The disciples were in a locked room because they were afraid. They had good reason to be afraid. In fact, two groups were frightening to them -- the Jewish leadership, which is mentioned in John’s Gospel, and the Romans.

The Jewish leaders had put Jesus to death because of the things he had said and did that threatened their leadership. Wouldn’t they also be likely to come after his followers as well?

The Romans were a threat because removing a body from its tomb was a capital offense in Rome. And that was what most people said had happened to Jesus. They said his disciples had removed his body to claim that he had risen. So the disciples also had reason to be hiding from the Romans, as well.

So, it was perfectly human for them to be hunkered down behind locked doors and afraid. Yet Jesus comes in the midst of this fear and breathes on them the peace of the Holy Spirit. You see, it wasn’t just that he said the “Peace of the Lord be always with you,” as we say. But when he said that peace, he gave them the peace of the Holy Spirit. That peace transforms; it brings comfort and courage to them that allows them to lay down their fears.

As we’ll see as we go through Easter, the disciples didn’t go immediately from their fear into being courageous. They still clung to their fears just a little bit, like little Linus does with his security blanket. But gradually, as Jesus came to them more and more, they begin to be open to Him. They began to let go of their anxiety so that they could focus on being the people of God in the world.

Now we are all hunkered down too, behind the locked doors of our homes. We have good reason to be that way and we should stay that way for a while – for our own good and for the good of others. But while we want to be cautious, we don’t need to be anxious. In fact we serve God best if we’re not anxious.

When we are anxious, we don’t sleep well and we become fatigued. We don’t think clearly. And we tend to hunker down even more – not only just staying in our houses but staying within ourselves so that we don’t think about other people. The world revolves only around us when we are anxious. When we are anxious for an extended period of time, we sometimes do find security in our anxiety. It becomes the devil we know whereas being courageous becomes the devil we don’t know. We become like Linus with the security blanket. Anxiety has become our security blanket and we can’t let go. When we are overanxious, we become unable to think about how much we love God and others. We can’t find ways to act on that love. We can’t really be true disciples of Jesus in the world.

So here’s the thing. We need to remain physically shut up in our homes. That’s a safety reality. But we don’t need to be metaphorically shut up in our homes with the doors locked. We physically social distance from others, but emotionally, we stand with them. We don’t need to keep anxiety locked up in our hearts and homes with us.

Jesus lives and is able to penetrate that anxiety. Jesus lives and is able to penetrate into those places where our fears have locked out thoughts of our neighbors or our thoughts of God. No matter how afraid or sad or in pain we are – no matter how much we let this fear, sadness or pain lock us in – Jesus comes and stands there in the midst of it. Jesus comes bringing peace, breathing into our anxious lives the breath of the Holy Spirit.

We are called to be open to Jesus coming into our homes, standing with us and breathing love and courage anew into our hearts. We are called to draw even closer to the Risen Christ to feel that breath of peace that He brings. We are called to receive the peace of Christ and let it transform us from being locked in fear to being open to loving others even more.

We are called to let go of our anxiety blankets.