, confused and afraid, Jesus came, stood among them and said: "Shalom Aleichem — peace be with you!"

Yes, Jesus wanted his disciples of all time to be at peace. But what is the peace that Jesus offers?

The opposite of peace is being at war. The Bible says we were all at war with God before coming to faith. Whenever a person does what God forbids, or refuses to do what God commands, that person sins. To sin is to rebel against God. It reveals deep-seated disrespect and hatred towards Him and His Word.

Many people would disagree with that description. Most would say, "I've always tried to be a good person. I'm not at war with God." Even my atheist acquaintances would claim that they do not hate God; they simply don't believe in Him.

But here's the reality: the more a person understands the absolute strictness of God's law—how even the smallest sinful thought condemns a person to an everlasting hell—the more our sinful natures push back. That resistance reveals the hostility hidden inside. This doesn't mean every unbeliever consciously shakes a fist at heaven every moment. But at its core, our sinful nature is opposed to God's holiness and to His claim on our lives.

Let me give you an example: I once met a man who claimed to be a Christian but refused to believe that God would send anyone to hell. After showing him from Scripture that hell is real and that God's judgment is just, he became very emotional and said: "Well, if it's true that God would send a person to hell for even the slightest sin, then I don't want to have any part with Him."

As shocking as that man's statement was, let's be honest - don't all our sinful hearts want to say the same thing? I know mine does. That reaction reveals the enmity our sinful flesh has toward Him.

Because of the corrupt nature we inherited from Adam, all humans naturally live in terror of God's judgment, whether or not they admit it. To calm that fear, some try to reshape God into someone not quite as holy as the Bible says He is. Others deny His existence altogether. Still others try to push Him out of mind by pursuing pleasure, success, or noble-sounding causes.

All such things can offer a temporary sense of comfort - but, just as morphine numbs the pain without curing the cancer, these false comforts do not change the reality that God is holy and we are sinful. They don't solve the problem of our guilt.

But Jesus came to win true peace for us. His perfect obedience to God's law won the righteousness we need to stand before God. On the cross, He suffered the full punishment our sins deserved. Jesus' resurrection proved that His payment was accepted – that He has truly reconciled us to God. That is why He showed His disciples His hands and His side. Those wounds were the receipt; and the empty tomb is the confirmation that our reconciliation with God is complete.

Shalom Aleichem. What great news Jesus had for his disciples – and for us! We no longer have to be afraid of God's holy anger. Jesus has reconciled you to His Father. He forgives all sins. In Christ, you are made righteous and whole. In Christ, you have Shalom – God's deep, lasting peace!

Part 2: Our Easter Greeting to the World.

We read:

²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I am also sending you."

Even though the disciples were overjoyed to see Jesus, they still feared that the people who had killed Jesus would come after them. Jesus did not want His disciples paralyzed with fear. He wanted them to take courage in the peace they now had with their almighty God.

Therefore, He repeated, "Shalom Aleichem – Peace be with you." And then He gave them a new purpose in life. Just as the Father sent the Son into the world with a message of reconciliation, so Jesus now sends His disciples – and His Church in every age – into the world with that same message of peace.

To equip them for this task, *he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit.* The Holy Spirit would remind them of everything Jesus had taught and would be the power behind their preaching – working through the Word they proclaimed to accomplish God's saving purposes.

Then Jesus added this extraordinary statement: *²³ Whenever you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven. Whenever you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

What an astonishing authority Jesus gave His church! Only God himself has the power to forgive sins, and yet He grants His people the dispensing of His forgiveness to others. When you say to a repentant sinner, "In the name of Jesus, I forgive all your sins," you are not sharing a private opinion. You are repeating what Christ Himself commanded you to say in His Word. You are speaking with His authority.

Think for a moment about what that means in your daily life.

Your coworker is carrying guilt she has never told anyone. Your neighbour is convinced that what he did years ago puts him beyond God's reach. Your adult child, who drifted from the faith a decade ago, quietly wonders if there is any way back.

Jesus says you get to be the one who tells them. You get to walk up to someone crushed under the weight of sin and say, "Shalom Aleichem. Peace be with you. Jesus paid for your sins - all of them. His resurrection proves it. You don't have to be afraid of God anymore."

Sadly, not everyone wants to receive this news. Many love their sins too dearly to let them go. Others are too proud to admit they need a Saviour. To such people God compels us to speak a harder word: "Your sins are not forgiven. You stand at enmity with God and are in danger of His everlasting punishment."

We do not say this because we hate them or think that we are in any way better than they are. No, we speak this warning because we love them and want them to repent and share with us in the great "shalom" Christ won for all people through His cross.

Part 3: Through Faith, this Greeting is More than a Wish.

Not everyone who hears the Easter greeting receives it in faith right away – not even among Jesus' own disciples.

Thomas was not with the others when Jesus first appeared. And even though ten of his closest, most trustworthy friends kept telling him, "*We have seen the Lord,*" he refused to believe. Setting his own terms, he said:

"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Thomas serves as an example of doubt. Pride in his own judgement – pride in what he considered reasonable – kept him from accepting the testimony of trusted friends.

That same sinful pride lurks in our hearts, too. It hinders us from taking hold of the wonderful promises God gives us in His Gospel. Sometimes that pride shows up in obvious ways, demanding proof on our own terms. Other times it hides under a cloak of piety and pain.

For example, we might find ourselves tempted to think: "My sin is too horrible to be forgiven. My pastor tells me to confess my sins to Christ and believe that He forgives me, but it can't be that simple. Surely I must do something more - something harder - to become worthy of His forgiveness."

As pious as such thinking sounds, it is profoundly wrong. Like Thomas' demand, it casts doubt on whether Christ accomplished what He said He would.

Mercifully, Jesus did not leave Thomas in his doubt. We read:

²⁶ *After eight days, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and look at my hands. Take your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue to doubt, but believe.”*

Thomas could only respond: “*My Lord and my God!*”

He finally believed.

²⁹ *Jesus said to him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”*

That blessing is meant for you. Even though you have not put your finger into the nail marks, nor seen Jesus with your physical eyes, you believed through the testimony of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit revealed the truth about Jesus to you.

³⁰ *Jesus, in the presence of his disciples, did many other miraculous signs that are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Yes, the Holy Spirit directed John to write His account with you in mind. It’s the Spirit’s tool to create and sustain saving faith in your heart so you can receive the everlasting life God wants you to have.

Shalom Aleichem! This is Jesus' wonderful Easter greeting to you – won by His blood, confirmed by His resurrection, and delivered to your hearts by His Spirit through His Word.

This is also your Easter greeting to the world – the most urgent and beautiful message any human being can carry to another.

And, through faith, this greeting is more than a mere wish. It is your reality in Christ!

Shalom Aleichem. Peace be with you—in Jesus.

Praise be to Christ, whose resurrection proves our forgiveness.

Praise be to Jesus for granting us this divine peace.

May the LORD ever keep us rejoicing in our great *shalom* – moving us to share it with others to the glory of His saving name.

Amen.