



# THE NEW SHOFAR

*What is the Eucharist? The Heavenly Meal, hosted by Christ, and presented in this realm to his people. Nothing less than the meeting place of heaven and earth.*

## Easter 1

<sup>19</sup> When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'

The disciples are still traumatized by the recent crucifixion of their Master and are, quite understandably, frightened concerning what might happen next.

This is the mob to whom He proffers the almost unimaginable gift: ***Peace be to you***. The sense of this declaration is one of absolute certainty. Peace ***is*** with you now, all you need to do is grasp it, take it into your lives, into the way you go about your daily living. You do not have to look for it, pray for it, or hope for it. The peace of God, the ***shalom*** of God is with you because I am with you.

While this text uses the Greek word for peace, ***eirene***, the concept is the Jewish ***shalom***—more than the absence of conflict—a wholeness that is the gift of God. It comes from “***shalem***” which means “whole” or “complete,” and so the word ***shalom*** describes a whole or fully satisfied situation. What Jesus is offering is the gift of being whole again, to be living in the land as we were created to be living.



***Shalom*** is what existed in the world at the end of God's creating. Man, Woman and creation, all in harmony, all living ***Shalom*** and all because God was in their midst in an intimate and loving way.

It is God who brings shalom, who is ***shalom***. Live in God and the inevitable consequence of that relationship is being made whole.

***As the Father has sent me, so I send you***

This is where Jesus goes next in greeting his disciples. He showers them in the gift of shalom for a second time and then, building on the gift of divine ***shalom*** he pledges to bring them into the continuing work of growing God's salvation in the world. The two study points for reflection and prayer are those two short words ***as*** or ***just as*** and ***so***. The basis, foundation and authority for our own Christian existence in the world is Jesus Himself. The content and priorities of our mission in the world are nothing less than the mission given to the Son by the Father. It has the same expectations, the same methodology and comes with the same assurances. And here it gets even more exciting, the mission and ministry entrusted to us is to be carried out under the Holy Spirit, the same Holy Spirit with whom Christ was anointed at His baptism in the Jordan. The success of this human ministry is guaranteed by the resurrection. The only demand is that we “do” our ministry in Jesus, just as Jesus did his in Galilee and beyond. And this includes his Golgotha witness.

## *Our true destiny is to be found in Christ alone*

Fear is a dreadful enemy, one capable of draining us of the energy and hope, life and the courage we need to continue with that battle. And how wonderful it is to have our Church begin behind locked doors... *because they feared the Jews.*

Note the way Jesus deals with this energy sapping ailment. He simply declares His presence, His presence as the Risen Christ the one who conquered death and the grave. He does nothing about the very real dangers from the Jews running around outside looking for these weird followers of the Rabbi from Nazareth. Nor does he seem to take into account the suspicious Romans who would be keeping out an eye for troublesome messiahs.

Jesus did not rise and go home. He rose and appeared to his disciples for it is with them the power of the resurrection to transform the world is to be gifted. But, as our gospel says, *the doors were locked*. They were keeping out not just the marauding mobs, but everyone. And there is our image for this week, the Twelve locking themselves away from that which frightens them.



But we cannot lock Jesus out. Alleluia! Alleluia! To that. The resurrected Christ has a way through the stoutest of doors, around the strongest of locks. We might think our true enemies are “out there” but Jesus knows all of our true enemies reside inside of us. It is in our hearts, in our minds that sin is formulated and initiated, and no wonder we do not want Christ poking around in some of those areas! But that is where he goes, that is where he is doing his greatest post-resurrection working. Whatever doors we place in the way of Christ, he comes through them.

### *The baying crowds did not simply disappear – neither do ours*

Jesus did not solve the problem of the mobs by stopping them in their tracks. What Jesus did then; what he does now is give us something – himself and with that presence comes the gift of *Shalom*. God’s gifts are poured into us that we have the courage and the power to leave those rooms we have created for ourselves. God knows what is going on in there and sends his son to the door, through the door, so that even when we try to lock them away from his presence, he simply appears. He has already conquered whatever locks us away.

Once the apostles experienced this reality, they were ready to take up the ministry of being sent into the world as the Son was sent into the world. Jesus resolves our major source of fear and immobility – ourselves - and now invites us to collaborate with him in bringing that same gift of freedom and life to others. Paul expressed this most beautifully in **Romans 8...** *For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* Just do it!