

Peace and Joy and Power

John 20:19-31

Introduction: Life is disappointing! By this I mean that our physical world and lives seem to offer us much more than they ever deliver. The list of evidence for this is endless; Education does not make you smart and yet it promises to. Men and women crave to be loved and yet marriage fails to give it. We want security for the future, but money and possessions either vanish or produce more anxiety. Young people believe the world's promises. The older look at what they have and realize that the deepest longings of their life are not satisfied.

AND...not having a good marriage does not meet that need either. Staying poor and not having any possessions or money will not make you feel secure either. In other words, The created physical world is not capable of meeting our "God-given" spiritual desires. The ones that transcend the physical. God alone can satisfy those and He is known only in Jesus Christ. This is a central theme of Christ's ministry.

John 1:18 ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

John 4:13-14 ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 6:27 ²⁷ Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

All human beings eventually come to the end of their lives. They have no physical life left and what remains is spiritual, the eternal. Every promise of the world is finally seen for the lie that it has been. No man on his death bed ever says, "I wished I would have worked harder and made more money." Or "I wish I would have spent more time entertaining myself with possessions and pleasures." John summed this up perfectly in his first epistle with a strong admonition to your heart....

1 John 2:15-17 ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions- is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

The resurrection puts the explanation point on all of this. Jesus' physical life and presence was a source of unspeakable hope to many...especially His disciples. The two on the road to Emmaus summed it up perfectly.

Luke 24:21 ²¹ "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.

Their hopes and expectations in this world have been shattered. There will be no Messianic Kingdom. There will be no righteous ruler and just political kingdom. In fact, evil has totally triumphed and a dark, depressing despair has settled over their lives. Christ death is God's graphic illustration of everything Jesus has preached...."Do not hope in this world, in yourselves or in others. It will not satisfy you in the end." This is why so many folks end their lives with a permanently etched grimace on their face. You see them everywhere you look.

Resurrection is about a different life. One that can satisfy the desires of the heart. Its character is Godlike and eternal. Because God alone is eternal only He can give eternal life. Let's sneak into that locked room and hear the first words Jesus says to His disciples. They are experiencing the crushing reality of what Jesus has taught...."Do not hope in this world, but in Me!"

John 20:19-31 ¹⁹ So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace *be* with you."²⁰ And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ So Jesus said to them again, "Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." ²² And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ "If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained." ²⁴ But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." ²⁶ After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you." ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed." ³⁰ Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.

The disciples are going through devastating disappointment. You might be able to identify with them. Perhaps you came to church this morning with a subconscious list of all the things that have not gone the way they were supposed to in your life. Your marriage, your children, your vocation, your financial security, your church associations, your friends, your??? They are things you hoped in this world. This does not mean they are wrong. You need to understand this. It is not wrong to seek love, the best for your children, a good job, some money and a good church. **NOT WRONG!!!** It is inadequate! Everything in creation is ravaged by human sin and weakness and were never intended to satisfy our longings of the heart for true joy and purpose. Let's see what Jesus says and does as He introduces us to Eternal Life in union with Him.

So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, [19a]: It is Sunday evening. It has been a grueling three days of grief, punctuated by some startling assertions. Some of the women had said that they had actually seen Jesus alive.

They have also seen the empty tomb, experienced the awesome earthquake, beheld the brilliant angel, seen the comatose Roman guard and heard the shocking announcement... "He is Risen!" But the testimony of women in Christ's day was not considered credible. In fact, when they did report all this, they were met with derision and unbelief.

Luke 24:10-11 ¹⁰ Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the *mother* of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.

Peter and John have believed that He arose when they saw the arrangement of the grave clothes, but they might have been thinking He had already returned to heaven. Jesus had told them....

John 16:28I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I am leaving the world and going to the Father."

The doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews [19b]: The Jews have succeeded in killing Jesus and they are expecting them to come for them as well now that the Sabbath is over and it is legal to murder people again. But...a locked door is not going to keep the temple police out for very long. John's real reason for mentioning the shut and locked door is what follows...

Jesus came and stood in their midst [19d]: With the door locked Jesus just appeared in the room. The physical world is ruled entirely by Christ. It's so called immutable laws of physics are totally subject to their creator. The physical world obeys Christ and not the other way around. Those who question the resurrection do so on the assumption that Jesus Christ must obey the laws of physics. There was no knock at the door, no call to open! As easily as Jesus passed through the grave clothes, He passes through a shut and locked door. The fact that John and Peter believed He arose did not mean they believed they would ever see Him again. They are stunned along with the rest.

He said to them, "Peace be with you." [19d]: Jews still use this greeting today. It would not have sounded strange to their ears. It is "Shalome alekiom." But...this turns out to be more than a greeting. Jesus says it three time in a few minutes. Only the first one is a greeting. After that it is about how you and I have peace in a world in which there is almost no peace or at best bogus peace.

And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. [20a]: Jesus starts by identifying Himself beyond a shadow of a doubt. This is important. Unbelievers have always denied the resurrection because it is irrefutable proof of Deity. Like passing through walls and grave clothes only on the grandest possible scale. It is evidence of complete sovereignty over life itself. Everyone who believes in God believes He has this power. They just do not see how it is intended to impact them directly. It is not a religious dogma....Resurrection proves that Jesus is God the Son, the creator!

John 5:26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. [20b]: It worked. Jesus proved to them that it was really Him and He was really with them again. Now I know what you might be thinking....If I actually saw Jesus in person I would be joyful too. I am stuck with the Bible and this preacher and a miserable life of disappointment and grief. This belief is why so many people are insisting that Jesus appeared at their bedside or in a room they were in....but let's think this through. Jesus has been preaching that the physical cannot meet the spiritual need. Seeing Jesus here is very temporary. In 50 days He will be permanently gone...then what? If you are looking for a vision of God in order to have joy, you need to stay closely tuned into this passage as we move through it.

So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you;" [21a]: Jesus repeats the greeting but now it is different. He has not just arrived and He is not leaving. It is out of place here unless it is more than a greeting.

The disciples were hoping for peace with Jesus as King. That hope of it is gone is part of the colossal disillusionment of the past three days. Now they are on the run. Their Lord is dead and they are hiding like animals from the men who killed Him. Where is the peace in that? Life has not turned out at all like they thought it would. Have you ever had that thought? Of course! This miserable world is the context of Jesus promise of peace BUT it will not be the source of peace. It will not be what we expect.

If you are like many Christians I know...waiting for death or for the Lord's return so that you can have some peace and joy, then you have entirely missed the point of the message and the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus offered peace from God in the midst of a world in turmoil. When life dishes out its rubbish and grief, Christ will give peace. This is not for heaven only. It is also for earth. Because of this you should purpose to seek and possess them now.

John 14:27 "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 16:33 "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."

"As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." [21b]: What this does NOT mean....

- We are **not** taking Jesus place....Doing the miracles, raising the dead and healing the sick. This is a common error in the church in our day. Thankfully it has only become wildly popular in the past 50 years or so. It panders to our sense of importance and power. Men want to believe they too have power over the physical creation like Jesus did....but here is the problem. We do not really have such power! All these so called "healers" themselves die and none of them at all have resurrected themselves. Their powers are bogus and their sense of importance is their own illusion. All the apostles died. Paul even said...

2 Timothy 4:20 Erastus remained at Corinth, and I left Trophimus, who was ill, at Miletus.

Why would a man with the powers of Jesus leave a beloved friend ill in a foreign city? This is not what Jesus means by “I also send you.”

- You were **not** sent from the Father’s side to become a human man. Jesus was unique and alone in this.
- You were **not** sent to live a sinless life and then to die for the sins of the world. It is crazy to pick out some spectacular powers in the life of Jesus and then imagine that we should have them too. This has nothing to do with faith, but everything to do with ignorance. Jesus made it pretty clear what He was sending us to do and it is pretty daunting, but not supernatural.

What it DOES mean....

Matthew 28:18-20 ¹⁸ And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me [not you] in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples [the command here] of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

The church stays behind while Jesus goes to heaven. Our marching orders are clear and precise. There is no faith involved in adding to them...only arrogance. And one other thing.... Who is going to believe you? Who is going to let you disciple them? Who is going to willingly go into the waters of baptism and join with you in a local church? Who is going to let you teach them the Bible? You and I are going to need help....and a lot of it....if we are sent by Christ on this mission. SO.....

And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. [22]: Like Peace...Jesus had also promised to give to the disciples the Holy Spirit. The Spirit comes when Christ return to heaven. The Spirit is the source of promised peace and the enabling power to carry out our mission.

John 16:7-8 ⁷ "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

The words “on them” do not exist in Greek. Jesus let out a breath [He breathed] and said, “receive the Holy Spirit.” This verse is a huge problem for some people. They just have trouble with the fact that this happened 50 days before Pentecost in Acts 2 when the church received the Holy Spirit. SO what is Jesus doing here? Jesus has used a present tense before to describe something that was certain to happen very soon.

John 12:23 ²³ And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. [but it was some time before He actually was glorified]

Jesus is doing this with the promise of the Holy Spirit. It will soon be coming upon the disciples in Jerusalem. At His ascension back to heaven He was still promising the Spirit very soon. Again the Holy Spirit is the only enabling power you have to be sent by Christ as His witness.

Acts 1:8 ⁸ "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

"If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained." [23]: The Roman Catholic Church believes in something they call "apostolic succession." They say that Christ gave the power to forgive sins or refuse to forgive them to the Bishop at Roman. This is the belief behind the priesthood and the sacraments. Nothing in Scripture...including this teach that.

Only God can forgive sins.

Daniel 9:9 ⁹ "To the Lord our God *belong* compassion and forgiveness, for we have rebelled against Him;

Mark 2:5-7 ⁵ And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ But some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, ⁷ "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming; who can forgive sins but God alone?"

This is directly tied to why we are sent [The Great Commission] and the enabling of the Holy Spirit to carry it out. The mission is to declare with clarity and boldness what Jesus taught about sin and salvation. Are you sure you actually know what it is?

John 8:24 ²⁴ "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins."

Let me be clear about this: The church does not have the authority to change the gospel. "To say that Muslims will go to heaven" or that "you do not have to believe in the deity of Christ.... just be sincere and believe in God." Or even closer to home that "you do not need to submit to Christ as Lord." Just pray a ritual sinners prayer and you are automatically going to heaven. The church does not have authority to change the gospel, but she has complete authority and obligation to proclaim it boldly.

Romans 1:16 ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples were saying to him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe." [24,25]: The demand for a visit from Jesus or angels is not spiritual. It is of the world. Thomas was not going to believe just because 10 of his closest friends and companions testified to it. But millions have....including you personally.

After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace *be* with you."

[26]: Thomas remained in this condition for another whole week. The others no doubt urged him to believe, but he was steadfast. He was not going to trust something he could not see and touch. He did not want to be a fool. He required something special to convince him.

The next Sunday Jesus appears to the disciples in that same place. Again the doors are shut and locked and again, Jesus simply appears in their midst. He goes straight to Thomas.

Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" [28]:

Was Thomas a great prize for Christ? I mean...was he just so indispensable and his faith so strong that Jesus just had to have him on His team? Ridiculous! So why does Jesus go after Thomas this way? Because Thomas was one of His lost sheep.

Luke 15:4-5 ⁴ "What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ "When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

Luke 19:10 ¹⁰ "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? [29a]: It is good that you have believed what you have seen with your own eyes Thomas. Any skeptic or unbeliever would have also believed. This is not a badge of honor, but a sign of weak faith. Thomas had a "seeing is believing" faith. Jesus now speaks of Holy Spirit produced faith.

Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed." [29b]: Those who believe without seeing are personally blessed by God. What is Jesus saying? He is speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit that brings men and women to Christ and has done so for 2000 years now. It is blessed to be sought by Christ and brought to faith. It is Jesus who acts unilaterally to make you alive spiritually and then to give you faith.

Ephesians 2:4-5 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

Ephesians 2:8 ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; [30]: "You don't know the half of it," John says.

But these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. [31]: But the things that are here are for your faith. John knows that Jesus is not going to physically appear to

every man going forward. Yes...He did to John on Patmos and to Paul along the road to Damascus, but not to me and not to you. Instead.... “these have been written so that you may believe.”

CONCLUSION

We need to get God’s perspective on this issue. We need to start believing that God can and will use you to bring men to Himself. Ask yourself why you believed. You are a rational person aren’t you? Do you believe the earth is round or flat? Would you jump off a cliff thinking you could fly? NO! Then why do you believe something about a person that you have never seen and cannot verify?

Because God has blessed you. He has opened His mouth and called out your name making absolutely certain that you would hear Him and recognize Him. This is who He is and the power that He has and it did not stop when He brought you to faith.

This is why He can call us to tell the gospel with the expectation that some will come to faith. He sent the Holy Spirit to do what you cannot do. Make men alive and bring them to faith. All you have to do is tell and pray....especially pray!

We all need more confidence in God to do this. If we had it we would be willing to own Christ publicly and speak with more boldness about the gospel. Peter wrote to us to help us understand how we are blessed when we have never physically seen Jesus...

1 Peter 1:1-9 *you... are chosen* ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure. ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to *obtain* an inheritance *which is* imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, ⁷ so that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸ and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.