



stories of  
**hope & resurrection:**  
an easter series  
week two

written by  
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*“On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*”

John 20:19-23

Easter celebrations in Congo look a little bit different from ours in the United States. While some people come to church with new brightly colored bold print African dresses, most will come on Easter morning in the same clothes they have worn everyday for the past few years. Chocolate doesn't exist in Gemena, not to mention peeps and jellybeans.

Easter is a very important holiday for the church here to be reminded of why they have chosen a life of faith and following the example of Jesus. Many people will go to church on Good Friday where they will pray and fast for two days, staying overnight in the church until Easter morning. On that morning, there is a great celebration in the church (usually including a five hour long service), and that evening there will be a great gathering and showing of the “Jesus Film”. In years past, hundreds of people have accepted Christ as they understand the story for the first time through film.

My favorite part of the Easter celebration in Gemena is that after all the singing, dancing, and worship at church, people go home. There are no Easter egg hunts for kids in the forest, no restaurants to have an Easter brunch, and most people can't afford to host a large meal in their homes. But everyone is encouraged to invite to their homes anyone with whom they have had an unresolved conflict in the past year. It is a time to celebrate the resurrection through reconciliation. I can't think of a more powerful way to honor the life and death of Jesus which gave hope to a broken humanity and a broken world. Renewed friendship born of the death of hardheartedness through the miraculous power of reconciliation. He is Risen Indeed.