

Resurrection Blessings

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Preacher: Tom Penman

[0 : 00] when we think of the good news of the gospel, one of the things which we must admit is that it isn't simply a message, is it?

It's powerful. Romans 1 says that it is the power of life, and it has the power to transform those who believe in it, not least of all the disciples of Jesus, the apostles of Jesus.

When we start this passage, it is the third day after Jesus has been crucified, and the disciples are, well, they're in a complete state of shock, aren't they?

We're told that they are inside with the doors locked because of the fear of the Jews, meaning the Jewish leaders. They have just seen the man, they have spent three years following, being taught by a man whom they cared for and loved, respected and taught and learnt from, get arrested and executed.

And they are scared that the same thing is going to happen to them. And therefore they are inside, with the doors locked, scared.

[1 : 20] And yet it will not be long before this same group of disciples will go out into the city around them and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

More than that, they will go from the city they are in to across the world. And that message of Jesus Christ will continue from city to city, from nation to nation, until, well, until it even reaches from as far away from Jerusalem as a small, wet nation like ours, thousands of miles away.

There is no stopping this gospel message. But the thing that impacts these disciples is the fact of the resurrection.

When Jesus comes to them, when they see that his message is true, it absolutely transforms them. And we have already said, as we've been looking at passages in John's gospel, that the purpose of John's gospel is that we ourselves might believe in this Jesus, that we would believe that he truly is the Christ, that he is the Son of God.

And we ourselves have put our trust in him. And therefore, this evening, to look at this passage together, I want to just take it in three parts.

[2 : 55] And I'm going to concentrate, really on verses 19 to 23, the first encounter that Jesus has with his disciples when they first meet him after the resurrection.

And I want to see what impact Jesus has. In fact, what does Jesus give to his disciples? What blessings does he give to them, which transforms them so much?

Well, there's three blessings that we see in this passage. He gives them his peace, his mission, and his spirit. His peace, his mission, and his spirit.

Look at those together now. So first of all then, Jesus blesses them with his peace. We're told that as they are inside, with the doors locked, Jesus came and stood amongst them.

And there are lots of different theories about what exactly it means that Jesus came and stood among them. Does it mean that Jesus somehow passed through the doors?

[4 : 09] Does it mean that he was always with them and that they only recognized him at that moment? Alternatively, in his resurrection glory, was it that he was more substantial than even the doors themselves?

Well, you can speculate amongst all those things over coffee after service, but it's a lot easier to preach what the Bible does say than to speculate about what it doesn't say. And it says that Jesus came and stood among them and said the first words out of his mouth, peace be with you.

These are amazing words. When was the last time most of these disciples had seen Jesus? It was on the night of his arrest, the night when he asked them to stay up and pray for him and they couldn't even keep their eyes open to do that.

And when Jesus had been arrested, they had fled the scene and abandoned him. This is a man they loved that they abandoned. And the first thing that Jesus says when he comes to them is not, I can't believe you did that.

It's not, you guys absolutely screwed up, you've got a lot of work to make it up to me. No, he comes to them and the first words he says to these disciples who have abandoned him and failed him is, peace be with you.

[5 : 45] Jesus brings peace to them. He then shows them just to confirm his hands, the nail marks which would have been in them from the crucifixion and his side, the wound where the spear was put in.

And to show that he really is the same person, the same body even, which had been on that cross a few days before.

This really is the same Jesus who'd been arrested, the same Jesus who'd been executed now stood among them. And we're told that the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

That's, that's got to be an understatement. That they were glad when they stood there. They are more than glad.

here is the man they thought was dead stood amongst them and they are overjoyed by what they see. How can they understand that this man who was dead is now alive?

[7 : 02] It surely impacts everything. In the, in the book, The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King.

And if you haven't read the book, you might have seen the film. And if you haven't seen the film, then you'll at least have heard of it unless you've been living under a rock the last 20 years. There is a scene at the very end when a character by the name of Samwise Gamgee is recovering after his adventures and his friend Gandalf comes in and the last time he saw Gandalf he thought that he saw Gandalf die.

And Sam says these words. He says, Gandalf, I thought you were dead but then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue?

What's happened to the world? Is everything sad going to come untrue? I mean, if Jesus is back from the dead, what does that mean for everything else in the life of his disciples?

Because the truth is that in a real sense everything sad will come untrue because of the fact that Jesus has returned from the dead.

[8 : 23] When Jesus says to them, peace, it has the same word that's used to translate the Old Testament word for shalom. It means more than just the absence of conflict.

If you have ever had an argument with somebody else in your family and been in a bad mood with them, you know the absence of conflict is not the same as peace.

Things can be very quiet and still not have peace. peace. Now, instead, the word peace being used here, the word of shalom, it has the idea of everything being in the right place, everything working as it's meant to work.

If you imagine a tapestry where every thread of that tapestry has been just the right place for the pattern to make sense, it's that kind of idea.

And the central thread, if you like, of that tapestry, the central part of that peace is peace with God himself.

[9 : 38] Jesus has been called the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. He had come to do the Father's will. He said himself that he'd come to gather all those who had gone astray, not for the righteous but for the unrighteous.

He even said he'd come to lay down his life for his people. And we see that. We saw that this morning when he went to the cross to pay for their sins.

And the fact is that when he went to pay for our sins on that cross, he paid it all. his last words were it is finished.

The sin has been fully paid for. If it hadn't been fully paid for, if there was anything left to pay, then he wouldn't have risen from the dead.

Let's be blunt about this for a moment, just for the sake of time. Why is there death in the world? Why do human beings die? Well, Romans 5 says that it's because the wages of sin are death.

[11 : 02] The wages of sin are death. We have sinned against the holy God and we have earned for ourselves the penalty of death. What about Jesus?

Jesus? Why does he die on the cross? Well, it can't be because he's got sin, which he's earned death for, because he was sinless, he was perfect.

No, when Jesus went to the cross, he took what we had earned, he took the wages of sin on himself. and he took the penalty that we deserved and he paid it all.

If his death had been insufficient in any way, if there had been anything left to pay, he would have stayed dead, wouldn't he? Because if there's any sin left on him, he would have stayed dead.

But he rises because death has no claim on him, because it has been fully paid for. Romans puts it, he is raised for our justification.

[12 : 23] He is raised from the dead because death has no claim on him, because there is no more sin to pay for, because he's paid for it all. The Dutch theologian Herman Bavinck puts it like this, the resurrection is the father's amen to the son's it is finished.

So the son says on the cross it is finished and in his resurrection the father says amen yes, it is finished, it is paid for, that is why the tomb is empty.

My friends, Jesus brought this peace to his disciples when he came to them in the upper room and he brings this peace to you today.

He gave it to his disciples freely, he gives it to you today freely. Just have no doubt this evening, if you have trusted in Christ then you have this deep peace with God.

You do because your sins have been paid for by Christ. This evening, is there anything on your conscience?

[13 : 55] Do you feel guilt about anything that you've done in the week before? Possibly even unease or guilt about anything that you've done today? Well, if you do, take it to God.

Take it to God and say, God, I am a sinner, I confess that I am, but Lord, I also trust that I have a saviour who has paid for my sins and I come before you tonight.

trusting in the peace which Jesus has made for me with you. Go to the Lord this evening if there's anything on your conscience and say to your heavenly Father, I trust in the peace of Christ and I know my sins are dealt with.

Secondly, then, we come to his mission. after Jesus has shown them his hands and his side, after he says to them a second time, peace be with you, he gives them this command.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. the disciples are being sent out by Jesus just as Jesus was sent out by the Father.

[15 : 30] The Father, sorry, Jesus throughout his earthly ministry says, I have come to do my Father's will. I have come in obedience to him and he sends out now his disciples to do his will and to do his mission.

Their mission is not the same as Jesus' mission. How could it be? Because Jesus' mission was to come and lay down his life and pay for our sins on the cross and conquer death.

they are not going to repeat that, obviously. But they do now have the role of going out and announcing the work that Christ has done.

Jesus' mission continues through his disciples announcing this peace that they have received with other people who can receive it as well.

See, the resurrection is a revolutionary event. It can't be contained to just being a local event outside of a city in the Middle East.

[16 : 41] It is of global importance. How many of us, all of us, have been marked by death in some way?

By the loss of a loved one? By our own fragility? death. But we live in a world where death seems to reign.

In fact, it's often said that death is the tool of the tyrant. You don't have to look very far around the world, do you? You have to see regimes and powerful people who use death or the threat of death

to abuse and to conquer. Whether that is the deliberate bombing of civilians to make them afraid, or whether it is terrorist attacks against people, whether it is one-off attacks or abuses.

death, we're told, is the tool of the tyrant. But here we have the extraordinary claim.

[17 : 55] not that life will inevitably end in death, but in Jesus, death ends in life.

If this life is not all there is, if we do not simply live for a few years on this earth and then spend the rest of eternity in the grave, it changes how we think about everything.

It changes what people can threaten you with. It changes the way in which our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world face that persecution, because they know that death is not the end for them if they are serving Christ.

It even changes the way that we treat each other in church, or at least it should do, because if this life is not all there is, then it means it isn't as important about whether or not I always get everything my own way.

Is everything in the life of the church exactly how you want it to be? Well, maybe, but if you know that you have eternity ahead of you because of Christ, can you live with the things which aren't exactly how you want them to be?

[19 : 25] Do you have to win every argument? Do you always have to come out and top? Or can you serve and be sacrificial to one another, looking to the future?

See, this is the importance of the mission which Christ gives to his disciples, the meaning of the resurrection on both the grand scale and the everyday scale, and the difference it can make.

And I think it's within the context of Jesus' mission of his sending out of his disciples that we should understand what Jesus says in verse 23.

23 where he says, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. That verse cannot mean that the disciples have the right to tell somebody, well, we have the right to decide whether or not you are forgiven.

Because Jesus has paid for people's sins on the cross, so if their sins have been paid for, then they are forgiven. But in the context of mission, what the disciples can do, what they must do, is tell the truth to people and say, if you have trusted in Jesus Christ, then I can say truthfully today, your sins are forgiven.

[21 : 01] I don't have to say that they might be forgiven or there's a high possibility of them forgiven. I can announce to you today, if you're trusting in Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

And I must also say the other side of that coin and say to somebody, but if you are not trusting in Jesus Christ, then your sins are not forgiven and you are not right with God.

But Jesus sends out his disciples on mission and he sends them out to share this revolutionary good news of the resurrection and what he has accomplished.

And finally, we come to the gift of his spirit. Jesus says in verse 22, receive the Holy Spirit.

In fact, just before he does that, it says he breathed on them. Well, the word them isn't in the Greek, but it's definitely implied. He breathes on them and maybe this seems like a strange thing for Jesus to do.

[22 : 23] He breathes on them, but remember that throughout scripture, breath and spirit are closely connected.

Think back to the Old Testament of passages such as Genesis 2 when God created the first human being, when he created Adam and he formed him out of the dirt of the ground, we're told, and then what did he do?

He breathed into his nostrils and he became a living spirit. Or think of the prophet Ezekiel, when Ezekiel was taken to the valley of dry bones and he prophesied to them.

And what happened? those bones grew flesh and came to life. What Jesus is doing here by breathing on them and telling them to receive his spirit, it is a foreshadowing, isn't it?

It's pointing ahead to the great day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will be poured out on them and they'll be drenched in it and there'll be tongues of flame and it will completely empower them.

[23 : 38] But Jesus says to them, receive the Holy Spirit. They are receiving the spirit of God himself.

There is new life from Christ. The same creative power that made the first human beings is now going to give them eternal life.

Life which never ends. Life which will see us secure into the glorious future the Lord has for us, even through the death of our earthly bodies to our own future resurrection when we are risen in glorious new ones through the work of the Spirit.

And this means that the disciples are not going out alone, are they, on mission? They're not going to be abandoned by God or abandoned by Jesus because the very Spirit of God will be with his disciples.

There will never be a moment when God is absent from his people because his people have his Holy Spirit.

[24 : 53] it's why elsewhere in the New Testament, in places like Ephesians chapter 2, we are described as being what? The temple of the living God.

The temple of the Holy Spirit, the place where God himself lives on earth is in his people. If you are here tonight trusting in Jesus Christ, do you realize that you have the Holy Spirit?

Do you realize that you are the dwelling place of God on earth? that he is never going to be apart from you, never far from you. He is always with you.

We live out the Christian life not by our own power, but with the living God with us at all times. That is the gift of the Spirit which Christ gives to his disciples, yes, in the upper room here, but to each one of us today as well.

We are given the Spirit of God himself. My friends, as we close this communion weekend, just remember for a moment all the blessings which the Lord has given to us.

[26 : 19] Peace with God through his own sacrifice. The joy of being included in the work of God by being given the mission to go out and share the good news with other people.

And his own Spirit with us as we do the work that he's called us to do. These are amazing blessings from the living God.

And they are true this evening whether you have a good day or a bad day, whether you feel excited by them or not.

They are recorded in Scripture because this is truth regardless of how you personally might feel. therefore I just want to close by encouraging you today.

Enjoy these gifts from Christ. Enjoy the blessings that he has given to you. Remember they are yours because he has given them to you because he loves his people.

[27 : 33] and the same Christ who died for you is the same Christ who now blesses you.