



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ◇ DEO ◇ GLORIA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

The Resurrected Christ Appears to His Disciples

John 20:19-23

October 29, 2006

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- I. **Jesus Appears to His Disciples**
 - a. **The Actions of the Disciples**
 - John states, in Verse 19, that ‘when it was evening on that day [‘Resurrection’ Sunday], the first day of the week [Sunday],...the doors were shut where the disciples were...’
 - The disciples [most likely ten of them (the Twelve less Judas and Thomas (Verse 24))] had shut themselves into an unknown location ‘for fear of the Jews.

- In other words, the disciples, at this time, were focusing on the Jews, NOT Jesus. The reason is quite clear: they had just executed their leader and it would not be beyond the realm of possibility for the leaders to begin seeking out the followers of the recently-crucified Christ.
- What is significant is that the disciples were **thinking of themselves**, not their Crucified [and now resurrected] Lord.
- Also, the disciples were ignorant of the significance of the empty tomb.
 - Had they realized the significance of the empty tomb [Peter and John would have informed them], they would have, no doubt, gone to spread the news.
 - Unfortunately, their understanding was blinded at this time.

b. The Actions of Jesus

- Miraculously, in spite of the disciples' self-centered fear and ignorance, Jesus reveals Himself to them.
- First of all, the appearance of Jesus was itself miraculous in that the doors were shut ['locked']. It is most likely that Jesus simply passed through the doors and appeared in His glorified state to His disciples.
- Secondly, it is Christ who pursues and purposefully reveals Himself specifically to His disciples [Verse 19], even as they had improper thoughts of Him and the events of the past three days.
- Finally, the actions of the Resurrected Christ fulfill His own words that He would return to His disciples.

John 14:18: "I will not leave you as orphans; **I will come to you.**"

John 16:22: "Therefore you too have grief now; but **I will see you again...**"

- This scene beautifully illustrates one of the fundamental truths concerning God as He relates to us, His people. Apart from Christ, no one ever 'seeks' or 'pursues' God. In fact, we are blind even to our need for Him. Yet, when He chooses to reveal Himself to us, He pursues us and there is no obstacle that we can erect [even closed doors!] that will prevent the grace of God from accomplishing what God intends. It is this grace that God extends to all of those 'sheep' given to the Son; it is a grace that is both **particular** and **effective**.

II. Jesus Comforts His Disciples

- After appearing to His disciples, Jesus immediately comforts them, with both His words and His actions.

a. The Words of Christ

- The first words that Jesus says to His disciples are, ‘Peace be with you.’
 - These words, in themselves, demonstrate the grace of God. The disciples had abandoned Christ at the moment of His greatest agony, and quite possibly, the disciples may have expected a rebuke, chastisement, or even blame from Jesus. Instead, they receive the words, ‘Peace be with you.’
 - Secondly, the peace that Jesus offers to His disciples, in the midst of the tragedy surrounding the week’s events, is **only possible through His vicarious sufferings and death** [on the behalf of His disciples].

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”
John 14:27

“These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”
John 16:33

b. The Actions of Christ

- John states that ‘when He had said this [Peace be with you], He showed them both His hands and His side.’
- When Jesus shows His disciples His hands and side, it accomplishes at least four things:
 - It demonstrates to the disciples that it is truly Jesus.
 - It clearly reveals that He was crucified. Not only do His hands show the marks of being nailed to the cross, but His side reveals that He had been stabbed in order to ensure He was dead on the cross [which had had clearly been after He was speared].
 - Thirdly, the marks are those, ultimately, of victory, not defeat. The reason for this is that even though Jesus had clearly been crucified and dead, He is now alive, demonstrating that not even death on a cross could end His work – It was an integral part of His work!
 - Finally, by showing His disciples His wounds, Jesus ‘turns their weeping into joy.’

c. The Reaction of the Disciples

- John states that when Jesus appeared to His disciples, and showed them His wounds, ‘The disciples then rejoiced...’
 - This is a clear fulfillment of John 14:18; 15:11; and 16:20-22).

John 16:20-22: “Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy...Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.”

The cross is no longer an object to be despised; an instrument of shame and torture. Because of the work of Christ, the cross symbolizes not death, but life.

The very object of the disciples' grief is now the object of their joy! It is no coincidence that the centrality of the cross becomes the heart of the apostolic [and future!] gospel message!

III. Jesus Commissions His Disciples

a. He Sends His Disciples

- After Jesus reveals Himself to His disciples, He says, once again, ‘Peace be with you;’ and then says, ‘as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’
 - Now that Jesus has finished the task that the Father gave Him to do [technically, Christ must first Ascend, then His work is done], Christ, in the same manner that the Father sent Him, sends His disciples to ***continue the task...***

“Succession is important...in the Old Testament...In the present Gospel, Jesus succeeds [John] the Baptist and is followed by both the Spirit and the Twelve (minus Judas), who serve as representatives of the new messianic community. Old Testament narratives involving succession feature Joshua (following Moses) and Elisha (succeeding Elijah).”

Andreas Kostenberger

- The task that Jesus sends His disciples to accomplish is based upon His [Jesus'] completed work [in His Incarnation, Life, Death, Burial, Resurrection, and Ascension].
- NOTICE: the disciples' relationship with Jesus Christ finds its foundation / basis in the relationship between the Son and the Father – the eternal Godhead. In other words, the relationship between the Father and the Son provides the

perfect model for our relationship with the Son. **As the Son's relationship with the Father can be described in one word: OBEDIENCE, so should our relationship with the Son.**

- Yes, Jesus Christ came 'to seek and to save that which was lost' (Luke 19:10); but this mission was predicated upon the Son's perfect obedience to the will of the Father.
 - So, our lives, as 'ones sent' by the Son should also be marked by obedience to His commands.
 - It is no coincidence that Matthew 28:19-20 states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."
- ❖ Disciples in all generations should view this as the greatest of privileges: not only has God called us to be His people, and He our God, He has also chosen to use us as the means to continue to the work of Christ in the world through the proclamation of the Gospel!

b. He Equips His Disciples

- After Christ says, 'I...send you' John states that Jesus 'breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'
- This Verse is reminiscent of Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 37:9:

Genesis 2:7: "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."

Ezekiel 37:9: "Then He said to me, 'Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, 'Thus says the Lord GOD, 'Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they come to life.'"

- Yet, despite many of our modern-day translations, this verse does NOT literally say, 'He breathed *on them*'; rather, it simply states, 'he breathed,' or, possibly, 'he exhaled.'
- Many often believe that this passage suggests that Jesus breathed *onto* or *into* His disciples, and thus imparted to them the 'Holy Spirit.' This interpretation, therefore, could be referred to as

‘John’s Pentecost.’ However, contextually, this understanding simply does not work.

- ❑ When Jesus ‘breathes’ and says, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit,’ He is anticipating the sending of the Holy Spirit at the Day of Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2. Christ is looking forward to Pentecost as the necessary event that is needed if the disciples are going to be **able** to fulfill the mission that Jesus has sent them out to accomplish.
- ❑ The primary significance in this passage is that, just as the breath comes from Jesus [and the Hebrew word, *ruach*, can mean ‘spirit,’ ‘wind,’ or ‘breath’], so the Holy Spirit is sent by Jesus.
- ❑ Furthermore, it is not until after Jesus has accomplished all that the Father sent Him to accomplish that the Holy Spirit will come [at Pentecost], on the basis of Christ’s completed work.
- ❑ Therefore, just as the Incarnate Christ accomplished all He did in the power of the Holy Spirit, so too we are empowered/equipped by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to a dying world to the glory of God the Father.

c. He Authorizes His Disciples

- ❑ After ‘breathing’ and saying, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit,’ Jesus authorizes His disciples to ‘forgive sins’ and to ‘retain sins.’
- ❑ First of all, it should be noted that this authority is NOT inherent to the disciples, but rather, to God.
- ❑ This Verse has caused a great deal of confusion throughout the centuries among different a groups.
- ❑ It is essential, first of all, to remember the CONTEXT of this authorization.
- ❑ Jesus has just sent His disciples into the world to **continue** His work **NOT begin a new one.**
- ❑ The task before the disciples, therefore, is clearly this:

Proclaim the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Power of the [indwelling] Holy Spirit, on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ to the glory of God the Father.

- ❑ Therefore, the ‘authorization’ that Jesus is speaking of here must relate to the task that Jesus has sent His disciples to accomplish – the faithful proclamation of the Gospel.
- ❑ “In the proclamation of the Gospel in the name and in accordance with the instructions of Jesus, He Himself is the speaker. And He came to earth to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). That forgiveness goes into effect with His word. Here also the disciples are permitted to continue His work.”
Herman Ridderbos
- ❑ “There is no doubt from the context that the reference is to forgiving sins, or withholding forgiveness. But though this sounds stern and harsh, it is simply the result of the preaching of the gospel, which either brings men to repent as they hear of the ready and costly forgiveness of God, or leaves them unresponsive to the offer of forgiveness which is the Gospel, and so they are left in their sins.”
J. Marsh
- ❑ In other words, it is the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, proclaimed through disciples in all generations, that is the standard by which we declare someone ‘forgiven’ or not.
- ❑ Ridderbos continues, “Therefore the authority to forgive and to retain the sins of others that Jesus gives His disciples does not consist in the application of moral standards but in placing people before the decisive choice to accept in faith the grace of God manifest in the sending of His Son or to remain in sin and to fall under divine judgment.”
- ❑ D.A. Carson correctly states, “The Christian witnesses proclaim and declare, and, empowered by the Spirit, live by the message of their own proclamation; it is God who *effectively* forgives or retains sin.”

May we, as believers today, never forget the profound privilege and responsibility that we have to ‘contend for the faith’ we have received and proclaim this Gospel to the world around us!