

It's okay is not okay. The only time I ever want to hear you utter those words is on a road trip and all of a sudden you forget and you wonder what the abbreviation for Oklahoma is, so you say "what's the abbreviation for Oklahoma again?" and your passenger says "It's OK." That's it. Either then, or in any spelling situation, or when you're talking about mediocre pizza. Only then is ok ever okay.

But nearly every other time you want to say "it's okay," I promise you it's not.

When your husband is late coming home and now you're late for a date or your kid's recital or he ran out of time to mow the lawn like he promised or he simply is late, when he comes in and gives an excuse or even simply apologizes, it's not okay.

When your kid breaks a lamp or a mirror, when your boss overlooks you for a promised promotion because it's easier to hire someone else, when you find out a friend started a rumour about you, when you yourself neglect to report random income on your taxes or skip church to just have a lazy day, it's not okay.

If any of these are okay, then Christ didn't have to die, and we shouldn't be celebrating His resurrection either.

These are sins, sins done against you or sins done by you, and sin by definition is not okay. Sin, disobeying God's commandments, His righteous ordering that both honours Him and maintains peace on earth, is what got Adam and Eve kicked out of the Garden and introduced death to those who should have had the pleasure of living forever.

And yet day after day, when we are sinned against, or when a friend tells us what they did to someone else in their life, we utter the syllables "It's okay." We try to comfort them, assuring them that it's not the end of the world.

It's okay, we say, because it's genuinely okay as we're not overly offended or hurt by what they say and did in their sin against us, or because we want the relationship to continue in spite of what words they just uttered or the actions that are turning into a pattern, or because we fall into the same

traps as well and we want them to know that they aren't monsters but they're just like you and me in their sinful words and deeds—maybe we need it to be okay for them because we need it to be okay for us.

But each word and each action that we sweep under the carpet, these were what Christ bore on His flesh and on His soul on Good Friday, the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, stealing the not-okayness onto Himself.

And He left them with His grave clothes all in the tomb when He arose, bringing the resurrection of the dead to His disciples, bringing into light the life that doesn't end because now sin is forgiven and defeated.

"Peace be yours," Jesus says as soon as He comes to them. He gifts them peace when all is not peaceful, when they are scared and confused, even after they abandoned or denied Him, when they sinned against their dying Lord who is now risen and standing in front of them. Yet before they can confess their doubt and unfaithfulness, He absolves them and tells them that since He is risen, all is well. He gives them peace.

And in John's Gospel, synonymous with peace is the life which God gives, the life that John breaks the fourth wall in this chapter to give, saying, "these things are written that you may believe, that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and in believing, you would have life in His name." He's saying to you, the reader and hearer that just as Jesus introduced peace to the disciples that resurrection morning, He gifts Life to you as you hear of His life and death and resurrection, as you are gifted the faith to believe. Life, as you would know your sins are forgiven, your death already suffered, and your eternal life already in the works.

Peace... Life... And now, the reason that this news has made it to you so you would have such a gift is because of what Christ does in between these gifts. Inseparable from the gift of peace and life is the gift that Jesus gives to His disciples as they are sent to write and proclaim all about Him. He breathes

on them His Holy Spirit, that third person of the Trinity, that gift which could not be theirs nor ours if our sin was not dealt with, but in His breath, in your baptism, in these words He gives it to you that you would not be alone as you live, and especially not as you go.

And this is the last gift of Christ that we receive in our reading today. The resurrected Christ appears and showers His disciples with the resurrection itself, with peace and life and the Holy Spirit Himself, but then He gives them the command to go just as Christ was sent by His Father, including forgiving the sins of others, and occasionally withholding said forgiveness as well. We have the good pleasure of proclaiming the resurrection to those in our midst.

We have something so much better to say than “it’s okay.” We get to say “I forgive you” and with those very words release the sins of those before us, giving them the Easter resurrection.

There’s this great pastor, Jim Nestigen, and I can’t imagine he’d be upset with me stealing this story. He was flying across the states and he’s about 6’2, and he likes beer and has the gut to prove it (his words), and as he goes to find his seat he sees he’s sitting next to someone of a similar stature. Should be a good flight.

As the flight continues, they chat. He shares that he’s a pastor, and the other guy is intrigued. The other guy shares what he does, and over the course of their time together he begins sharing stories from Vietnam. Nestigen can hear how wrecked this man is over what he had to do so many years ago, so he keeps listening, letting him bear his heart and taking in every word.

Now the conversation dwindles, and the plane is about to make its descent, the seatbelt sign is on, but Nestigen asks him, “have you confessed it all that troubles you now?” And the former soldier, with confusion on his face, says “confess? I haven’t confessed anything?” Nestigen assures him that he certainly has, and that he has been commanded by his Lord to forgive such a confession. And without a further word undoes his seatbelt to stand and place his hand on his forehead, and declares Christ’s absolution. While the flight attendants are panicking, wondering why this giant of a man is standing

amid turbulence, with his hands on his neighbour's forehead, he simply says. "In the name of Jesus Christ, I forgive you the entirety of all your sins." I don't think he would've stopped even if the plane was crashing—something more important was happening.

The absolved didn't quite understand what had just happened, how a man could do such a thing, or even why, but the conversation continues and Nestigen pastors him through what Christ did and what that means, and the guy asked, with tears in his eyes, if he could say it again, so he absolves him all over again. He even gave his card, warning that he might doubt this forgiveness in a bit, but just give him a call. And apparently this resurrected man called every day for two weeks to hear those words all over again.

You should hear the joy in his voice as he tells this story. Actually you can hear it—ask me afterwards. He's giddy.

And why wouldn't we be? When we say I forgive you, we are releasing the chains on our loved ones, even on strangers, that ought to bind them to hell. We, who have been forgiven, whom the Holy Spirit dwells within, who have been sent with such news, are proclaiming anew the resurrection, along with its peace and life and forgiveness. No, their sins are not okay. But they're forgiven anyways.

"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ," Paul tells us.

This is what your spouse needs to hear first and foremost when they sin against you. This is what your children need to know when they disobey you. Yes, they'll need your empathy and understanding; yes, they may need to know how to do better in the future. But over any of that, they need to know that you forgive them. They are reconciled to you whom they've sin against, and they're reconciled to the God they've rebelled against.

And this word is what the sin-sick world needs to hear as well. When friends talk about how much they messed up with their families, or at work, when a co-worker jokes about how much their anxiety over past mess-ups keeps them up at night, sure, joking with them that you're in the same boat

can lighten the mood, but assuring them that their failures don't have the last word, even saying "I forgive you" which will undoubtedly lead to discussion of why on earth you have the right to say such a thing, that is what they need to know. And because Jesus lived, died, rose, and declared this to you, you have the authority and even the command to share such good news!

Trust me, it's one of the most joyful parts of our job, absolving you, freeing you from what's burdening you, giving Christ's resurrection to you anew.

And while it's good that you forgive those who sin against you and speak forgiveness when and where the need arises in your various vocations, we are here to make sure it is proclaimed. Constantly. Without fail. So you'd never forget. In a podcast I recently listened to, they said "It's great when your wife forgives you; it's your pastor's job to forgive you." It is our pleasure to speak the forgiveness of sins to you as you forgive those who sin against you, or vice versa, to forgive you so that you may have the faith to go and forgive those who sin against you. Either way, we love being busy forgiving you.

You have called us to ensure that John 20 keeps happening in this place; that the Gospel is proclaimed, that peace is handed into the ears, the hands, the hearts of whoever is sitting in these pews and listening wherever they may be, that life eternal is dished out and the Holy Spirit spread by the Word and Sacraments. You have made it our duty to proclaim Christ's cross and resurrection, and it is our joy. So come and bring a friend. Be forgiven in our offices and here together in the sanctuary. Peace be yours.

And remember. It's not okay, but in the name of Jesus, I forgive you.