

John 20:19-31

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[0 : 0 0] let's just turn now to that passage of scripture from John chapter 20 and thank you for your wonderful singing which is tremendous I was thinking some people were walking past there, there's no question they were hearing God's people singing and that's a great witness, it's wonderful so keep it up and before we start on these verses, it's wonderful and encouraging verses, let's just turn now Heavenly Father we ask you to bless us as we look at your word and we ask God that you speak through me and speak into all of our hearts for this wonderful encouraging passage of scripture where you reveal yourself to your disciples just as you reveal yourself to us so bless us now and enable us and guide us in Jesus' name

Amen Always on a Sunday or Sabbath we are celebrating the resurrection of Jesus that's one of the things we do particularly on a Sunday but what does the resurrection of Jesus mean to you and to me and how did the disciples come to understand the resurrection and why is the resurrection so important to us as Christians now in the verses just before this this passage which I did not read we read about the time when Mary Magdalene met with Jesus she met with Jesus and she knew that he was alive that's actually one of the reasons that we can believe in the truth of the gospels because the first person that is a witness of Jesus is a woman and in those days a woman had no standing at all for giving witness in court but the first person that is recorded as knowing and seeing Jesus is a woman

Mary Magdalene and then after that Peter and John had gone to the grave because she had told them it was empty and we read in verse 8 and 9 that Peter and John went there and John believed that he still did not understand the Old Testament scriptures he believed that Jesus had risen Peter we don't know about it we're not sure what he was thinking and then we read what we read this evening in verse 19 that the disciples were locked in a room they were fearful they were very uncertain what had really happened they were still very puzzled and they were in deep grief they were afraid of the authorities they'd seen what they had done to the one they loved they would be beaten and flogged and mercilessly nailed to a cross and died they were very very traumatized people and grieving terribly and they they knew they're people who knew everything that you could know about Jesus as a close friend you would know because he'd been with them for at least three years but they you can see them here they are powerless and they're unable to do anything because they've not met with the risen

Lord Jesus yet they have not met with him yet and you know it's a bit like us if we have not met with the risen Lord Jesus there may be people here who feel that they have not met with him tonight then we too are powerless and we are unable to do anything at all Jesus said without me you can do nothing and this is true we know that as we struggle in the Christian life if we turn away from him we find that we're able to do really nothing of any importance at all so maybe there are people here tonight who are feeling scared a bit like those disciples feeling a bit powerless like those disciples perhaps you know a good deal about Jesus like they knew about him but they've not you've not actually really met him in his risen form in your life and if you've not met him and if you've not experienced the risen Jesus in your life then you too or I too will be powerless and I'll be scared and I'll be uncertain just like those eleven disciples in that room and then Jesus appears there were ten disciples they've got that wrong actually because Thomas wasn't there as we find that later and of course

Judas wasn't there then Jesus appears and I'm going to read verse 19 then the same day at evening being the first day of the week when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them peace be with you isn't it interesting there's no reprimand here remember these disciples in many ways run away and failed Jesus Peter denied him three times but the first words he says are words of peace peace

be with you and this word for peace means a sort of total well-being a peace that only God gives a beautiful peace now some people maybe you're one think that if they really did meet up with Jesus then he would be rather angry he might show you a list of your sins for instance think of the mess of our lives that we make how would he react if you came face to face with Jesus and the disciples said that as I've just said had any reason to fear rebuke they were far from perfect people like us the first words of Jesus are peace and the same is true if you come to know him and I think one of the defining characteristics of an encounter with Jesus is a sense of peace and it's not just a statement of Jesus he's giving here he says peace be with you he's actually giving peace to the disciples he's even commanded peace to be with the disciples it's a sort of peace that we can't work up it's a supernatural peace

[7 : 00] Philippians 4 7 we read and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus peace with God only a Christian can have that sort of peace because it's the peace that Jesus won for us on the cross through his death for our sins he's brought us close to God because of what he has done it's a special peace that only we can have a spiritual peace we can come close and know God that is peace he then shows us shows them in verse 20 the marks of his crucifixion now other gospels state that he also ate some food in front of them and all this seems to be to prove to them that he was real that he wasn't just a ghost some sort of an apparition and we read the disciples were overjoyed it depends on the translation we use the translation here and some others say they were glad

I think the word is stronger than that it's like an overwhelming joy that they have when they suddenly realise that it really is him and it's a wonderful wonderful joy the amplified bible which gives it sort of amplification of many of the words in the bible says they are filled with joy delight exaltation ecstasy rapture and we have to imagine this group of terrified scared men breaking down in tears of joy as they realise who Jesus is in his ear remember what Jesus said in chapter 16 back in John's gospel he said a little while and you'll see me no longer see he was predicting exactly what would happen he knew what would happen a little while you'll see me no longer and a little while you will see me the disciples didn't understand him we read back there and then he said to explain truly truly

I say to you you will weep you will lament but the world will rejoice you'll be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy and then later in the same chapter he says I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you no one will take your joy from you once they had seen Jesus that joy stayed with the disciples through thick and thin and they went through a lot of terrible things and many of them were even marked for their faith but they had something that joy they met with the risen Jesus no one could take that joy from them or from us likewise we too can have such a joy they can't be taken from us that's his promise Jesus bestows peace again in verse 21 he says peace to you in fact in these few verses we read that he gives his peace three times in verses 19 21 and 26

Jesus understands you see their fear and their anxiety just as he understands yours and mine he's constantly reassuring isn't that a wonderful thing are you anxious and fearful he understands this he wants to give you his peace and we can all receive that and then he has this commission in that verse 21 I think it is yes as the father has sent to me I also send you and this is a commission not just for those few disciples in that room but to the whole church to us we are to go into the world around us with the gospel whether it be scalpe whether it be the whole of aris whether it be somewhere the other side of the world there's no point in just staying in church the work is out there that's what he's saying and in verse 22 we read these fascinating words he breathes on them the Holy

Spirit who they would receive in fullness of course on the day of Pentecost much later but he breathes on them the Holy Spirit we are reminded here that without the Holy Spirit in our lives from Jesus we are absolutely powerless we can't go out of the great commission without the Spirit verse 23 we read these also very interesting words if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them if you retain the sins of any they are retained and the interpretations of this are many but it doesn't mean that we forgive sins only God can do that the words they are forgiven are in the perfect tense that is they have been forgiven it is a completed past action with results in the present so when the church when you or I present the gospel message of forgiveness of sins to people in the power of the Holy

[12 : 36] Spirit we proclaim that those who believe in Jesus have their sins forgiven that is the fact that is what he is saying here likewise those who do not believe in him do not have their sins forgiven and so in these few verses verses 21 to 23 we have the peace that Jesus gives us the Holy Spirit that he gives us the great commission of bringing the gospel to the world and the fact of forgiveness of sins for those who believe and we could spend the whole week talking about these things but we're going to move on because somebody's missing where's Thomas where is he actually we don't know where Thomas was he's just not there I like to think that he was one of those who needed to be alone for a while with his terrible grief he was overwhelmed with sadness perhaps he therefore he needed just to be alone to mourn alone just couldn't cope with anybody else around him and we know that story with some people when they are deeply grieved remember

Thomas was a very committed man remember how when Jesus was called to the dying Lazarus Thomas said let us also go that we may die with Jesus and it wasn't that he was not a committed follower of Jesus he certainly was he was prepared to go and die with him but in verse 25 we read that when they told him they had seen Jesus he wanted physical proof of Jesus being alive he wanted to see those even his finger into those nail holes and into his side Thomas stands for many people who find it hard to accept the truth of the resurrection nowhere does the Bible condemn him for this he's not condemned for it and there may be some people here tonight who have doubts about the resurrection about the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead note that one week later in fact he's eight days later

Jesus comes back to them specifically to help Thomas isn't that amazing how did Jesus know that Thomas was wanting to see him he knew because he was with Thomas all along even if Thomas had not seen him so Jesus you see knows all our uncertainties and his our fears and he's there for you just as he was for Thomas he's there for you and me and in verse 26 we read that Jesus returns because he knew Thomas desired so much to see him do you desire to meet up with Jesus do I desire to meet up with him like Thomas just that desire to meet him that called Jesus to him he will always respond to anyone who has a real desire for him Jesus said seek that you will find knock and the door will be opened come unto me all who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest he wants us to seek him

Thomas had great desire that he was desperate to meet for Jesus how much do we desire the same sometimes our desire for him is very weak we become very self sufficient and we get on with our lives as if well we can maybe do some bit of prayers on Sunday or whatever it is how much is our desire to meet with Jesus that's a challenge to me we need to ask for such a desire to be in our hearts and actively seek him day by day but we see in verse 26 again that Jesus gives those words of peace so badly needed in our lives when I came to faith in 1982 it was the peace the supernatural peace that really struck me it is a peace beyond all understanding and we can lose that peace sometimes as Christians and we can be tested as Christians but it's always available as we come back to him he then tells

Thomas to touch the wounds he says reach your finger here look at my hands reach your hand here put it into my side do not be unbelieving but believing we don't actually know whether he did reach out and touch Jesus or not doesn't tell us here I think probably he didn't he just needed to see Jesus and what does he do he makes this wonderful declaration he says my Lord and my God this is the only time in the Gospels that someone calls Jesus God isn't that wonderful it's a wonderful statement of praise and belief Thomas had found his Saviour and the Lord and so if you're struggling with doubts take heart Thomas was the same and he ended up absolutely brimming with faith and he said these wonderful words now tradition has it and there's some good evidence that Thomas was the apostle to

[18 : 24] India and the church in South India traces its origin to Thomas the doctor who after met Jesus went all the way to India to tell people about him to the South of India and they traced their start of the church to Thomas we might ask what are the implications of Jesus rising from the dead there are many implications just a few of them here just encourage us first of all the fact that he has risen from the dead means that he has paved the way for our resurrection we can now know that death has no sting we can have confidence in the afterlife because he has removed death as an obstacle whether it be for us or for others who know him he is a living saviour that's the second thing he's not just a dead saviour he's a living saviour not some long dead hero but a living lord with whom we can have a relationship thirdly he has defeated satan all the horrors of the cross did not end with his death he bore our sins he died and he rose victoriously he has defeated satan fourthly

we can have confidence in god's mighty power paul said in philippians 3 i want to know christ and the power of his resurrection and then he said in ephesians 1 his incomparably great power for us to believe that power is like the working of his mighty strength which he exerted in christ when he raised him from the dead this wonderful part it tells us that if god raised him from the dead what can he not do when we pray and when we have faith fifthly above all the resurrection means that jesus is who he says he is lord and god just as paul says he said my lord and my god like paul says we have to seek him actively we have to worship him as lord and god perhaps there are some here tonight we've not done that or need to do this again sometimes we need to renew that in our lives to kneel before jesus and simply worship him from our heart as thomas did we actually know more than thomas did yes thomas saw jesus in the flesh but we have much more evidence for the resurrection than thomas said one of the best legal brains in the world former chief justice lord darling wrote the following words about the resurrection in its favour as living truth there exists such overwhelming evidence positive and negative factual and circumstantial that no intelligent jury in the world could fail to bring in a verdict that the resurrection story is true now that's the legal brain looking at all the evidence why did he say that well there's not enough time tonight to go into all of it but one can at least look at some of the main objections people have for the resurrection there are people who say oh well this happened and that's happened and it wasn't really true one of them of course is that some people say that Jesus didn't actually die on the cross he just was taken down and he was still alive not understanding that the

Romans were very very efficient in killing people they knew how to do it there's no question of someone coming down alive from the cross another objection is that maybe the authorities the Jews or the Romans stole the body but they would have produced it when the disciples started saying we've seen them we've seen them there's a nonsense here it is they never produced it another objection it may be the disciples stole the body to pretend he had risen I think we can immediately discount that look what those disciples were like afterwards they went to deaths for Jesus they proclaimed the truth that they'd seen they would never have done that because it's all a lie there's no lie this is the truth they've seen but the greatest evidence for the believer is the reality of knowing

Jesus and having a relationship within that at the end of the day is what really convinces us but look at verse 29 these are wonderful words from Jesus he says Thomas because you have seen me you have believed blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed and that's you and me blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed we've not seen in the flesh the risen Lord Jesus but we believe we are blessed it's a beatitude like the other beatitudes one commentator says this last and greatest beatitude is the persistent treasure of the church a wonderful statement that so we should really encourage because Jesus says we are blessed when we believe and if you're a believer tonight may this truth of

Jesus risen from the dead be an eternal encouragement and bring great joy let us seek to have that real meeting with Jesus seek and you'll find if you're still struggling to meet with him and for those who hold back from doing so don't there's only one way one truth and one life Jesus our risen saviour put your trust in him say with Thomas my lord and my god and so just looking quickly back on this passage you see Jesus wants to be seen he shows himself and wants you to see he wants us to know him risen and alive he gives us his peace he says a few times here he turns our sadness into joy he understands our doubts that's a very important truth he comes to us as he did with Thomas when we desire to know him and he transforms us then just as he did with Thomas let's pray