

Last Words: Behind Closed Doors John 20:19-29 (Luke 24:36-49)

INTRODUCTION

The disciples were discouraged, confused, and afraid. They are hiding behind closed doors – locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. **The story was already circulating that the disciples had stolen the body of Jesus.** Perhaps the authorities would apprehend and punish them. Perhaps Rome would execute them, as well, for breaking the tomb's seal. They did not know – but the air was filled with a mixture of confusion and fear. They were aware that the tomb was empty, since two disciples, among them, had recently arrived with the news that Jesus had appeared to them on the road to Emmaus. It was too much to hope for.

We will need to read two portions of Scripture to fully appreciate the miracle. First, please turn in your Bible to **Luke 24:36-49**. Please turn in your Bible to **John 20:19-29**. If we are not careful, we will devote our time, attention and energy to Thomas. This should not be. **The central figure in this encounter is the risen Christ.** He once again makes a post-resurrection appearance to minister to His own.

Please note with me the following:

I. A special _____ & _____ from the risen Savior (20:19-21)

A. The special _____ (20:19)

I love those first words, *“Peace be with you.”* Can you imagine what the Lord could have said?! This is His first appearance to the disciples, after they had denied Him, abandoned Him, and refused to own Him, so much so, that none of them took part in His burial. It would certainly be understandable if Jesus had greeted them, *“You unbelieving, thick-headed excuses for disciples! When are you going to get it together?”* The women had shown the only display of courage among them, apart from the apostle John.

He could have really let them have it. Like a parent who really gives his children a tongue lashing. It would not surprise us if the latter part of **John 20**, was a record of a tongue lashing the disciples would never forget. But look again at Christ's first word to them, *“Peace...”*.

But look again at Christ's first word to them, *“Peace...”*. What wonderful news – in our greatest fears, we cannot lock Him out! And He says to their fears, and ours, *“Peace be with you.”* *“Peace be with you”* was a common Jewish greeting wishing overall well-being on the other person. But in the context here it surely means far more than just a obligatory (token) greeting. This word, *“Peace,”* was an incredible expression. It was more than *“Hello,”* or *“God bless you.”*

In the Old Testament peace is closely associated with the blessing of God, especially the salvation to be brought by the Messiah (cf. **Ps 29:11; Isa 9:6; 52:7; 55:12; Ezek 37:26; Zech 9:10**). *** Now indeed such peace has come, for *“his ‘Shalom!’* on Easter evening is the complement of *‘It is finished!’* on the cross, for the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted. ***

B. The special _____ (20:20-21)

Please note what happens...*First,*

1. He _____ their fears & doubts (20:20)

“Just in case there is any doubt as to who I am,” Jesus implies, *“let Me show you!”* It is fascinating to me that, in the mind of God, Christ's resurrected body would be perfectly whole, yet, it was **His decision for His Son to retain five scars.** Our resurrection bodies will be perfect in the sense of not bearing any scars that we incurred during our lifetimes. But Jesus' resurrection body still has the scars to remind us of the great price that He paid to save us from our sins (see **Rev. 5:7**). **Luke 24:39-40** tells us that Jesus showed the disciples His feet as well). **Five scars that forever remind us that He was the Lamb – sacrificed.**

Jesus dispels their fears & doubts, next...

2. He commissions them to life-long _____ (20:21)

The resurrection of Christ produces a responsibility for Christians. In other words, we are not to remain behind closed doors! The apostle Paul calls us the *“body of Christ”*. We are His hands, His feet, and His mouth – and if there ever was a time when the simple, clear message of Christ is needed; if there ever was a time when confusion abounded, it is now.

Peace with God is foundational for your mission for Him. You can't begin to serve the Lord unless you first are reconciled to Him through the peace that Christ accomplished on the cross. Before you believe in Christ, your sins alienate you from God (**Rom. 8:7-8**). But when you trust in Christ, you enter into a new relationship of peace with God (**Rom. 5:1**). Then and only then does God appoint us as ambassadors of His mission of reconciliation with this world that is hostile toward Him (**2 Cor. 5:18**).

Not only does Christ give us peace *with* God through His blood, but He also gives us the peace *of* God through His abiding presence with us as we seek to accomplish the gospel mission. The peace that the Lord gives also extends to our relationships with one another. When churches get into internal conflicts, they sabotage their witness to the watching world. That's why many passages in the New Testament exhort us to work for peaceful relationships. The risen Christ is the basis for resolving relational conflicts. As Paul said with reference to the deep divide between the Jews and the Gentiles (**Eph. 2:14**), *“For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall”* Christ has given us peace with God, the peace of God, and peace with one another, so that we can carry out His mission.

A special word & commissioning....next, please note...

II. A special _____ from the risen Savior (20:22-23)

A. It includes a _____ (20:22)

To attempt to serve the Lord in any capacity, but especially in proclaiming the gospel to the lost, without relying on the power of the Holy Spirit would be futile. As **Zechariah 4:6** reminds us, *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the Lord of hosts.”*

Now, other passages make it clear that the Holy Spirit would come in fullness, after Christ ascended to the Father. That will not happen until some fifty days from this point. In **Acts 1:8**, we find the familiar words: *“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses...”* Notice this verse says, *“...shall receive...”* That is future tense. The Lord ascending and the Spirit descending was yet a future event. Like many expositors, **I believe that this passage in John is an experience whereby Jesus provides them with a preliminary provision; a foretaste of the strength to come.** In the meantime, this breath of the Holy Spirit would be a sweet gift that would enable them to wait nearly two months for the fulfillment of Christ's promise and the creation of the New Testament church. And, if you have ever had to wait two months for a life-changing answer, you know how important God's presence and grace is during that time.

His ministry to His own includes a gift and...

B. It includes a _____ (20:23)

Now, this verse is used by the Roman Catholic church as the biblical basis for the priest's authority to forgive sins. The special privileges vested in the Roman priesthood are taken from a verse.

So, what are the men in the upper room given? A special message. They, and we, are all given the power and privilege of giving the assurance of the forgiveness of sins by God and announcing the terms of forgiveness. Luke 24:47 says that we are to preach the repentance and remission of sins! So the

meaning and application for us is that we have the authority to proclaim to those who repent and believe in Christ, *“Your sins have been forgiven you.”* Or, if a person hardens his heart and refuses to believe, we must solemnly proclaim, *“You are still in your sins”* (see Acts 8:20-23). Empowered by the Spirit, Christian witnesses proclaim and declare, and live by the message of their own proclamation: **it is God who effectively forgives or retains the sin.** Christians who are thus involved in the forgiveness of sins do so as agents of the Holy Spirit and never as independent actors in this process.

The gospel that we proclaim is not so much about Jesus helping people with their personal problems but rather about God forgiving their sin through Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Do you realize the authority you display every time you share the gospel? Do you realize that you are giving a person the conditions whereby sins will be forgiven by God? What incredible authority. Imagine speaking for God; declaring to human beings on earth what has been done in heaven!

A special word, a special commissioning, a special ministry and last, but not least,...

III. A special _____ from the risen Savior (20:24-29)

A. _____ Thomas (20:24-25)

B. _____ Savior (20:26-29)

1. Exhibits patient _____ (20:26-27)

2. Commends believing _____ (20:28-29)

CONCLUSION

What can we take with us this morning? I believe that the lessons are simple yet profound.

• He _____ us

• He _____ us

• He _____ us

The risen and ascended and reigning Christ has granted us His Spirit for daily living; to be on mission with Him. He has not set us up to fail. Let's press on!