

Life in His Name – Part 50
So That You May Believe - John 20:19-31
Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – March 10th, 2024

Intro:

- This morning, we are going to continue our story of the life of Jesus as we see Him interacting with His disciples, meeting them in their doubts, helping them through their fears, and inviting us to believe. What Jesus does for them is what He does for us. From our passage for today, I trust that you will find hope, comfort, and confidence in how Jesus interacts with us, and you will worship Him, follow Him, and love Him all the more.
- We are going to read the passage in its entirety, and then we are going to circle back to focus on three central truths from this passage that should provide help and perspective to you and those you love.

John 20:19-31 NIV

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “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.”

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!” 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.”

28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”

29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

30 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Jesus meets us in our doubts

- There is a progressive pattern of Jesus's post-resurrection encounters recorded in the Gospel of John. In each interaction, Jesus helps each person and group of people to believe in Him by giving each what is needed to help them overcome their doubt and disbelief, from the ones with the least doubt to the one with the greatest. Let me show you what I mean.
- *John the beloved.* John was the first to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. As recorded earlier in this chapter (John 20:1-9), John, after hearing the report that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb, ran to see for himself. After examining the evidence of what was left behind, "he saw and believed" (John 20:8). All John needed to believe was to examine the evidence that He had, and this was enough for him to believe.
- *Mary Magdalene.* Mary had seen the evidence but still did not believe that Jesus had risen from the dead. It took a supernatural encounter with angels and a personal interaction with Jesus, who called her by name, for her to recognize who He was and to cling to Him in love and worship (John 20:1-2, 11-18).
- *The disciples.* According to what we have read this morning, the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors and Jesus "stood among them" (John 20:19). He spoke to them and showed them the evidence (His hands and side) that He was alive. When the disciples encountered Jesus in this way, they were "overjoyed when they saw the Lord" (John 20:20b). This is Jesus, showing up to a group of people who have heard about Him, where He appears, "standing among," where His voice is heard and the evidence of who He is, is presented.
- *Thomas.* He was the one disciple who was not present, for whatever reason, when Jesus first appeared to the group. The other disciples told him they "saw the Lord" (John 20:25). Thomas still did not believe, even with the eyewitness testimony of his close friends. He wanted to see for himself, and not only that, but he also wanted the hard evidence. He wanted to put his finger "where the nails were" and put his hand "into His side" (John 20:25), but until that happened, he would not believe.
- One week later, while the disciples were together behind locked doors, including Thomas, Jesus showed up again. This time, He spoke directly to Thomas, providing him the evidence he needed, and invited him to do exactly what he asked, to physically touch the scars of Christ. At this point, Thomas believed that Jesus was "my Lord and my God."
- What does all this tell us? Jesus will provide what is needed to overcome doubts and to believe. Jesus comes to us. Christianity is the only religion in the world where God climbs "down the ladder" to us; in other religions, we must "climb the ladder to God." This is the goodness and love of Christ Jesus. This gives us hope even for the hardest skeptics and those who have not yet believed. Perhaps they are like Thomas. They have been around Jesus and have seen and known others who have believed, but they are still in the "week" before Jesus appears to them, calls out their name, and gives them what they need to believe.
- The next thing I want to point out from this passage is how Jesus helps us through our fears.

Jesus helps us through our fears

- Did you notice in our passage why the disciples locked the doors? Because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders (John 20:19). They were rightly afraid because if the leaders had killed Jesus, what would stop them from killing the disciples as well? Let's look at what Jesus did to help them through their fears and, in turn, be helped through our fears.
- *Jesus gives us His presence.* The first thing that Jesus did was stand "among them" (John 20:19), even though the doors were locked. This is something that only God can do. There is no "locked room" that Jesus can't enter. There is no place where He cannot find you. Jesus can go anywhere He wants to go, and He does not even need you to open the door. He does not need

your permission to speak to you. When you call to Him, He will meet you in the way and in the time of His choosing to best help you. The number one reason given in the Bible for us to not be afraid is because He is with us (Psalm 23, Jer. 1:8, Matt. 14:27, etc.). You are never and will never truly be alone, for Jesus is with you.

- *Jesus gives us His peace.* The very first thing that Jesus said was “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). And then He said it again because they needed to hear it twice (John 20:21). Most of the time, we need to hear it again and again as well. One of Jesus’s titles is the “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6), and where Jesus is, there is peace. This peace that “surpasses understanding” will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Php. 4:7). He will either calm the storm or calm our hearts and minds. Know that He helps us in our fear and gives us His peace that is beyond and above our circumstances.
- *Jesus gives us His purpose.* Notice that the next thing that Jesus does is commission them, and in turn, us. He said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21b). How ironic is this? Jesus was telling them this as they were huddled inside locked doors in fear. This was probably the last thing they wanted to do, but here Jesus was, telling them that He was sending them out, just as He was sent out, to proclaim the kingdom of God and call people to repent and believe the gospel (Mark 1:14-15). He also said that they, and we as well, are “ambassadors of the kingdom” and that our message has the authority of Christ Jesus Himself. If people believe the message, their sins are forgiven, and if they do not believe, their sins will not be forgiven (John 20:23). This is our primary purpose of ambassadors or messengers of Christ and His Kingdom (see also 2 Cor. 5:16-21).
- *Jesus gives us His power.* In this encounter, Jesus did an odd thing: He “breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’” (John 20:22). Now what is this about? I think the answer is twofold. First, this “breath of God” harkens back to the creation account, where God, after forming Adam from the dust of the ground, “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life” (Gen 2:7). This was the first creation that gave all of us life. Now, after the resurrection, Jesus breathed on us the Holy Spirit, which, in this recreation, gives us a “new birth” with resurrection power. In so doing, in His authority demonstrating that He is God, and doing only what God can do—create new life and give the Holy Spirit—His power helps us overcome our fear.

Jesus invites us to believe

- Thomas, the one with the strongest doubt, in the end, gave the strongest statement to Christ: “My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). This is a declaration of commitment to who Christ is. Christ received this designation, giving further and perhaps the final proof of His identity in the Gospel of John, knowing full well the command of Scripture from Exodus 20:2 to “have no other Gods before me.” In receiving this praise and designation, Jesus claimed He was and is God.
- From this statement, John records these astounding words and blessings of Jesus:

John 20:29

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

- We are of those who have not seen and yet have believed. We are blessed by Jesus for this belief.

- John concludes this chapter, and the book in many ways, by stating that Jesus performed many other signs as well in his presence and in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book, but the ones that are recorded:

John 20:31

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

- As you have heard all the way along in this series, this is the reason why this book is written, and this is the reason we have spent a year investigating this book: that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, *you* may have life in His name.
- I hope that through this series, you have learned much of Jesus and love Him all the more, that you treasure Him more, and that you are committed to Him more fully, that you have placed your life and eternity into His hands. I believe, and I hope, that you will receive His invitation to believe, based on the evidence He has left for you, and His work He is now about in your life and the world.

Conclusion

- From our passage today, know that Jesus meets us in our doubts, helping us to believe. Know that Jesus helps us through our fears, providing us with what is needed to continue moving forward to fulfill His purpose in and through our lives. Know that Jesus invites you to believe and follow Him.
- You would think that this is the perfect place to end this book; however, there are a few loose ends to tie up, mainly with one who was the first to believe, and then to repeatedly deny Jesus in stunning ways, and then to believe again. What about him? What happened to Peter? In the next two weeks, we will see more of the heart of Jesus and how He restores us and recommissions us to His mission as we follow Him.

Benediction

May the Lord your God save you, rejoice over you with gladness, quiet you by his love, and exult over you with loud singing (Zeph. 3:17).

Questions for Growth Groups

- What did it take for you to come to Christ? Share your story with the group.
- How has Jesus met you in your fears? How do you need Him to meet you now?
- Who in your life is still in the shoes of Thomas? Continue to trust and pray for that person(s) now.

*The prayer team is available after service in the front of the auditorium