

“AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME, I AM SENDING YOU”

John 20:19-31

Key Verse: 20:21

“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’”

In this passage Jesus appears to his disciples on the evening of his glorious resurrection. It is the first time for them to see the Risen Jesus. Their fear vanished; peace and joy filled their hearts. Then Jesus sent them into the world with the message of salvation. A week later, Jesus appeared again. It was primarily to help Thomas overcome his doubt and believe. After meeting the Risen Jesus, Thomas worshiped him as God. According to tradition, he became a great missionary. Let’s listen to Risen Jesus who gives us peace, joy and a mission.

First, the Risen Jesus said, “Peace be with you!” (19-20).

Look at verse 19. “On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” Verse 19 says that the disciples were together with the doors locked for fear of the Jews. The disciples were full of fear. Ostensibly, they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who were determined to eradicate Jesus’ influence from the face of the earth. These leaders had wanted to keep Jesus’ body in the tomb by any means. Perhaps they wanted to display Jesus’ dead body to disprove the resurrection and humiliate his followers. But now Jesus’ tomb was empty and his body could not be found. The Jews were scrambling, and likely to take drastic action against Jesus’ disciples. The disciples felt constant

apprehension, like targets in a shooting gallery. Every time the stairs creaked, they shuddered. They might have called each other in low whispers, using initials as code names. Simon Peter was “SP,” Matthew was “M,” and James and John were “J1 and “J2.” Fear had made the disciples of Jesus prisoners in a locked room.

This is the exact depiction of mankind under the power of death. Hebrews 2:15 says that the devil holds men in slavery through their fear of death. This constant torment of the thought of death makes strong men turn into cowards. The devil’s torment makes men irrational with the thought of death. It doesn’t make sense for civilized human beings to commit grievous crimes of road rage against people they don’t know. There is the devil’s torture behind this. The devil makes a fifteen minute traffic delay seem like the sacrifice of one’s whole life for nothing. For those under the power of death, there is no peace.

Look at verse 19 again. Suddenly, Jesus came and stood among his disciples. Jesus was alive! Jesus had risen from the dead. The Risen Jesus looked at his disciples and said, “Peace be with you!” Jesus’ words were a pleasant greeting. It was like saying, “I am so glad to see you!” More than that, Jesus’ words had deep spiritual meaning. Jesus imparted to them the peace of God that comes from being right with God. When Jesus died on the cross, he paid the full price that sin demands. Before that time, God forgave men on credit, so to speak. The debt for sin was getting higher and higher, and was never being reduced. But when Jesus died for the sin of the world, and God raised him from the dead, the balance was paid in full. There was a sigh of relief in heaven; God was vindicated in his justice. This has a real consequence to each man. As sinners, we all participate in the debt of sin that has piled up. But when we accept Jesus as our Savior, our debt is cancelled. This gives us peace with God.

Jesus imparted this peace to the consciences of the disciples. They knew they had abandoned Jesus when he was arrested. Through a sense of failure, their consciences had been wounded, and condemnation harassed them. They might have expected a strong rebuke from Jesus. But Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you!” Jesus had forgiven them unconditionally. Jesus had cleansed their consciences through his precious blood. They could stand before God with assurance of acceptance. They could serve God in holiness and righteousness. When they had peace with God, they also had peace with each other. They really needed this to maintain their fellowship. After experiencing Peter’s denial, Judas’ betrayal, and mass abandonment, they began to lose trust in one another. But when Jesus said to them, “Peace be with you,” he imparted enabling grace to forgive, love and trust one another again. Most of all, the Risen Jesus gave them the peace that comes from eternal life. As he had risen, they too would rise. There is no death in Jesus. Eternal life gives us real peace.

When the disciples heard Jesus’ words, “Peace be with you!” fear vanished from their hearts. They gained a great assurance that everything was alright. Jesus’ words had such great power because they were backed by his act of salvation. Look at verse 20. “After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.” Jesus’ hands bore the marks of the nails, and Jesus’ side, the wound of the spear. Jesus had taken the punishment that sinners deserve in his own body. Jesus had stood in our places to be pierced and crucified. Isaiah said, “...the punishment that brought us peace was upon him...” (Isa 53:5). God is not magical in his forgiveness of sins. To forgive our sins, God had to satisfy his justice with a real sacrifice. Jesus was the sacrifice. Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. That’s not all. God

raised Jesus from the dead. The Risen Jesus is the eternal victor over sin and death. The Risen Jesus solved our root problem forever. The Risen Jesus gives us true peace, overflowing joy and eternal life.

Second, the Risen Jesus said, “I am sending you” (21-23).

In their overflowing joy of being united with the Risen Jesus, the disciples were jumping, dancing and praising God, and probably giving high fives to each other. They needed to calm down and listen. So again Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you!” Then Jesus told them the main point of his message: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” God sent Jesus as the first missionary to a lost world. Now Jesus was sending his disciples into the world as missionaries.

John’s gospel has taught us how the Father sent Jesus into the world. John 3:16 says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” Jesus is the most precious, one and only Son of God. God loves Jesus. But God did not express his love for Jesus by spoiling and overprotecting him. Rather, God asked Jesus to take the most costly mission as the Lamb of God. Jesus understood God’s love for him and for the world. Jesus accepted God’s sacred trust and obeyed wholeheartedly. Now, Jesus was sending his disciples into the world. Jesus loved them enough to give his life for them. Jesus called them friends and brothers. Jesus’ love didn’t spoil them. Jesus’ love sent them into the world to share his sufferings for world salvation.

God’s heart’s desire is ever the same. God wants to save the people of the world, missing no one. Those who know God’s heart are willing to go into the mission field, facing many sufferings. Missionary David Byun’s family has suffered much

in Astana from the problems typical to missionaries, as well as from the intimidating presence of criminals. Their lives have been in danger more than once. But God has used their family to reach out to many lost souls with the gospel. The same can be said of many UBF missionaries. Why do they suffer so much and risk everything? It is because they know the heart of Jesus who said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

Being Jesus’ disciple is not just for the personal benefit of having peace and joy. Jesus sends his disciples into the world to participate in God’s mission of world salvation. The word “apostle” is not merely an honorary title. The literal meaning of “apostle” is “one who is sent.” Jesus sent his apostles to the world to save the world. At the 2005 CIS Conference there were wonderful messages, testimonies, and mission reports, as well as dances. In one dance, Kim Jung Il, the leader of North Korea, shared the gospel with Fidel Castro, the leader of Cuba. Castro accepted Christ. Then they joined forces to send missionaries to other nations, including Vietnam. It reminded us of Isaiah 52:15, “...so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.” God wants the leaders of all nations to accept the gospel. God wants people of all nations to be saved.

The Risen Jesus wants our hearts to beat with his, and burn with his, with the desire to preach the gospel to all nations, beginning where we are. Now it is time to start a new fall semester. It is time to visit our campuses with the message of salvation. This is urgent. Last week, we were saddened by the terrible destruction in New Orleans and the gulf states due to Hurricane Katrina. Suffering people cried out for help. When help was slow to come, their cry became a desperate

shout for survival. We must do whatever we can to help them, and we must do it right away. But in all truth, the cry of young souls on our Chicago campuses is just as urgent. They need Jesus. We must go to UIC, Northwestern, Northeastern, IIT, UC, Loyola, Devry, and Harper College to preach the gospel of Jesus. Jesus says, "I am sending you."

Look at verses 22-23. "And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" We must know that carrying out God's mission is not doing a favor for God. It is the restoration of creation order and a right relationship with God. In the beginning, God made man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. To this living man, God had given his mission. Sin ruined everything. But the Risen Jesus restores man's relationship with God and his mission. The Risen Jesus breathed upon his disciples and imparted his Spirit. The Spirit gives life. The Spirit gives mission. It is to proclaim the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' death and resurrection. Those who accept the message become God's children, stewards of God's creation. But those who do not accept the message will suffer eternal condemnation. It is God's hope that all men will believe and be forgiven and that his kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. The only provision God has made to fulfill this hope is the proclamation of gospel of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. We must take this mission seriously.

When the Risen Jesus arrived, the disciples were cowering in fear. But to the Risen Jesus, they were God's hope for world salvation. The Risen Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Let's accept this word of Jesus and bring the gospel to our campuses.

Third, Jesus plants faith in Thomas (24-31).

There was one disciple, Thomas, who was not present with the others when Jesus came. As soon as he returned, they told him, “We have seen the Lord!” This is the same message that Mary had given the disciples earlier that day. The disciples had not accepted Mary’s testimony, and Thomas did not accept their testimony. He said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (25). Thomas sounds like a contemporary postmodern young person. They cannot believe on the basis of others’ testimony. Instead, they must see and experience for themselves. They have lost faith in their parents after experiencing too many broken promises and the trauma of broken families. They have learned from history that it is foolish to simply believe what they are told. So they want to experience life for themselves and form their own conclusions. Sometimes we feel that such an attitude is presumptuous. How did the Risen Jesus deal with Thomas?

Look at verse 26. “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” Jesus came in the same way as he did the first time, and with the same word of blessing. But this time, Jesus was most concerned about Thomas. Look at verse 27. “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’” Jesus was not angry with Thomas. Jesus offered his wounded body for Thomas to see and touch. Jesus was ready to let Thomas put his finger in his nail-marked hands and to put his hand into his wounded side, if only it would heal his doubt.

Jesus was full of grace to Thomas, like a mother whose only desire is for her sick child to get well.

Surely, Jesus loves postmodern young people. Jesus is willing to demonstrate his love in a way they can understand and accept. Jesus is willing to let them touch his wounded body. To be shepherds for this generation, we must learn how to express the love of Jesus until it becomes real to young people. One young man was sick with doubt after his parents divorced, breaking his heart. He began to study the word of God with a kind shepherd who loved him faithfully. He accepted Jesus' word and knew he should commit his life to the gospel. But the disease of doubt prevented him from doing so. In anguish of soul, he began to give his Bible teacher a hard time, by demanding his love and service, and by expressing rebellion unexpectedly. It was to test the love of Jesus in his Bible teacher. Again and again, his Bible teacher was driven to his knees in prayer, asking for God's patient love to bear with the young man. After two years, the young man decided to believe the love of Jesus and committed his life to the work of God.

When Thomas saw Jesus, he fell to his knees and confessed, "My Lord and my God!" He accepted Jesus as Lord and submitted to his leadership without reservation. He accepted Jesus as God who owned his life, and as his Judge whom he must satisfy unconditionally. Thomas completely surrendered to Jesus as God. Thomas accepted Jesus' main teaching. It is that Jesus is God who gives eternal life. This is the point of John's gospel. It is worthwhile to struggle with difficult sheep to the end, for they may eventually make the greatest confession. Still, Jesus did not regard Thomas' faith as the most exemplary. Look at verse 29. "Then Jesus told him, 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who

have not seen and yet have believed.” Jesus will bless those who confess him as God by faith alone.

Look at verses 30-31. “Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” When we believe the main point of John’s gospel’s, that Jesus is God, we have eternal life. We share the same blessing the apostles received.

Jesus wants us to believe that he is God who gives eternal life. This gives us peace and joy in our souls and eternal life. Then Jesus sends us out to preach the gospel of forgiveness to all people. May God help us accept Jesus words and go out to the students teaching the truth of John’s gospel, “Jesus is God. Believe and have life.”