

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

The Gift of Peace

John 20:19-21a

Intro: We're looking at the aftermath of the resurrection of Jesus in John [ch20](#). I find it interesting to see the discovery and development of the reality of the resurrection as the truth about Jesus' new condition slowly spreads. Understand, the work of the Father in bringing to completion the gift of salvation has been fully completed. There is nothing left to do. Jesus stated as much in one of His final declarations from the cross when He said, "It is finished!" The problem was, nobody knew about it; not even His closest friends and followers - at least, not yet!

Its fascinating to me to watch as the light of God's truth begins to dawn on individuals and they not only begin to understand the truth of the resurrection but also begin to appreciate the ramifications of that truth in their own lives. I find it interesting because this is exactly what happens today to individuals who discover what the resurrection of Jesus Christ actually means to them. Oh sure, they've heard about the resurrection. I mean. That's what Easter is all about, right? You wouldn't know it by seeing how most people celebrate that holiday. The resurrection isn't important to most people not because they haven't heard about it but because they don't really know what it means to them.

As we have mentioned previously, Jesus made 7 specific statements from the cross. We dealt with a few that John mentions in his Gospel. These statements are clearly important and have great meaning to the work Jesus was accomplishing on the cross. They also constitute the foundation for a wonderful series of messages and have been preached many times, often in the weeks leading up to Easter. The only down side to this phenomena is that these series are often labeled as the 7 last words of Christ. That's unfortunate because it implies that Jesus had nothing left to say after His death; it suggests that there was no resurrection! What we're going to see as we finish up the Book of John is that Jesus gave a series of "last words" that were spoken after the resurrection which may actually be more important and have a greater claim to our attention than the statements made from the cross.

What are these words? They are: “Peace be with you” (20:19, 21); “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you” (20:21); “Receive the Holy Spirit” (20:22); “Do not be unbelieving, but believe” (20:27); “Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed” (20:29); “Feed my sheep” (21:17); and “Follow me” (21:19). These seven sayings may be described as: a great bequest, a great commission, a great consolation, a great challenge, a great benediction, a great responsibility, and a great invitation. Now, let’s look at the first of these—a great bequest.

19-21a – This was the same day as the resurrection. Jesus rose from the tomb earlier that morning and the NT tells us that He made 5 separate appearances on that day: To Mary Magdalene (14-17) to the other women (Matt 28:9-10); to the 2 on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-32); to Peter (Luke 24:33-35); here, to the disciples (sans Thomas).

It’s good to see that the disciples stayed together or at least gathered together to console one another. They had just gone through the worst week of their entire lives and now there are rumors floating around that someone has stolen the body of Jesus or that Jesus was alive or something! There was confusion, there was remorse, there was some room for hope but there was also a lot of fear and dread. John tells us that there was still quite a bit of fear amongst them that they might also be fingered as associates of Jesus and be arrested and tried just as He was. On the other hand, if Jesus were somehow now alive – what must He think of them! They were His closest friends and allies but when push came to shove, they deserted Him to a man. If He were now alive, how could they ever face Him again?

But, it was good that the disciples were together. In ch 15, Jesus had told them that when He eventually departed from them, they must continue to love one another (17). This command assumes that the disciples would stay together. In ch 17, Jesus also prayed for their continued unity after He was gone (11). This command was fulfilled and this prayer was answered, at least in the days immediately after the resurrection. Except for Thomas! Where was he? Maybe the Saints were playing; maybe he was spending time with his family; maybe he had a long day of work the next day and needed to get his rest. There’s probably a thousand reasons why Thomas wasn’t there but the long and the short of it was, when Jesus appeared to the disciples, he wasn’t there to experience it or receive from it.

Why does John mention that the doors were shut? Now, he tells us they were shut out of fear of the Jews. That being the religious leaders – those who had unjustly arrested Jesus and had Him executed. We can thus assume that when John says the doors were shut, they were also locked. The disciples were understandably afraid and they took the necessary precautions. But John isn't simply reminding us of their state of mind in this verse. He mentions the shut doors to inform us as to the nature of the glorified body Jesus now possessed. The doors were shut and locked and yet Jesus came and stood amongst them. This means He hadn't come through the door the normal way!

There are 2 things we need to consider here. 1st) the risen Jesus, in His glorified body, was not limited by closed doors. The room was secured against any unwelcomed entry but Jesus had no problem getting inside. He was able to enter the room without opening the doors. We can't just say that He was now only a spirit; He had a solid body for He will invite them to touch him and see. **Luke** tells us at this meeting, Jesus even ate some fish (21:41-43). Spirits don't need to eat; they don't have the capacity for it! We don't know exactly what His resurrected body was like but we can see that it was a different kind of body, one that isn't limited by the laws of nature. This demonstrates that resurrected bodies aren't subject to the same limitations as our present bodies. Since believers will be raised in the same manner as Jesus, this gives us some hint as to the nature of our future body in the resurrection.

2nd) Not only does this inform us as to the nature of Jesus' glorified body, it also informs us of the focus of His heart. Considering the limitless nature of His glorified body, Jesus could have gone anywhere and done anything after His resurrection. He could have popped over to Pilate's palace and smacked him on the back of the head! He could have appeared to all of the religious leaders and said, "I'm back!" or "In your face!" He could've travelled the universe or just went straight to the Father's presence and received back the glory He willingly set aside before the incarnation. Since He could've done whatever He wanted, it's obvious that's exactly what He did. He wanted to be with His people. He sought out His people!

That truth is both a great encouragement and a sobering reality. Jesus could have done anything and He wanted to meet with His people. What a great encouragement to know that when we gather together as God's people that

Jesus is not only with us but He wants to be with us. That is a glorious reality but it's also a bit sobering. Do we desire to meet with Jesus as much as He does with us? He wants to fellowship with us but how often are we more like Thomas? He wasn't there! Who missed out on that deal? Thomas! But it's more than just church. Jesus desires to meet with each of us personally, on a daily basis. If you were granted an audience with the President of the United States, it would be considered a great honor and you wouldn't let anything keep you from making that appointment. Well, we have Someone infinitely greater than a President or monarch who has made an appointment with each of His followers and we shouldn't allow anyone or anything to distract or delay us from meeting with Him. Thomas missed out because of unbelief – what's our reason (no excuse)?

Peace – How would you feel if you were with a small group of people in a secure room and someone suddenly appeared right in the middle of the group? It would be slightly disconcerting, right? Now imagine you with a small group of co-workers and you're all in the break room cutting down the boss like nobody's business and the boss suddenly appears in the middle of all that? You would all have heart attacks and die right there at the table! Think of the mindset of these disciples – their nerves were already frazzled from the horrific events of the weekend and now there's all the rumor and confusion surrounding the empty tomb and then, “poof” – Jesus is standing there with them! Luke tells us that they were “terrified and frightened, supposing they had seen a spirit” (Lk 24:37). I can't say that I blame them. On top of that, Jesus could have rebuked and chastised them for their unfaithfulness just a few days prior but He didn't. That's not what He came to do. He came to give them a gift. He came to give them peace!

When Jesus appeared among His disciples, He used a common greeting, “Shalom.” This word is used the same way we use “Hello” but there's more to it than that. For starters, it was never used in a flippant manner (like “Hi”). It was a serious greeting. Plus, it was always related to the thought of peace being God's gift, like, “God bless you.” More importantly, in the NT the idea of God giving peace to men is always connected to what Jesus accomplished by His death and resurrection (Rom 5:1). It's in this sense that Jesus uses the word in His greeting to the disciples. He had gone to the cross. He had been raised from the dead. Now, as the result of what He had accomplished on the cross, He was dispensing real peace to those who believed on Him.

What is peace? One definition applies it to a relationship between countries: “an agreement to end hostilities.” Another calls it “public order.” A third calls it “harmony in personal relations.” None of these are wrong but, good as they are, none of them do justice to what Jesus really meant when He offered peace to men. When Jesus spoke of peace to His disciples He was speaking of peace with God. This is the peace that was purchased by His suffering on the cross and it’s significant because people aren’t at peace with God naturally. According to the Bible men are at war with God. They’re openly opposed to Him. Thus, it was up to God to make peace through the cross of Christ.

We must also understand that this peace must be on God’s terms. Anybody know the significance of yesterday’s date? Dec 7th – a date that will live in infamy! The day Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and the U.S. enters World War II.

Anyone know when it ended? Emp. Hirohito surrendered on 8/14/45, the news was announced to the world on 8/15/45 but it wasn’t until 9/2/45 that representatives of the Japanese government climbed aboard the USS Missouri, anchored in Tokyo Bay, officially signed the treaty to end the war. Now, there was no place for haggling between the Japanese and the Americans, there was no concession requested or even expected – Japan had treacherously attacked the U.S. unprovoked and there was no acceptable resolution to the war other than unconditional surrender.

Now, if we can recognize this truth on the human level, we can recognize it spiritually. This is the way it must be between God and rebellious, sinful men and women. People come to God and try to present their terms. They say, “God, if you do such-and-such for me, then I’ll serve You and we can get along together.” But there’s no room for haggling with God. If you want peace with God, you must receive it in the way God provides it. Jesus died to make peace. If you are going to enter into God’s peace, it must be by faith in Jesus and what He has done. The wonderful thing is that when we come to God on such terms we discover that He’s not hostile. He’s no longer looking at us in wrath. There are no frowns. Instead, He receives us with smiles and makes us His daughters and sons.

When Jesus offers peace He does so in another sense too. While it’s true

that He offers us peace with God ([Rom 5:1](#)), it's also gloriously true that He offers us the peace of God also. It's God's own peace He's offering to us. The Bible speaks of this peace in [Phil 4:6-7](#). This was a wonderful word for the disciples. They had gone through the most traumatic week of their lives. If ever there was an agitated and confused group, it was this small, fearful band of Christ's disciples. But then Jesus came! One minute they were alone and miserable; the next minute He was there. How happy they were to hear Him calm their troubled spirits and still their hearts. "Peace! *Peace be unto you!*"

Do you know this peace? World War II ended on Sept 2, 1945 but the world has been in conflict ever since. "Peace" was the battle cry of the turbulent '60s but all the idealism, songs, drugs, and optimism of the decade did nothing to create a peaceful world, not among countries, races or even generations. This wouldn't be so bad if those who truly want peace could at least find it in the privacy of their own souls. But even that's impossible because we carry the seeds of turmoil in our hearts. Our basic problem is that we're not at peace with God, and deep down we know this is true. Plus, this disharmony disturbs our relationships with other people and our own ability to rest. We're all agitated people. But Jesus made peace between His Father and all who trust in His reconciling death for sinners on the cross. Since those who know and trust Christ have been given peace with God they can now also experience peace with others and with themselves in the innermost recesses of their souls.

Jesus offered the disciples peace but what does that mean to us today? The peace Jesus offers means your sins are forgiven. This brings an amazing relief to a sinful soul. All religions have some form of penance or propitiation that their followers are required to perform in order to address their sin but none of these works or rituals deal with the guilt of sin, thus, they offer no peace at all. But, the blood of Jesus washes away all our sin, giving us the first real taste of peace we have ever experienced. The peace Jesus offers means our slavery to sin is broken. Not only does the blood of Jesus free us from the guilt of sin, it also frees us from the bondage to sin. I'm no longer locked into a lifestyle that leads to destruction.

The peace Jesus offers also means that my Savior now takes on my fears and cares ([1 Peter 5:7](#)). The peace Jesus offers means my life is settled in him. Not just for today but for all of eternity. Now that's some kind of peace!

Do you know this kind of peace? Have you entered into a state of peace with God? Have you had a recognizable experience of the peace of God in your life? If you haven't yet accepted this peace that Jesus offers into your life than the rest of the amazing statements Jesus has to say will not apply to you. Only those who have willfully entered into a state of unconditional surrender to God can be at peace with God and can experience the peace of God in their lives. This is not a promise of a life free from trouble but a life of peace despite and amongst the trouble.

One thing we should take notice of as we go through the rest of John's Gospel is the response of all those who come in contact with the risen Jesus. Wherever people are confronted with the reality of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, their lives are completely transformed. Mary Magdalene life was transformed from a despondent sorrow to an overwhelming joy. The disciples will go from hiding out in fear of the Jews to boldly preaching the Gospel in spite of the Jews. Thomas will go from a stubborn unbelief to a determined confidence.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ demands a life-saving (life-changing) response of faith and that same transforming experiences we read about in the Bible can be yours today. The same transforming power of the Gospel is present in our midst; it is contained in the resurrected life of Jesus and revealed in the truth of God's Word. As you witness the dramatic changes that took place in the lives of these people, you must ask yourself: Have I personally met the risen Savior? Have I allowed Him to change my life in just this way? If not, wouldn't you like to do so today? 😊