

## "Peace Be With You" John 20:19-21

### Introduction

Throughout our study in the Gospel of John we have observed the disciples of Jesus in a variety of different situations and seen a whole array of responses from them. We've seen them in the wonder of discovering deep truths; excited about God's power; confused and ignorant at times about truths Jesus was teaching; bickering with one another, eager and teachable; threatened and afraid; troubled in their hearts. But today we are going to see them in a way we've never seen them before. In our passage today, we find the disciples broken hearted. They are shaken to the core. They are afraid – but more than just afraid – their whole past, present and future has for the moment become muddled and turned on its ear.

And for these tough men, they were learning that it takes more than grit to overcome life's greatest blows. It takes the peace of Christ. And that's what we are going to learn today. No matter what your fear is; no matter how hard life is hitting you, Jesus Christ offers you a peace that is more powerful than anything in the world.

[John 20:18-23]

I think it's hard for us to put ourselves in the shoes of the disciples at this point. We might ask ourselves, *what would I do if I'd just found out the most exciting and wonderful news that man has ever known?* The

disciple's had just been told that Jesus was alive. And yet the response we see from them is polar opposite of what we might expect.

Let me review for you and put together for you the context from all four gospels. It was Sunday night. Jesus had been alive for nearly twelve hours, so it was still the day of the resurrection. The disciples and some other followers of Christ were together in the upper room, with the door closed. And they were afraid.

- They were afraid of the Jews.

If the Jews were willing to arrest Jesus and flog Him and crucify Him, what might they do to His followers? Could they ever go out in public again? Were they wanted men? They were afraid of the Jews.

But their fears were deeper than that.

- They were afraid of life.

They had staked every thing on their belief and commitment to Christ. They'd left families and businesses and homes to follow Jesus. And now He was gone.

So this day had been like no other day.

- It began with a report from Mary Magdalene that an angel told her Jesus was alive. She and some other women came and gave this report to the disciples.
- *But the words appeared to them as nonsense and they would not believe.* (Lk. 24:11)
- Peter and John went to have a look. They found evidence that led them to believe that maybe He was alive. But rather than return to the other disciples, they went to their own homes for a while to think about things.
- Mary went back to the tomb and saw Jesus and talked with Him.

- When she returned to the disciples, she found them mourning and weeping. She told them *I have seen the Lord!* But they still would not believe her. (Mk 16:10,11)
- According to Luke 24:34, somewhere during the late morning or early afternoon, Jesus appeared, for what must have been very briefly to Simon Peter. That brought all the disciples back together again where they began to conclude that perhaps Jesus had truly risen from the dead. As they were discussing this, two men returned from Emmaus with an incredible story about an extended conversation with Jesus as they traveled.

So that brings us to our passage today. The disciples are trying to sort out their personal crisis. It's a crisis of faith and a crisis of life. The truth is they were having trouble believing the plan of God. The death of Christ still was not making sense to them. And they were simply having trouble trusting God for what had happened. They were being threatened by their fears, their insecurities and the uncertainties of life.

Maybe you know something about that. While none of us will ever experience anything quite like that day for the disciples, we certainly know something of what it means to have personal crisis. You may be (or have experienced) some of your own crises of faith. Or maybe your doubts and troubles revolve around the circumstances of your life – a marriage that's in trouble, a job you don't really like, some friendships you've made that are getting you into trouble, or a personal decision you made that's just not turning out the way you thought it might.

The point is this. Your struggles don't have to be just like the struggles of the disciples in order for you to learn from the answers they received at the end of that day. Jesus came to them and offered them peace. How sweet must that have been? *Peace be with you.* He said it twice. That proves that even though this was a common greeting, Jesus meant for it to be anything but common. *Peace . . . be with you.* Peace is the answer we seek when turmoil reigns. Peace is what we long for when our lives are turned upside down. So let's look for a few moments at the things that became the turning point for the disciples.

1. They gathered together.

It's easy to overlook this simple reality. In spite of their broken heartedness, in spite of their fears, in spite of their uncertainties, the disciples did not scatter, nor did they isolate themselves. They might have run from the Garden of Gethsemane, but somewhere along the line they realized that they needed one another. They may have been struggling with their faith, but they were not void of faith or they never would have come together. Somehow they knew things were not over yet.

They may have been weeping and questioning and doubting – but they'd come together to sort things out.

And that's a great starting point for anyone who is struggling with fears, troubles, doubts and struggles. *Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor, for if either of them stumbles the other will lift up his brother; but woe to him who stumbles when there is not another to lift him up.* (Eccl. 4:9, 10)

If you are having trouble holding on, then come to the family of God. We were studying

Galatians 6 in our Bible study this week. Verses 2 & 5 seem to contradict one another, but they actually give a wonderful biblical balance. Verse 2 says *Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.* Then verse 5 says *For each one will bear his own load.* How can they both be true? Simply put, we have to take responsibility for our own life. We have to bear that load before God. You will answer to God for how you live, what you believe, etc. No one can take that from you or for you. But at the same time, we all have times when we could use a little help. To have someone help us lift, even if they can't take away our load, can be a tremendous encouragement.

As the disciple's day progressed, we can begin to see that being together was a good thing. And as they began to help one another consider the facts, their burdens slowly began to lift. By the time the men from Emmaus came into the room, late in the day, but before Jesus had appeared, the disciples were the first to speak and they said to the two men, *the Lord has really risen.* That's a lot of progress from earlier in the day when they thought the idea was nonsense.

Are you willing to allow others in the body of Christ help lift your load? Are you willing to help bear the burden of someone else? That's often the first step in finding peace.

## 2. The Presence of the Risen Christ

The door was shut. The doors were barred. John makes a point of telling us that they were afraid and making themselves as secure as possible. But *Jesus came and stood in their midst.* He was not a ghost. He didn't pass through the doors as a spirit. That contradicts the resurrection. But there is the mark of a miracle here. Jesus came miraculously

into their midst. Luke tells us the disciples were startled and frightened and *thought He was a spirit*. And as soon as they saw Him, Luke further explains that their doubts washed over them all over again. *Why are you troubled and why do doubts arise in your hearts?*

So what was the first thing Jesus did? John 20:20. *He showed them both His hands and His side*. Listen, here is one of the greatest things you must do to embrace the peace of Christ. You must believe that Jesus lives. You must understand the power and the reality of the resurrection. Your whole faith depends on this fact. The power for your life and victory comes from the same power of God. Your ability to trust God no matter what happens ultimately rests upon the resurrection. If Jesus lives then your sins are forgiven. If Christ lives and rules today then there is nothing in your life outside of His power and control.

And so, Jesus appeared graciously to the disciples on the first day of the week, as they were gathered together talking, crying, thinking and considering – and He gave them the greatest gift. He proved His resurrection and demonstrated that He had not abandoned them – but that He would be with them always.

In the same way, you must know that Jesus is alive. You must believe, if you are a child of God through faith that Christ will always be with you. He stands at your side, He dwells within you. You are not alone. That is a great foundation for peace.

And by the way, the application that flows out of that is that you would then think, talk, and live that truth. As you work through your troubles, do it in the presence of Christ. Be keenly aware that His presence with you is so that you will live and think

and speak and believe the way that would please Him.

The 3rd thing that brought the disciples peace was:

### 3. The Truth of Christ.

Verses 21 says *So Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.*” We will talk more about this commissioning next time. For now though I want you to think about what is happening here. These words seem so abrupt given the state of the disciple’s hearts. But it makes more sense if we see the context for the commission explained by Luke. After He showed them His hands and side He said *These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.*” Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, *“Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. “You are witnesses of these things. “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you;*

For the first time the Word of God began to make sense to them. Jesus didn’t just send them out into the world, Jesus ministered to them from the Scriptures. This ought to be a great challenge and encouragement to us. While God doesn’t owe us explanations for all of our troubles, we can find in the Word of God promises and answers that will help us see the redemptive purposes for suffering and life.

Here was the missing key for the disciples. They needed to know that life was not random. The death of Christ was not an accident. The suffering

and pain He had gone through (and they with Him) all were part of God's plan.

For you to have peace, you need those same things. Your life is not random. Your circumstances in life are not independent of God's purposes for you. And if you are a Christian, those purposes are for your good. Those are truths taught and explained and illustrated in the Bible.

Ask God to open your mind to the truth of the Bible. Two things came to the disciples that evening. They finally reached a settled peace in their hearts about all that had transpired. What a relief to grasp that God's plan was perfect! And secondly, their hearts were filled with joy. The fruit of peace is joy.

These things are not beyond your grasp. In fact they are your right as a child of God. May God grant you peace and joy even in the storms of life.