

The Resurrection

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[0 : 00] Now let's turn to that passage in the Bible, John chapter 20 from verse 19. If you're able to find a place, it would be very helpful.

! What we like to do as a church is to take the Bible seriously when we meet together and we spend quite a bit of our time looking at what it says.

Because we believe that that's a good and a healthy way to meet God. We meet God through listening to what he's said, I suppose.

It's the way all relationships work, if they're going to work well, isn't it? You listen to what the other person's saying and work on that basis.

Well, we want to listen carefully to what God is saying and he's speaking in this part of the Bible. So that's what we're going to do. Let's pray.

[1 : 06] Lord, help us to listen, help us to receive, help us to meet with you, help us to be refreshed and sustained and enabled to live the Christian life or perhaps begin the Christian life or resume the Christian life.

But to do what we need to do this very evening, to do business with you. Amen.

Well, I can't say everything that needs to be said about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I'm just going to follow on from what we were thinking earlier on in the bit that was read.

And I don't think I'm going to say very much more than some obvious things. So let's look at verse 19.

It says, in the evening of that first day of the week. So there is a specific time, the first day of the week.

[2 : 12] And Christians have remembered on the first day of the week, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I presume they met in the evening probably because they had to go to work.

I don't know. I think generally speaking that would have been the case in New Testament times. But it was the first day of the week, the evening, which is in fact what we're doing this evening.

We're carrying on that Christian tradition. We haven't got our doors locked, but they had their doors locked. Because the Jewish authorities had just gone to a lot of trouble to execute their leader.

And so it's not altogether surprising that they were a bit fearful that the Jews might come and try to do the same with them. At this point, Jesus comes and stands amongst them.

So the locked doors show us that there is something unusual about the risen Jesus Christ.

[3 : 19] He is capable of appearing inside a locked room without breaking through the wall, without picking the lock.

So, as we were saying this morning, his resurrection is a physical resurrection. That's what is being claimed here. But it's not just more of the same.

It's a sort of uprated, upgraded physical body, which can do things that our physical bodies can't. But as it goes on to say, it is a physical body.

So Jesus comes and stands amongst them and says, Peace be with you. And after he had said this, he showed them his hands and side. And the disciples, excuse me, it actually says they rejoiced.

But NIV translation, they were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. And Jesus said to them, Peace be with you. So that's a repetition of what he'd already said.

[4 : 23] As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. And with that, he breathed on them and said, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, excuse me, they are forgiven.

If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven. So I'd like to look at two things this evening. And the first is in those few verses there. Excuse me.

When Jesus rises from the dead, he is recorded as saying some things. And presumably, because John, the Gospel writer, is very selective.

He goes on and tells us this later. The things that he has chosen must be significant. So I'd like to at least have a go at drawing out some of the significance of what he says.

And I think for this first thing, it's a significant for what I've said is the theology of mission. Please don't be frightened by the word theology.

[5 : 26] I'm just saying it's a sort of set of spiritual truths which fit together. And when I say mission, I mean to say a policy, an action, a combined effort.

And in this case, a combined effort to tell people about Jesus Christ. So I think in these few words, he's telling us about this activity of telling other people about Jesus Christ.

And I think it is to do with the Gospel. To do with the particular good news message that Christianity has.

I think it's to do with the Holy Spirit. And I think it is to do with the Apostles. So let's try and unpick that a little bit.

So first of all, let's notice that Jesus says, peace be with you. So I'm not going to stop very long on that. But it's interesting, this is what he says.

[6 : 38] Sort of first, not quite the first words, but some of the first words he says to his people, peace. Sometimes when you meet somebody, you put your foot in it by saying completely the wrong thing to begin with.

Some wrong things came into my mind there. I'm not going to actually say them. I'll leave them to your imagination. You could say completely the wrong thing to somebody when you met them.

Interesting that when Jesus meets his disciples, he says completely the right thing.

He says, peace. I'm not, you know, I want you to understand this. I'm not commenting on a situation of antagonism.

A situation in which things are unresolved. A situation in which there's stress and anxiety. I want to tell you, as I first meet you, that the situation can be described in this way, peace.

We have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. And I think that's a great thing for us to remember. The human makeup is very complex, isn't it?

[7 : 56] And we get all agitated about all sorts of things. For a Christian, agitation is on the surface. But the further down you go, when you get rock bottom, there is peace between us and God.

And therefore, peace in our lives. We sometimes sing a song, it is well with my soul. God says he works all things together for good for those who love him.

So I think peace is a great thing for him to say. But I'm not going to stop on that one. I wanted to go on and look at this, what he goes on to say.

There's a lot in these words. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. So Jesus is saying, why am I here?

What am I about? Well, I'm here because I've been sent. In the prayer that he prayed in John 17, you might remember, that idea crops up an awful lot of times.

[9 : 09] That the world may believe that you have sent me, for example, in verse 21. It seems to be one way of putting everything into a nutshell. The Father has sent the Son.

He sent the Son, well, for a particular purpose. He sent the Son because God was interested in rescuing people like us from the situation that people like us are in.

That is to say, a situation whereby we don't really know where we're going with our lives. A situation whereby we know things are not right between us and God.

And he says, the Father sent his Son to bring people back from that. I'm putting that into a nutshell. And how did Jesus achieve it?

Well, he achieved it by dying on the cross as a penalty to be paid. There's wrongs to be paid for. Jesus did that on the cross.

[10 : 24] And then he rose from the dead. So he was sent on a mission by his heavenly Father.

And he says, as the Father sent me, so, to these ten people who are gathered there, however many there were, the disciples, this first generation group, he says, Now, I've been sent on this mission.

I've been sent into the world, not to condemn the world, but to save the world. I've been sent on this rescue mission. Now, I'm sending you. And I think there's a lot going on there.

He says that this is what God has done. Now, the God of the Bible is three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And in a moment we'll see the Holy Spirit mentioned.

But here we've got the Father and the Son. And this is something that comes from the heart of God. From the heart of God, the Trinity. That the Father sent the Son into the world to save people like us.

So I've put there as my heading, and again, I don't mean to put you off with the heading. There's a Trinitarian mission. There's something that God the Trinity has been engaged on.

[11:47] And the Father has sent the Son. And then he says, well, that's why I'm here. The Father sent me in this redeeming work.

And he says, now I'm sending you. As the Father has sent me, so I'm sending you.

And so I'm going to put the Son sending this group. Which in the first case were his inner team of however many.

Perhaps it was the 12 minus Judas minus Thomas being 10. Or perhaps it was a larger group. But it's the group that he knew in those first days.

And he says, I'm sending you. And he says more than that. He says, receive the Holy Spirit. So now it is Trinitarian because we've got the Father, the Son and the Spirit.

[12:51] Receive the Spirit. So the Son. At the Son's say so. The Spirit is sent to the Apostles.

Certainly to this group. And then Jesus says, if you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

So I put here a little picture with people. And these people receive forgiveness.

Or alternatively, they don't receive forgiveness. Depending on their reaction to the Apostles. If they receive what the Apostles say.

And agree with it. We presume. Then that's what he means. That through the Apostles, they are forgiven their sins.

[13:49] Through the ministry that the Apostles have. Those early Christians had. And if they didn't receive what they said. Then they wouldn't be forgiven.

So I think that we have in those verses. A theology. Set of thoughts and teachings to do with mission.

Now, I think it would perhaps make more sense if I went on to the second bit as well. Because you might have some questions. So perhaps we'll pick up questions in a moment. So, are you happy for me to go on to the second bit?

Or has that been so condensed and obscure that you'd like to go home? Right. Okay.

Let's go on to the next bit. So this is a bit to do with Thomas. So he's one of this initial group.

[14:54] But he wasn't there on this occasion. And in verse 25. The other disciples told him, we've seen the Lord. And he says, unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, etc.

I will not believe it. So I think here, this is my second point of two. We have teachings about faith. About how people come to faith. And this involves history. Whether things really happened or not. And it also involves scripture.

When I say scripture. I mean the things written down in the Christian book. The Christian book has two compartments, if you like.

It's got the pre-Jesus Old Testament. So that is all that bit. Quite a lot of it. Those are the scriptures that Jesus himself would have read.

[15:57] And it's very clear from the accounts of his life that he believed that. And he believed the Old Testament to be the word of God. He believed that what the Bible says is what God says.

So that's the Old Testament scriptures. And then we've got the New Testament scriptures. Written by or with or in cooperation with that group that we were looking at.

Those 10 or 12 or however many people. The first generation Christians. And they've written stuff down. And that is the New Testament.

So that's the complete Bible. That's the Christian scriptures. And we'll see some reference to that in what's written here.

So let's look at it. We have a week later, verse 26. The disciples were in the house again and Thomas was with them.

[16:56] And again the doors were locked and Jesus came and stood among them and said again, Peace be with you. And then he turns to Thomas. Now Thomas, as we've just said, he said, I won't believe unless I see Jesus, unless I touch him and poke my finger into the nail holes and bung my hand into the wound in his side.

Use is quite a strong word for put the hand in. So I say bung, which I don't think is too far off. So Jesus does stand there. So we have the risen Savior. We have Thomas and the others. And Jesus says, do so.

Be perfectly sure by looking and touching and listening and being there that I have risen from the dead.

And Jesus doesn't rebuke him. He tells him to stop not believing. NIV says, stop doubting.

[18:08] Has anybody got a different translation for verse 27? Anybody got an authorised version or a... ESV? What have you got for yours?

Luke and James says, do not be unbelieving but believe. Thank you very much. That is a more literal translation. Doubting seems to have the idea of having two or three ideas in your mind and battling them out.

It doesn't say that. It says, don't be in the state of not believing. Move to the state of believing. It's sort of that way or that way. Don't be unbelieving but believe.

So here's Thomas. There's the risen Savior. There's Thomas who is invited to touch and hear and see the risen Savior.

And verse 28 is the high watermark of faith in John's Gospel. It's the best expression of faith you could expect.

[19:13] Where Thomas says, my Lord and my God. I can't think of anything higher that he could have said. Call somebody Lord and God.

Interestingly, I've got a Jehovah's Witness interlinear Greek New Testament. And the Jehovah's Witnesses don't believe that Jesus is God in any full sense.

And I'm quite interested to see what the Greek New Testament says. And it says, Thomas said to him, my Lord and my God. So, I think that's what it says.

Thomas said, my Lord and my God. Now, Thomas sees and believes. Thomas, verse 29.

Jesus told him, because you have seen me, you have believed. So, we have this situation of Thomas having faith in Jesus Christ because he has seen and touched and believed.

[20:21] And I'm going to put into this mix the fact that there was joy, which is in verse 20. We noticed that before. The disciples were overjoyed. And I'm also going to bring into it something that we looked at this morning.

That of fellowship with the Father and the Son. And I'm drawing this from verse 17, where Jesus says, I'm going up to my Father and your Father.

To my God and your God. In other words, that the close relationship that Jesus had with the Father, the followers have with the Father. And the close relationship he could say, this is my God.

He could say to his followers, this is your God. So, I've put in here that there is a fellowship that Thomas now has with the Father and with the Son.

And Jesus says, going to my brothers. So, the relationship is not only with the Father, but with Jesus himself. So, that is the picture as regards Thomas.

[21:34] Now, have one finger in John chapter 20. And then have another finger, a little bit later on in the Bible, a letter that John wrote.

As it's the first letter of John chapter 1. So, have that. Have one finger in there. And be ready for that.

But while you've got one finger in there, I'm going to carry on in John chapter 20. Okay, can you do that?

Two places at once. Not a very good way of organizing it, is it? So, we've got one John, which we're going to look at in a moment. John, but we haven't quite left John chapter 20.

And we've got to verse 30. Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. So, that's John saying, I've selected them.

[22:35] Loads of things I could have put down, but I haven't put down all of them. 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.

So, here's my little picture. Here are the people like us, who have not seen. I'm linking it with verse 9.

The people who have not seen, that weren't there, that didn't have the opportunity to touch Jesus. And these people can have faith.

He says, so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ. And how is it that these people come to believe? Answer.

Because it is written. Do you see that sentence? Verse 31. These are written. So, I've done a scroll there. 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.

[23 : 52] Do you see what's being said? What's being said is that whereas Thomas met Jesus in that physical sense and came to faith, we come to faith not by our physical meeting with Jesus, but by a reading of Scripture.

These are written so that you may believe. You haven't seen or heard, but you can read. And that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ.

And he goes on to say that you may have eternal life, or actually just says life, doesn't it? This is rather amazing, isn't it? Because we might think, well, if I'd been alive in those days, and I'd really seen Jesus dying on the cross, and I'd really seen him risen from the dead, then I could probably have faith under those circumstances.

You know, how I wish I lived all those years ago. That would have been easy then, wouldn't it? I could have been a spiritual person, and my spiritual life would have no problems, and I could have really, you know, that would have sorted everything out for me.

But what's being said is, now hold on. You too can have a real spiritual life. You too can have a life as meaningful and as spiritual as they had, and as full of conviction and purpose and confidence as they had.

[25 : 24] That's what it's saying, isn't it? You can believe as well. And how do you believe? Well, by the book. These are written so that you may believe.

So I sort of put the whole picture of that together. And perhaps it helps with the first bit there.

Here are the apostles who did see and believe, and we can believe if we listen to what they said.

And we can have forgiveness if we listen to what they said. So let's bring in 1 John chapter 1, which is the bit that I mentioned a bit earlier. So here is John speaking, or writing.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at, and our hands have touched, this we proclaim concerning the word of life.

[26 : 33] He's referring to Jesus, isn't he? The life appeared. We have seen it and testify to it. In other words, we saw it and we're telling you about it.

We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us.

You can have the same experience that we have. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

Notice the same features there, joy and fellowship. And what he's saying is it is possible for you guys, who were never there, to have the same spiritual experience that we apostles had.

You're not, you don't, you're not, what's the word? Hampered. Think of another word for hampering. Restricted.

[27 : 47] Disadvantaged. Disadvantaged. Yeah, you're not disadvantaged by not having been there. But here's the amazement of it. If you read the book, if you get the message of the apostles as written down, or if you hear somebody explaining it to you from the book, if you hear somebody giving you the message that's in the book, you too can have eternal life.

What an amazing thing that is. So, those are my fairly obvious comments. One was about this whole matter of mission.

There's this sending out for people to have faith. And then there's this bit here about how we have faith. We have faith through the Bible.

Through the message, the apostolic message, which is here in the Bible. So, I'm going to stop there and see if there are any questions or observations. And if not, we'll sing and we'll go home.

But there might be some questions and observations. Thank you.