

“My Lord and my God!”

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[0:00] Hallelujah, the Lord is risen. The Lord is risen. Hallelujah. Let's do it one more time.

! These are the implications of Easter morning.

These are the implications of your resurrection, in which we delight in as your children, as beneficiaries of the work you've finished and accomplished on the cross.

Thank you, O great Savior, for saving us, for calling us out of death into life. And Lord, we pray even as we now look at your word this morning, that you again, as it were, enliven our hearts, draw us closer to you, Lord Jesus.

Help us to fall deeper in love with you and be more assured and grateful for our great Redeemer. It is in his name we pray. Amen.

[1:40] So, we are going to be in John 20 this morning, verse 19 to 31. I know that some of you know we've been going through 1 Corinthians. We've taken, since Palm Sunday, we've taken a three-week detour to look at these passages in our gospel readings.

Next week, we'll get back to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. But here this morning, we're in chapter 20 of John's gospel. We know about skeptics, don't we?

Some of us might have been. As surely when it comes to the resurrection, maybe we were skeptics. We might be dispositionally, by nature, some people are very believing.

For those of us who are skeptics, we try to think of those people as gullible. And some of us are skeptics, the gullible ones or the believing ones.

We might think of us who are always questioning as skeptics. Dispositionally, we have different dispositions in regards to this. And one thing about the resurrection in this time of Easter is that the skeptics roll out.

[2:51] Every Easter, they roll out their conspiracy theories about the resurrection. And they ask people not to believe in the lie that a man rose from the dead.

As if it's a daily occurrence, a man rising from the dead. Well, the one thing the disciples were not. The disciples, the one thing they were not was.

The one thing they were not doing, rather, was refusing to face reality. They saw the reality as it faced them. At the death of Jesus Christ.

And as they faced that reality, they were not brave men, as it were. They were not faithful men either. They were still relying on their strength.

So they had no faith to exercise. And the humanist worldview will say, concerning the disciples, what do the disciples need to take the lessons? Or this is what they need to do.

[3:55] They need to take the lessons that Jesus had taught them before he died. And let him and his teachings live in their hearts. Some Christians would deny the bodily resurrection.

Later, we'll say that very same thing. They deny the bodily resurrection of Jesus, but they will say that that's exactly what happened. The disciples led Jesus and his teachings lived in their hearts. And that's what encouraged them to go out into the world with his teachings. Well, the gospel accounts relapse at that sort of view.

The reality of what happened to Jesus runs counter to just a group of men who had the teachings in their hearts and then go out in bravery and joy.

Because that's not what's going on in any of the gospel accounts. What some of these skeptics will say is that the disciples decided to stop getting depressed and start living out Jesus' teaching.

[5:02] And that's what changed the world. The reality is that that's such utter nonsense. You know, it's the late Chuck Colson. Some of you might know him.

He was one of Nixon's political advisors. Some people think of him as one of Nixon's henchmen. He later became a Christian while he was in prison, while serving time for his actions during the Nixon

presidency.

Well, he said this about the resurrection. I quote him, I know the resurrection is a fact. And Watergate proved it to me.

How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead. Then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it.

Every one of them was beaten, tortured, stoned, and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren't true.

[6:04] Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world. And they couldn't keep alive for three weeks. So you're telling me 12 apostles could keep alive for 40 years?

Absolutely impossible. That's Chuck Colson. I think he's right. And what we see here in verse 19 is that the disciples were hiding in a room.

Faced with the reality of the death and crucifixion of Jesus, they were hiding in a room. Likely the same room where Jesus shared his last meal with them on Monday, Thursday. Peter and John had not called a meeting.

That's not what's going on here. This is not a strategic meeting to strategize how to get the Jesus franchise back on the road. That's not what's going on here. They're hiding in fear.

They were not saying, Well, guys, he's dead. But we have to go on. He's alive in our hearts.

Through the life that he lived, the lessons he taught us.

[7:09] Come on, guys. He's resurrected in our hearts and in our minds. Now let's go out there and take the world for Christ. That's not what's going on here. Yeah.

Terrified. Hiding. Weak. Despaired. Despairing. None of them said that. It was grief-stricken.

Have you ever been grief-stricken? Imagine someone coming to you in the depths of your grief and telling you such sanctimonious nonsense as, well, it's just, you know, in your heart and in your mind.

And chances are that your mourning might turn to rage at such a person. And rightly so.

Because no words of consolation, no matter how beautiful those words of consolation are, no words can erase the grief of losing someone you dearly loved to a tragic death.

[8:12] I'll suggest to you that the only thing that can erase that sort of grief, the only thing that can erase that sort of grief is if that loved one should appear bodily and you can see them again, hear them again, touch them again, laugh with them again.

That's the only thing that can get rid of such grief. Eat with them again. If the sting of death that took that loved one away from you could not hold them, then indeed your grief can be overcome.

Absent that reality, you will and should grieve the loss of your loved one. And so we find the disciples doing exactly that and also hiding in fear.

They've shut the doors behind them, dejected, confused, grief-stricken, perhaps they should be rejoicing at this point. Maybe they should be because they've heard the women's report at this point, after all.

Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Marys, as we saw last week. And she is, she, they, all of them, had already relayed the news to them. So in Mark, we have with that cliff hunger where they ran away, fearful.

[9:31] But the other gospel shows that the women surmounted their fears and they actually did proclaim to the disciples that Jesus is risen. Peter and John, even by this point, at, by this point, race to the tomb.

Remember that great grace in the gospel with all the memes, John beating Peter to, to the grave site? Well, they've raced to the, to the side of the tomb. They, they've both found it empty.

Yet, all of them still remain hidden behind closed doors, afraid for their lives. And who among us haven't experienced the grief and confusion that these disciples, all of them, women and men, haven't experienced what they've experienced in these past three days.

Who among us will not be paralyzed? That's what's going on. They are paralyzed by confusion and fear. Because they still don't know, remember, they still don't know what it all means.

Even if it were true that Jesus is risen, which I think they're coming to believe to some extent, but they don't know what that means. He's indeed alive.

[10:41] What does it mean for them? All they know now is sorrow over the death of their leader, fear for what may happen to them, and confusion over the events of that morning. They were faithless, hopeless, and what they need is, they needed Jesus.

But Jesus was dead, and his body was missing. Or, he is risen, as he mentioned, as the women testified.

But what they need in the midst of all their fear and confusion is Jesus. He's the only person who could give them faith and hope. He's the only answer for them amidst their turmoil.

And E, Jesus, never deserting his own, comes to them. John tells us that the door was locked because they were afraid of the Jews.

They were terrified that they could be next. And in this place of their terror and fear and confusion, Jesus came.

[11:51] Not as an apparition, no, but bodily. many have wondered how Jesus got through a locked door. And there have been many theories about the capability of his resurrected body.

I love to engage in those theories. I'm not going to do that now. We can talk about that after the service. It delights me because maybe it's clues about what our resurrected body will look like. But I think the most important thing about this is to remember that Jesus is Lord.

He commanded the things that were not into being. He quieted the raging storms even before his death and resurrection. So what's a locked door to him?

The door could have been a metal vault or a tombstone. It cannot stop him. And so he stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you.

Shalom, Halakim in Hebrew. This is the normal Jewish greeting. They would have been familiar with this greeting.

[12:56] But from the mouths of Jesus, this greeting holds far more weight when Jesus greets them now with this pronouncement of peace. Jesus comes to his own having finished the work of bringing peace from God to man.

Peace here is not a mere greeting or hope for something in the future. Peace here, according to Jesus, is a bequest a declaration of our new status before God.

In Christ, we can now have peace with God. He showed them the marks on his body signifying that peace. I've often wondered why Jesus' resurrected body still has the marks of his death.

And many have wondered if that means we will still have our scars and deformities in heaven. I don't believe so. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, concerning our resurrected bodies, that it will be imperishable in glory and with power.

But Jesus, he bears the mark of his death and he shows it to his disciples. Perhaps it's so that they might recognize that it is Jesus and not some clone.

[14:14] Perhaps. I think it's a mark of honor on our Lord. The mark of his crucifixion. It's a mark of glory even on our Lord. It is a symbol of his love and grace towards us.

It reminds us that the peace we now have with God came at a cost. God laid down his life for us. It's an amazing picture really.

It's an amazing picture for us to see this is the lamb who was slain. As even Revelation reminds us. Later, Apostle John will write in Revelation 5 about Jesus in his exalted state and refer to him as the lamb who was slain as heaven praises his glory.

I'm reminded of this poem about the God who has wounds.

wounds. The poem goes like this. To our minds, only God wounds. But to our wounds, only God's wounds can speak for those who are Christians.

[15:27] We have a God that has wounds. And what does those wounds on our Lord tell us? He tells us that he's a loving father, a loving God who comes in the midst of our fright, of our fears, of our despairing, to save, to redeem, to give hope.

only the Bible offers us a picture of a God who became weak. The gods of other religions don't have a God who became weak so he might save his people.

Only the Bible has a picture of a God who became weak, who subjected himself to a grievous wound so that his creation might be saved. And the implication of that for you and me is this.

no matter how wounded you are or how much pain you may be going through, Jesus has borne the most grievous wound.

And so he knows your pain. More importantly, your present pain, even now, is only momentary.

That is the beauty and the joy and the meaning of the resurrection.

[16:46] Your pain, even now, is momentary. all the pain we will endure, no matter how grievous it seems to us, they are momentary.

Even death, the ultimate wound, even death, because of the resurrection, death is only a momentary affliction to the believer.

They will not last, because God has suffered the ultimate wound for all eternity for us, so that we may have peace with God, and with our fellow man. This is the meaning of the proclamation of peace, as Jesus greets the apostles.

And then we see that he sends them into the world, after the declaration of peace. He sends them into the world. The disciples in the room here represent the church. This is Jesus, our Lord and Savior, God's father, sending, commissioning his church.

He came in the name of his father to save us, and now he sends us into the world to tell the world of this great salvation in his name. The church works.

[18:02] The church's work is to proclaim Jesus. That's our work. That's our task. To proclaim his life, his death, and resurrection to a sinful world. This is why we gather as God's people.

This is why, as we gather here, at the end of this Lord's Day service, we'll be sent out to do this. Because it's what the work our Lord has given us to do.

To tell the world that we can now have peace with God through faith in Jesus Christ. That's the apostolic message given by our Lord to the apostles and passed on to every generation of Christians.

That message has not changed, brothers and sisters. That message will never change. We are to proclaim Christ crucified and resurrected to a sinful world.

And look at verse 22. John tells us he breathes on them and gives them life. Breathes on them and gives them life and gives them the Holy Spirit to comfort and to guide them.

[19:09] There is a correlation here. As we read this account of Jesus breathing on them. There is a correlation with Genesis 2.7 when the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature.

Here again God breathes new life into his church, the new humanity so that they may have life to do the work he sends them to do.

So, here's the thing, when you start getting self-important, you know, we all get like that sometimes, I do, maybe I should speak for myself.

So, when you start getting self-importance and thinking God holds you for your contributions, here's a good reminder, the very breath that gives you life is from him.

and when you get discouraged, maybe, or weary, on the verge of despair, as you do the work that God has placed on you to do, when you're discouraged, weary, on the verge of despair, remember that you do not work in your own power, either.

[20:29] It is breath that gives you spiritual life. in him we live, we move, and have our being.

That is true for our physical and spiritual life. And so, God, Jesus breathes on them this new life, the Holy Spirit, into the church to empower it.

Verse 23, empowers the church to declare, again, the forgiveness of sin, and to proclaim condemnation, judgment, for the unrepentant. Verse 23 is easy to get carried away with, with verse 23 at this juncture.

But I think what Jesus is doing here is giving us, the church, the power to absorb people of their sins, or hold them in condemnation. Now, we have to understand what's going on here.

The Greek phrase, they are forgiven, in verse 23, is better read, they have been forgiven. Right? They have been forgiven. This means that in proclaiming the gospel, if you turn, as you proclaim the gospel, if a person turns from their sin to Jesus as Savior, repent of their sins, turn to Jesus Christ, then we, the church, can proclaim what is already true in heaven, that God has forgiven them.

[22:03] But if they remain in rebellion, and unbelief, and do not turn to Jesus, who is the only way to peace with God, then we can also say, declaratively, that if they remain in their sin, they are condemned.

You know, the world tells us not to do that, because we're judging. But we're not, it's not based on our rubrics. Yes, Jesus Christ was giving us the standard. If you turn to him, no matter how grievous your sin is, no matter what you've done, if you turn to him, you're forgiven in repentance.

He will forgive you, cleanse you. If you remain in your sin, you stand condemned. This is precisely what happens after our general confession of sins every Sunday.

sin. You know, I have no power. I don't know if you know this, but let me say to you now, I have no power to forgive your sins, or my sins for that matter.

When I get up after the confession of sins, all I am doing is declaring God's truth, God's comfortable words. It's declarative.

[23 : 16] I'm declaring that our sins have been forgiven when we come to Jesus in true repentance. What a comfort this is for us as believers.

What a comfort. Jesus assures us and gives us the authority to comfort one another, to remind one another of our new status with God when we come to him in repentance, that he has made peace with God, and that we have that peace with God.

It's a tangible confirmation of that peace. in those words of affirmation. Other faiths don't have this. Do you know that? You know, a pious and righteous Muslim or Jew cannot say with confidence, I'm at peace with God.

They cannot. They can only hope that after all their piety, God accepts them. They can only hope. But you, Christian, you have an assurance.

You're forgiven solely on the basis of what Jesus has done. The wounds he's incurred upon his body for your transgressions. As Ephesians 1.7 says, in him, that is in Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

[24 : 45] And so Jesus appears to his disciples, we see here, to encourage them, to send them as witnesses to continue his ministry on earth in the power of the Spirit. But John tells us in verse 24 that one of the apostles, Thomas, was not there.

John decides to include this incident with Thomas in his account. I don't think it's so we can start calling and doubting Thomas as we want to do. Thomas is no more unbelieving than the other ten apostles, in fact, who didn't believe the account of Mary a week earlier.

yet, there's a reason to think that Thomas would have known that there is no point in the other ten apostles making up a story about seeing Jesus if it wasn't true.

I think he knows that. Because to do so, for the disciples to be making such a tale up, would be unimaginably cruel. Because they shared with him in the grief and sorrow.

And so they have nothing to gain in making up stories. Thomas knows they're not making it up. But he remains unbelieving. Because he wants to see, demands to see in his hands, to see in Christ's hands the mark of the nails, and places his finger into the mark of the nails, and places his hands into his side, and he says to them, the other ten, until I do that, I will never believe that he is risen.

[26 : 13] Why is Thomas so obstinate? Why does he doubt his friends? I think his doubt is that of a deeply disappointed person, who doesn't want to confuse faith and gullibility.

We're very much in our modern age, we try to look back and think of those people, well, yeah, they live in a primitive world, they believe anything. Well, no, they don't believe anything. They know men don't rise from the dead.

They know it was an impossibility. Thomas knew that, I know you're telling me this, I know you're saying it, but I have no category to grasp this thing you're telling me.

It seems like good news, but I must see it. And in the week between Jesus' appearance to the ten and his appearance to Thomas a week later, what would Thomas have been doing?

He would have been playing everything in his mind over I think he wants to believe, but Thomas' greatest fear is being gullible, being made a dupe again, as he feels like he had been, because he entrusted himself to this Jesus, who was then crucified.

[27 : 29] I'm sure that many of us, before we came to Christ, that was our fear as well. I just can't believe this stuff. It's too fantastical. Properly, there's someone here today who still refuses to believe like Thomas, because the pain of believing in a lie is unbearable.

But it's not a lie. It is the truth that changes every other truth, every other reality in our life. In our contemporary mind, faith, we think of faith as a subjective, private thing.

Faith is a preference. I have my belief, you have yours. faith. But nowhere in the Bible is faith seen as a private thing that you can hold on to.

The validation of real faith, in the biblical sense, is found in the truthfulness of the faith's object. I'm going to say that again.

The validation of real faith is found in the truthfulness of the faith's object. God never asks us to muster up a feeling of faith.

[28:39] God would never ask you to convince yourself against every evidence to believe something if it isn't true. That's not what biblical faith is. The call of God in the gospel isn't to adopt a coping mechanism to get by.

That's not what faith in Jesus is. Look at the disciples. Even after they've seen the resurrected Christ, he's still finds them a week later hiding in the same room.

This isn't something that you can just gin up, because if you can, the disciples would have gin up courage and faith and all of that by now. If they're trying to make something up, this whole story, is that what the disciples are trying to do?

They're terrible at it. Because only the truth can be so unflattering to them, and yet so comforting. the truth reveals that faith isn't something they have to muster up within themselves.

They couldn't do it. Instead, it is a trusted place in Jesus Christ, who is the founder and the perfecter, that is, finisher of our faith, as the author of Hebrews says.

[29:51] Because if Jesus is not alive, and the resurrection is not a historical and factual event, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians, then we are all doomed. And the disciples, the apostles recognize that.

That is what John is stressing in recounting Thomas' doubt. Faith in the resurrection wasn't just some euphoric rush to cling to something to cope with the pain of Jesus' death.

Rather, it was an absolute trust in a person, the person of Jesus Christ, who died and who on the third day rose again because he has defeated death. And so Jesus shows himself to Thomas, and then he commands him to perform his test that he had given.

And then he says to Thomas, stop disbelieving and believe. Now, we're not told that Thomas placed his hands in Jesus' wounds as he insisted he would.

Those were the claims of an unbeliever anyway when he made them. But now, upon seeing Jesus, upon seeing Jesus, he believed, and he uttered his incredible statement of faith, which we have in verse 28.

[31:03] On bended knees, he said, my Lord and my God. Here is Thomas' confession of belief and faith in Jesus. And it is the climax of John's gospel, this confession of faith.

John starts, remember, his gospel by telling us that Jesus is God. He was in the beginning with God, and now at the end of this gospel, from the mouth of Thomas, the doubter, we have the same confession, that he is indeed Lord and God.

But then Jesus softly rebukes Thomas, you've seen me, now you believe. Blessed are those who have not seen me, and yet have believed. This is you and me, brothers and sisters.

This is the millions of believers who have come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ since his ascension. Blessed here does not only mean happy, but also it means accepted by God.

It is both a comforting word that Jesus gives to all who will come to faith in him. You are blessed, you are blessed, accepted by God on the basis of your faith in me.

[32:20] It is a proclamation of peace and acceptance by God to all who hear and read the apostles' accounts and come to faith in Jesus. This is John's purpose in recording this.

This is the reason the church is sent out to bear witness to Jesus, so that the unbelieving may come to profess him as Lord and God, as Thomas did.

John tells us in verse 31 that by believing you may have life in his name. That is the purpose.

Jesus. The apostles went into the world. They proclaimed the gospel, that Jesus died and rose again from the slumber of death on the third day.

They proclaimed it to the world and recorded it for us as something which they saw with their own very eyes. John writes in 1 John 1:3, that which we have seen and heard we proclaim to you so that you too may have fellowship with us.

And indeed, our fellowship is with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ. Thomas confessed Jesus as his Lord and God, as Lord and God, the one who created, who sustains, who redeems, Lord and God.

[33:38] Any future in this life and the next is bound up in this person of Jesus Christ, who is both Lord and God.

If you want any future in this life and the next, you must come face to face with this declaration of Thomas, of Jesus being Lord and God.

As Lord and God, he is the great judge to whom every soul must come before judgment. You know, this confession that Thomas made here shipped the rest of his life.

It shipped the rest of the apostles' life as well. Not just his, but the other ten apostles in the room. Church tradition tells us that St. Thomas was martyred in southeast India in the present-day city of Chennai.

He is believed to have been chased up a hill by an angry mob and ran through with a spear.

Thomas lived and died affirming Jesus as Lord and God.

[34 : 51] There's a church now on the hill where he is believed to have died. You can go to that church and in that church you will see in giant letters inscribed on wood these words, my Lord and my God.

will you, like Thomas proclaiming to be Lord and God? But not only Lord and God of the world, but will you proclaiming to be Lord and God of your heart and of your will, of your very life?

Will you surrender in wonder and worship to this humble king who has made peace with sinful man and a holy God? will you die for him?

And as I say that, you might think at the point of Thomas' kind of death, a persecution, being killed. But what I mean here when I say will you die for him is a continual dying to sin, to the flesh, and to the world.

Will you, as Jesus says, will you lose your life to Christ in love and devotion, knowing that all who do so will find their life hidden with him, where even death has no power to take it.

[36 : 16] He is risen. He has defeated death for you and for me. And all who place their trust in him and declare him to be Lord and God, have this assurance of the same victory over sin and death.

It is in that proclamation of his being Lord and God, who is victor over sin and death, over the grave itself. It is in that declaration that we go forth into the world.

It is in that declaration that we live a life of faith. So will you go on dying to self and live unto Christ? Let us pray. You are Lord and God. We confess it. Help us, Lord, with the help of your Holy Spirit to continue to live under the truth of this declaration.

And help us, Lord, to boldly call a dying world to you, to come to see you as Lord and God. We pray this in Jesus' name.

[37 : 36] Amen. Amen. BEEP