

John 20:19-31 Beyond Doubt Falls OPC PM Apr. 4, 2021

On Easter Sunday, in the evening, I draw your attention to these verses, because that was when it happened. On Easter Sunday, in the evening.

Verse 19, “*On the evening of that day, the first day of the week...*”

I must clarify for those of you who remember what I said this morning about sunset being the start of a new day for Jews? John, who wrote much later than Matthew, does not concern himself with Jewish reckoning of time. This seems to be Sunday evening, after sunset, but not considered by John to be Monday. It was the first day of the week.

Yes, the same day that Jesus rose again, Jesus appeared to the disciples in His resurrected body.

Verses 19-23 show us what happened.

The disciples gathered.

Since Jesus was executed, would the disciples be next to be killed? So, they locked the doors.

Jesus came into the room where the doors were locked. How is that possible? The resurrected body has different qualities than our bodies now. Jesus’ resurrected body must have not needed the door to be unlocked and opened for Him to enter the room! You cannot walk through doors tonight. But Jesus can. Philippians 3:20-21, “*...our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

*who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body, by the power that enables Him even to subject all things to Himself.”*

Once Jesus entered the room, Jesus said, “Peace be with you!” Since all the disciples had abandoned Jesus, it is significant that Jesus did not say “Shame on you.” But Jesus did not die for them and rise again in order to shame, but to save.

Jesus showed them His hands and His side. His hands had scars of crucifixion. His side had the scar from the spear.

There is an understatement in verse 20. “The disciples were glad.” Glad that He was alive. Glad that He was not angry with them.

I love what happened next - then Jesus said again, “Peace be with you.”

After that, Jesus did something important. Jesus commissioned them. As the Father had sent Jesus, now Jesus was sending the disciples. That was in verse 21.

Then in verse 22, another beautiful thing happened...Jesus breathed on them, and said receive the Holy Spirit. In verse 23, Jesus gave instructions on forgiveness.

Now we want to look at verse 24, because here we focus on the fact that Thomas, one of the Twelve disciples, missed it. Thomas was not present with them in the locked room when Jesus came and said these things and showed them His scars of being crucified, and spoke of the Holy Spirit.

So, John wants us to follow the test-case of Thomas. Thomas is famously known as doubting Thomas, but Thomas moved beyond doubt. Thomas is meant to be an

encouragement to all of us on our journey of faith. So, our main point in tonight's sermon is this:

**Christ has scars for me, so that I am beyond doubt.**

How did Thomas move beyond doubt? By Jesus' scars. Thomas learned to view the scars on Jesus as the scars OF Thomas UPON Jesus. Thomas declared, "My Lord!" Thomas did more than believe that Jesus was alive for Thomas. Thomas believed that Jesus had died for Thomas. Thomas moved beyond doubt.

Verse 25 – the other disciples told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord." But their words of testimony were not enough to convince Thomas.

It seems like multiple disciples were working to convince Thomas that their own sighting of Jesus was sufficient for Thomas to believe. Finally, Thomas protested in verse 25, "*Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into His side, I will never believe.*"

Do you know what followed? A long week for doubting Thomas.

To be precise, a week and a day.

Verse 26 gives us the timeline, "*Eight days later...*"

Verse 26 – What happened 8 days later? More mercy. Jesus showed mercy to Thomas by repeating the whole previous scene. Again the disciples gathered. Again the disciples were inside. The previous time Thomas had been absent, but the difference this time was that Thomas was present. Again the doors were locked. Again

Jesus came and stood among the disciples. Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you.” If you are counting, this is the third time Jesus said Peace be with you!

Then, in verse 27, Jesus said to Thomas, “*Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.*”

Verse 28, “*Thomas answered Him, ‘My Lord, and My God!’*”

**1. I have His Word. (v.31a)** Christ has scars for me, so that I have His Word. (v.31a)

John 20:31a, “*these [words] are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.*”

We have words of Jesus. Why are these things written? That you may believe.

Why does Jesus have scars? That you may believe.

Christ has gained for us the Word of God. We have a revelation from God. We have words of life, words of wisdom, words of instruction.

Because of Jesus’ scars, we have words of peace and words of blessing.

Because we have His Word, we have resurrection life.

In John 14:19, Jesus said “...*Because I live, you also will live.*”

Of course we understand that the scars point back to historical events. Resurrection life does not come to us through Jesus' scars alone, of course, but rather resurrection life comes to us through what events took Jesus’ blood and the events that left the scars on Jesus’ body.

Penalty for our sins needed to be paid, and that resulted in the death of Jesus, with His blood being spilled and his scars being formed. Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" The result was eternal life for us in Christ Jesus our Lord, who now possesses those scars, as much as we possess eternal life.

Hebrews 5:9, where Jesus "...became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him..."

## **2. I have His peace. (v.19b, 21, 26b)**

Jesus is insistent that we possess His peace! We have His peace because of what will happen to us. Jesus said to His disciples in John 14:18, "*I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you.*" We understand that Jesus' resurrection is not the end of the story. Once we celebrate the resurrection on Easter Sunday, don't turn your brain off. What is next? Jesus will ascend, and pour out His Spirit. Jesus will come again for us, to take us to heaven. Christ is coming soon.

Christ now has scars for me, so that I will soon have a body like His body. A resurrected body. How do we know? Because the events of Easter Sunday morning taught us that Jesus keeps His promises.

Just as Jesus promised to come to the disciples, and Jesus did come to the disciples in a resurrection body, so also Jesus promised that He will take us to be with Him where He is. John 14:2, "*In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?*"

Jesus has promised to prepare a place for us in His Father's house in heaven!

That is what gives us peace today.

Think of the promises that we have. 1) We will have new bodies. 2) we will be with Jesus. 3) we will be in the home of God the Father forever.

John wrote more about this in his letter 1 John 3:2, “*Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.*”

Why do we have peace? Because we shall see Jesus in His resurrected body. Because we shall be like Jesus. Because we shall have a body like His. How is that connected to Christ having scars for me? Without Christ’s scars, I not have this blessing. Without Christ’s scars, I would have gnashing of teeth and the lake of fire. However, with Christ’s scars, I will have a new body, like His glorious body. This is why we have peace.

Along with His peace comes His joy. Consider what happened in that room with the disciples and the locked door. Verse 20 says that “...*the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*” What does joy for us have to do with scars for Christ? Without the scars on Christ, we would not have joy. That brings us to our 3rd point.

### **3. I have His Spirit. (v.22)**

In the Bible, Easter and Pentecost coincide. In other words, the resurrection of Christ is tied to the sending of the Spirit of Christ.

How did we get breath in the first place? Genesis 2:7 “...*the LORD God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*” But then in Adam we all fell into sin, and we all died spiritually.

The same LORD, in Ezekiel 37:9, in the valley of dry bones, told Ezekiel to prophesy that He would “...breath on these slain, that they may live.”

The same LORD, after He Himself had come to life again, breathed on the disciples and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit...” in John 20:22. This is the beginning of the awakening of the spiritually dead.

In John 20:17, Jesus mentioned the ascension. That will be the next event.

After the ascension, then Jesus would need to be glorified.

John wrote about glorification way back in John 7, Jesus had said that anyone who thirsts should come to Jesus to drink and that out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. In order to help us understand these statement John wrote the helpful verse 39, *"Now this [Jesus] said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in [Jesus] were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."*

John was not writing about when the Spirit would be coming, but rather John was writing from whom the Spirit shall come. The Spirit will come on them from this Risen Lord Jesus. John wrote not chronologically, but theologically. That means, when John wrote that Jesus said to His disciples "Receive the Holy Spirit,..." John was not concerning Himself with the when, but from whom. Jesus is the one who gives the Spirit to us. Let me wrap up this sermon.

### **Concluding Application:**

What if we are winding down Easter Sunday, but you still have doubts? What should you do? John helps us out in this passage. John says follow the pathway of Thomas from doubt to faith.

The sudden appearance of Jesus when the doors were closed and locked cannot be explained in such a way that human minds are satisfied. Not only did the Lord prove His resurrection, even showing the disciples his side and His hands, but He also gave them a much needed blessing of peace. It was a peace obtained by way of the cross. Jesus further comforted the disciples by informing them that their task as official representatives of Jesus would continue. Though they had all left Jesus and they had all ran away and left Jesus to die alone, here Jesus shows that he considers them to be His apostles with true authority to rule the Church.

Furthermore, the beauty of the story shows the tender character of Jesus remains the same after His death and resurrection. Namely, Jesus is filled with mercy. Jesus met all the demands of His disciple Thomas, who was doing wrong to

make such demands. The loving treatment which Thomas received from Jesus brought out the desired response from Thomas, “My Lord and My God.”

This was the first time in the Gospel of John that the phrase “My God” was used to refer to Jesus Christ. And it came from the mouth of the formerly-doubting disciple named Thomas. It is an invitation from the author John the Evangelist to us to follow the same pathway out of doubting into believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of god, and that by believing, we may have life in His name.

It is an invitation to move beyond doubt.

About 100 years after John wrote, there was a man converted, but then he was dying. Before he died, he wrote these last words to a friend: "It's a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy which is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they don't mind. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians--and I am one of them."

This is the statement of a person who has moved beyond doubt.

Have you?