

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.’”

As we have just heard, Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene, the first eyewitness to the resurrection. After her personal meeting she left the empty tomb excitedly shouting, **“I have seen the Lord!”** In this passage, Jesus appears to his disciples and then to Thomas. And just as he washed away Mary’s sorrow, the resurrected Jesus will remove the power of death remaining in his disciples. We will see that the risen Jesus drives out fear and doubt, and replaces it with peace and love. And Jesus’ love transforms scared disciples into brave apostles who will change the world. May we all be filled with the peace and love of the risen Jesus. And may we hear Jesus’ personal call for each of us to bring his love to the whole world.

I. Peace be with you (19-23)

On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders. By evening, the disciples had time to process the news of Jesus’ resurrection. They had heard the news from Mary. They had heard Peter and John describe the empty tomb. But they still couldn’t believe. They hadn’t seen the risen Jesus with their own eyes. Their most recent memory of Jesus was his body hanging on a cross. They didn’t want to die like Jesus. So they locked the doors, paralyzed with fear.

Look at verse 19b. Jesus came and stood among them and said, **“Peace be with you!”** The final convincing proof that the disciples needed suddenly appeared in the room. The risen Jesus showed up like a ghost. At first, they were startled. But when they realized it was Jesus, all their fear, all their anxiety, all their hopelessness just melted away. And it was replaced with real joy. They were finally able to let go of fear and be free.

In that moment the power of death was completely broken. The risen Jesus was proof that death had no power over them. That memory of Jesus on

the cross was replaced with Jesus standing in their living room. And he said, with an exclamation point, **“Peace be with you!”**

Have you ever felt afraid or worried like the disciples? I didn't until I became a father. Then I started to worry about my kids all the time. Are they healthy? Are they safe? What about their future? Am I a good parent? My biggest fear: what if my daughter one day wants a boyfriend?

What about you? Are you afraid of failing in school? Not getting into the school you want? Not being able to find a job after graduation? Or are you afraid that you might lose your job? Afraid you don't have enough money? Afraid you'll never find the right husband or wife? Maybe you're just afraid that you're not handsome or pretty enough, smart enough, or good enough.

I was reading thechangeblog.com which had an article entitled, “Harnessing your Fear.” It said to deal with fear we should “take good care of our fear-prone body by exercising, doing yoga, practicing deep breathing, walking in nature, and meditating.” Those treat symptoms. But they don't solve the root problem. Only Jesus solves that problem because the root of fear is death.

Hebrews 2:15 tells us this is why he came, **“[to] free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.”** We're no longer slaves to fear. As Heather mentioned, we are part of the family of God now. Brothers and sisters with Jesus which means we share in his blessing. That blessing is real peace in our hearts. We do not have to be troubled or afraid anymore. Jesus says, **“Peace be with you!”** Amen.

Read verse 21. Again Jesus said, **“Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”**

Like Mary, the disciples would have been happy just to hang out with risen Jesus. To hold on to him and never let him go again. Just them and Jesus in that room forever.

Do you ever feel like the disciples? Maybe you're thinking can't I just stay with you Jesus at this conference forever? Or maybe you really enjoy

time with Jesus through Bible study, praise and worship, and prayer. But you're just not sure if you're cut out for "mission."

Jesus prayed in John 17:18 to send his disciples into the world. But his prayer didn't end with them. It was also for us to be sent into this world to make Jesus known. Jesus' heart is to make himself known to a dark and dying world. And he wants to do it through imperfect people like us.

Jesus says, "**As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.**" Let's think about these words.

First, as the Father has sent me. John 1 tells us Jesus came as a light in this dark world. But instead of receiving him, people mocked, rejected, hated, and finally killed Jesus. Knowing this, God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son anyway. He sent his son Jesus to show us what true love is. True love that's sacrificial and unconditional to the end. The kind of love that can only come from God. Godly love that leads us back to our Heavenly Father.

Jesus is sending us to bring sinners back to the Father by serving the world with sacrificial and unconditional love. To love others like this, we must be willing to lay down our lives like Jesus, both figuratively and in some cases literally. Honestly, loving like this is hard to do.

As we serve in ministries all over the world, we all know how hard it is to love even one person with Jesus' love. We juggle school, work, and family to share the gospel only to be mocked, rejected, or in some places even threatened. But as we heard yesterday, Jesus told us in John 15 that when we feel discouraged keep in mind that the world hated him first. The world rejects us because we no longer belong to the world. We belong to Jesus and share in his heavenly calling. We should be encouraged to know we are being sent just like Jesus.

Second, I am sending you. It was important for the disciples to meet the risen Jesus personally and hear directly from him, "**I am sending you.**" The risen Jesus is personally sending each of us too.

Many of you may not know that I am the son of UBF missionaries and spent three years in China. Right after I graduated from law school, when others were focused on finding a job, I went to China as a teacher to do short term missions. My students often asked me, “Why would you leave the USA to come and teach in this far-off place in China?” In those moments, I realized it didn’t matter who my parents were or what church I attended. I was not sent by my parents. I was not sent by UBF. I was personally sent by Jesus to share his love with my Chinese students. Jesus is sending each of us. It may not be to China. It may be to our family. To our school. To our workplace. It may be to another country. Wherever it is, people need Jesus. If we know Jesus’ love, he is sending us. We have to ask ourselves: where is Jesus sending me?

In verses 22-23, the Risen Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, **“Receive the Holy Spirit.”** If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

Jesus sent them with the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. No one can do gospel work on their own. No matter how hard we try, no one can convert another. But when we proclaim the gospel of forgiveness in Jesus, the Holy Spirit does his work and people are set free from the power of sin in their lives.

The Holy Spirit in us means we don’t have to do it all on our own and we don’t have to be afraid. We just have to be available.

Timothy Chang came to Washington from Korea with his wife Eunice. He had a good job that gave him a clear path to a green card and U.S. citizenship. But when God called him to India, he went with his wife and three young kids to take a professor position at a greatly reduced salary with none of the security in the U.S. He did this because he believed that Jesus was sending them and their security was not in a good salary but in the promise of the Holy Spirit who is with them. Amen.

II. Stop doubting and believe (24-31)

Thomas was the only one of the Twelve who wasn’t in the room when Jesus first appeared to them. He refused to believe the 10 other disciples’ testimony, **“We have seen the Lord!”** 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.” Even now because of this we know him as “Doubting Thomas.”

If we're honest we all doubt like Thomas sometimes. We just don't say it because we're afraid of seeming weak or vulnerable. It is at times like these we have to vocalize what's in our hearts to our heavenly Father. Maybe you're struggling with doubt about God's word. The direction of your life. Maybe you're skeptical of God's love. Or his power to heal you. Thankfully, our God is a compassionate, patient God who meets us in our weakness. This is exactly what he did for Thomas.

Look at verses 26-27. Jesus heard Thomas' words. And like a compassionate father, Jesus didn't yell at him. Instead, Jesus humbled himself and simply loved Thomas. If this were a movie, everyone else would fade into the background. We would see just the Risen Jesus and Thomas standing there. Not knowing what to do Thomas froze. So Jesus took the initiative. He showed Thomas his hands, and let Thomas put his finger in the nail marks. He even let Thomas put his hand into Jesus' side. Then Jesus says, **“Stop doubting and believe.”** The risen Jesus standing there pushed aside all doubt and brought Thomas to his knees.

Thomas responded, **“My Lord and my God!”** Not just Lord or God. **My Lord and my God.** It was a deeply personal confession we all must make. Is Jesus my Lord and my God? “Jesus, you are my Lord and my God.” Would you say that with me?

Look at verses 29-31. Then Jesus told him, **“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** Jesus performed many other 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 Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

These things were written so that we may believe. The world wants us to think that believing in Jesus is a blind faith. But nowhere in the Bible do you ever see the words “blind faith.” Instead, we see a careful record of the resurrection. John writes that though we did not see the Risen Jesus, his

resurrection is a historical fact! The evidence is seen in the empty tomb. The folded head cloth. The testimony of Mary, the disciples, and Thomas.

If you want proof that Jesus is alive and the resurrection was real just look at the disciples' and especially Thomas' life. This scared bunch became apostles and martyrs who gave their lives for the Risen Jesus. Church history tells us that Thomas was martyred in India. Today there are over 2 million Indian Christians who trace their spiritual heritage to Apostle Thomas. The disciples wouldn't have died for a lie. They were willing to die because in the risen Jesus they knew the resurrection was real.

As this conference comes to a close, let's ask ourselves: who is Jesus to me and to whom is he sending me? The resurrection is not a theory. Risen Jesus appeared to Mary, to the disciples, and to Thomas. And drove out their sorrows, fears, and doubts. In a word, Jesus drove out the power of death in each of them. The Risen Jesus' presence is here with us now. He comes to each of us through his word and Spirit so that each of us can make a personal confession of faith in Him. Risen Jesus wants to empower us and send us to share his love with the world. We have been so loved, so let us love. Amen.

Let's read the key verse 21: **“Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’”**