

LIFE GROUP GUIDE

The Gospel of John - Peace & Power Through Christ

John 20:19-23



10.22.2023

SCRIPTURE:

John 20:19-23

SERMON NOTES:

Martin Luther was a man in turmoil in his teenage and early adult years. He went from studying law to becoming a monk because he feared the Lord. But he was restless. He couldn't fast enough, suffer enough, or pray enough to bring contentment to his soul. He read and sought the Scriptures and finally found the peace that eluded him in the message of the gospel. The message of justification by faith alone changed his life. He saw that the message of the Bible was that Christ satisfied the debt of sin owed. We cannot work our way to God's favor. We cannot labor our restlessness away. We must put our full trust in Jesus alone who can satisfy God's wrath and give us peace. And he found that peace. This led Martin Luther to begin teaching and sharing what he found with others. He believed the Church had lost its way. And eventually his labors launched the Protestant Reformation that changed the world. Luther found rest and peace in the gospel of Christ and gave his life to making that message clear for the church.

Martin Luther: *"To be convinced in our hearts that we have forgiveness of sins and peace with God by grace alone is the hardest thing."*

Luther knew finding peace with God was impossible for sinners unless they were convinced in their hearts that they were truly forgiven by Christ. He said it's the hardest thing. Why? Because we tell ourselves that we haven't done enough. Our flesh preaches to our hearts that we've failed too many times for God's love. Everything points to our inadequacy. But the finished work of Christ points to our justification and acceptance. This is why Spurgeon said:

Charles Spurgeon -- *"A sense of perfect peace with God is the grandest thing in all the world with which to travel through life."*

Finding that peace with God is the greatest thing in all the world. It allows for you to live at peace with God and in your soul. We don't wake up each day in dread or terror of God's anger at us. It's been satisfied. Christ has paid the price. He has reconciled us. Without that reconciliation with God, we will always lack peace. We will always be restless.

Augustine: *"You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."*

How do we find peace with God? Where do we find that rest? It's in Christ alone. Do you have it? That's what we're looking at in our text today.

Exegesis: John 20:19-23

VS 19 -- *On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."*

It is the evening of Sunday. Jesus rose from the tomb that morning. He was dead, He is now alive. In the previous verses, we see He appears to Mary Magdalene. She doesn't recognize Him at first. Why? Maybe because her expectation that He was dead led her to conclude it couldn't be Him (it eliminated the possibility). Or maybe Jesus' resurrected body looked like Him, but appeared differently to others because of His glorified state. Either way, she doesn't recognize Jesus. But He makes it clear to her. She then tells the other disciples. So several hours after this encounter, the disciples are gathered together. The doors are locked because they are fearful of the Jews.

Their fear is tied to the fact that Jesus had been killed as a result of the religious leaders handing Him over to Rome. They assume they could be next. The doors are locked out of fear, but John includes this detail less out of being meticulous and more to set the stage for the miraculous thing about to happen: Jesus comes through the door.

Jesus came into the room. How? He just came through. He doesn't unlock the door. He simply goes through it. He has a physical body, but His physical body, raised in glory, is capable of things it wasn't (and ours isn't) prior to the resurrection. Does this point to what our bodies may be capable of one day? Possibly.

Jesus says, "Peace be with you." This greeting is customary in Israel and still is to this day: Shalom Aleichem. But Jesus isn't simply giving them the customary greeting, and we know this because He says it is again in just a moment. This statement of peace is the fulfillment of a promise.

John 14:27 -- *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

John 16:33 -- *I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

Before Jesus goes to the cross, He promised them that peace is what He came to bring. What peace? Not earthly, temporal peace. He promises to bring internal peace, because He is ultimately reconciling sinners from their contentious relationship with God. Sinners live in turmoil with a holy God. The only way peace is possible is to be reconciled. The only way to be reconciled is through Christ. It is not coincidental that Jesus' final words "It is finished" from the cross are matched with His first words to His disciples afterwards, "Peace be with you." The finished work of Christ brings peace to sinners.

VS 20 -- *When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Jesus is not a ghost. He is not a figure or figment of their imagination. He is there in physical form. Mary tried to cling to Him because He was embodied. We read that He showed them His hands and His side. This is truly their Lord. His crucified hands not only displayed the nail piercings, but His side that was speared was also there to be seen. I love that John records that they were glad when they saw the Lord. Seeing these wounds made it clear that it was Jesus. And knowing it was Jesus made them glad. Their grief turned to joy.

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

John 16:20-22 -- *Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. 21 When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. 22 So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*

Jesus always fulfills His Word. God always fulfills His promises.

VS 21 -- *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

Jesus again says, "Peace be with you." This is the evidence that He isn't just giving greetings. They have peace now because of His finished work. Why does He repeat it? Because He is about to commission them to take that peace to the world.

Jesus shows them that they are the extension of His ministry. He is not sending them on a new mission. They are continuing in Christ's mission. Just as the Father sent Jesus, Jesus is sending them. For what aim or goal? The forgiveness of sins. To reconcile people to God.

VS 22 -- *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

What is happening in this verse? Scholars and theologians debate over it. Is this John's account of the Acts 2 sending of the Spirit? Some say "yes." But that is likely not the case. Most believe this is a precursor or foreshadow of the sending of the Spirit, not the actual filling of the Spirit to come at Pentecost.

It says that He breathes on them. Don't imagine Jesus taking a blowing-out-your-birthday-candles breath and just blowing at them. The actual verb in the text implies a deep inhale and exhale, followed

by the statement "Receive the Holy Spirit." Almost all scholars believe the event is symbolic, rather than the moment they receive the Holy Spirit. It parallels the foot washing scene in John 13 where Jesus acts out the cleansing His sacrificial death will bring by washing their feet.

One interesting feature of this scene is the parallel with God breathing life into Adam who was formed from the dust. He breathed the breath of life into Him. The breath of life gave life and power to the first man. In the same way, Jesus breathing the Spirit to His disciples will give them life and power as new creations in Christ. Why is this necessary? Because in order to fulfill the commission of going to reconcile sinners to God through the preaching of the gospel, they need His life and power through the Spirit.

VS 23 -- If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Jesus tells the disciples a similar statement that we read in other Gospels around church discipline. He says whoever they forgive of sins will be forgiven, and whoever they withhold forgiveness from is withheld.

Let's start with what this doesn't mean. It doesn't mean they are the granters or deniers of forgiveness of sins. Only God can forgive sins. The Roman Catholic Church takes a passage like this, and wrongly (because of the rest of Scripture) interpret this to mean that the apostles (then) and the church leaders (now) have the power to grant or deny forgiveness. This isn't what Jesus is saying.

The interpretation connects to verse 21. Jesus is sending them out just like He was sent. What are they to do? They are to preach the good news. They are going to share the gospel of forgiveness of sins through Christ. What will determine whether or not people are forgiven or not forgiven? By their response to that message delivered by the apostles. Salvation comes through believing the message of Christ and the apostle's who delivered it, not whether they allow it or withhold it.

Application:

1. Jesus brings peace to sinners through His reconciling work.

The peace Jesus offers isn't an earthly comfort that will fade. He gives eternal peace through reconciling us with the Father for eternity. We no longer need to fear God's thoughts of us. We do not need to stress whether or not we are acceptable before God when we meet Him. We have peace. Jesus has secured it through His death and resurrection. It is ours.

Have you received the peace Christ offers sinners?

His blood covers over all the sins of those who trust Him. Have you trusted Christ for this peace?

Romans 5:1 -- *Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Peace with God. Peace with others. Peace with ourselves.

2. Jesus gives us a mission to live and power to live it.

Jesus gives His disciples the task of continuing His mission. What is that mission? It isn't simply to do good in the world. It isn't just a humanitarian mission. The mission is to bring forth the kingdom of God by making disciples of all nations. This task is LARGE. But Jesus provides us each individually with the power of the Spirit to guide us. We have the Spirit, His Word, and His Church to live out the mission. And we do this in every sphere of life. We do this in our families, at work, and in other places the Lord puts us.

The majority of people will not earn a paycheck vocationally from a church. Nor does the Lord need everyone too. He calls you to live faithfully as a disciple in every sphere of life, whether you own a company, work as a teacher, a banker, or work at McDonald's or WalMart. The mission and power are with all believers.

This is why we are expanding our facilities here. It's why we send families long-term to places that need Jesus. It's why we're committed to revitalizing dying churches in our area. All of this is in scope with the mission. And the Spirit empowers us to do it successfully.

3. Jesus goes to His own when they are afraid.

Fear is a real part of life. We struggle with fears daily. Many fear death. Many fear failure at work or school. Many fear relational failure or betrayal. Fear is common in life because in a broken world we know things don't always go as we want them to.

The disciples are together in hiding. They have the doors locked out of fear of the Jews. Their future is uncertain in their minds. But Jesus goes to them in their fears. He comes with the blessing of peace. He's come to make them glad.

Jesus' presence to His disciples gives them peace. He strengthens their faith. He turns their grief to gladness. But He still does these things today. The remedy for fear is to remember the presence of Christ with you. His promise as Immanuel is to be with us always. The presence is meant to cast out fear.

**Isaiah 41:10 -- *10 fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

There's three things I want you to recognize in this:

- Christ meets us in the Word (get in the Word each day, seek Christ in the Word, seek fellowship with Him)
- Christ is near to hear our prayers (when you bring your prayers to the Lord they are not traveling great distances to reach Him; He hears)
- Christ is constantly with us and we need to remind ourselves regularly each day (there's never a moment where you are alone; give thanks with every remembrance)

4. Jesus can get to you no matter where you find yourself.

The apostles were in a locked room and Jesus came straight in. He didn't need to be let in. He didn't have to strain in order to get to them. This should encourage you. Jesus can go where no one else can go. He can go where no teacher can go, where no boss can go, where no spouse can go, where no counselor can go, where no money can go. Jesus can get to you.

This means Jesus can reach us like no other, but also means He can reach depths like no other. He can get to us in our addictions. He can get to us in our anxiety and depression. He can get to us in our fears and sorrows. He can get to us in our sins, confusion, and doubts. There is nowhere Jesus can't go.

LOOK BACK

- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you GROW in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you GO to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?

BUILD UP

- **REVIEW:**
 - Read John 20:19:23 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different version.
 - Why had the disciples locked themselves in a room?
 - What does Jesus say when He enters the room with His disciples? What does it mean?
 - Why does Jesus show the disciples his hands and side?
- **REFLECT:**
 - How does Jesus bring peace to sinners?
 - Where is Jesus sending the disciples?

- What is the significance of Jesus breathing on the disciples?
- What does Jesus mean by, *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*?
- **RESPOND:**
 - Where is Jesus sending you? Have you gone yet? If so, what fruit are you seeing? If not, what is holding you back?
 - How does this passage encourage you when you are afraid?
 - How does this passage challenge you to be obedient?
- **MEDITATE:**
 - John 20:21 - *Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”*
- **MEMORIZE:**
 - John 14:27 -- *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.*

SEND OUT

- **GROW:** How will you abide in Christ this week and grow in your love and understanding of Him?
- **GO:** Who in your sphere of influence needs to hear this story or the gospel?
- **PRAYER:**
 - Pray over any request from your group members.
 - Worship Ministry Assistant - **Ashley Horvath**
 - Ministry - **Journey Worship Co.**
 - **Pray for our long-term families on the field:**
 - The Wilsons
 - The Grays
 - The Starks
 - **Pray for our mid-term sent ones on the field:**
 - Kaesi
 - **Pray for the lost - Unreached People Group (UPG):** Sila in Vietnam



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- **Population in country:** 900
- **Global population:** 4,300
- **Christian Adherent:** 3.00%
- **Evangelical:** 1.90%
- **Primary Religion:** Ethnic Religions
- **Primary Language:** Sila
- **Summary:** The Sila are a Tibeto-Burman people who live in Vietnam. They migrated from south China and are part of the Lolo linguistic groups. They practice an ethnic religion combined with animism and ancestor worship. Most farm and hunt for their food supply and they struggle with malnutrition and diseases such as malaria.
- **Prayer Focus:** Ask the Lord to send Christian medical workers to labor among the Sila and soften the people's hearts. Ask God to strengthen, multiply and protect the small number of Sila Christians and for government leaders to be open to allowing foreign workers. Ask the Lord to establish a Sila church that will multiply. Pray the Sila people would soon turn away from worshiping the dead to worshiping the living Christ.
- Want to keep up with other Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>