

Rolling Stones and Unlocking Doors

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[0:00] Amen. Now the iron bars are broken. Christ from death to life is born.

glorious life and life immortal! on this holy Easter morn, Christ has triumphed, and we conquer by his mighty enterprise.

we with him to life eternal, by his resurrection rise. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. How many of you remember the Rolling Stones?

Yeah. So who's the lead singer for the Rolling Stones? Mick Jagger. And he's my age, and he's still rocking. I'm not rocking, but I'm still preaching.

Let's roll into preaching. Today we're going to talk about rolling stones and unlocking doors. So we're going to crack open the gospel lesson today, John chapter 20, and find out what God has for us as we crack open these verses.

[1:24] Now last Sunday, in case you were under a rock, was Easter Sunday, right? And Father Caleb knows that.

You know, clergy are interesting. When Easter rolls around and finally get to Sunday afternoon after Easter, they're out of it. There's this liturgy that the congregation says, Father, may we talk with you tomorrow?

And he answers, no. So, he's getting a well-deserved break this Sunday. Today is the second Sunday of Easter, and we read the second part of John 19.

Last Sunday, we talked about the stone being rolled away. This Sunday, we talk about doors being unlocked. They run together.

So we'll see how that works. So let's look at that. Beginning on chapter 20, and verse 19. It says, On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, that's what we call today Easter Sunday, day of the resurrection.

[2:37] It's one reason Christians worship on Sunday rather than on Saturday, the Sabbath, because we recognize, above all, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, a miracle which affects every one of us.

On that evening, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. I would say, if I had been living then, I probably would have been inside that room with the doors locked.

Look what they had done to my leader. And I'm one of the leaders. So they're kind of cringing in that room. Waiting. They don't know what to do.

As the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them. How did He do that? Did He go through a wall? I don't think so.

His resurrected body had flesh and bones. Remember in one of the passages, He says, Give me something to eat. And it says, And He ate it before them. This resurrected body had flesh and bones.

[3:44] And just like last week, when the stone was rolled away, I suspect that's when Jesus came out. He didn't blast through rock. Okay?

And so, in this passage, how did He get in there? Well, do you remember when, a little later, when Peter was locked up in prison at night, and the angel came and got him out, and it says, The doors fell open?

Well, I think it's the same with Jesus that night. The doors unlocked, and He walked in. Could they have been surprised? I think so.

He stood among them and said, Peace be with you. Now that's, Shalom Alekom. That's a typical greeting of one Jew to another. So that's not special at this point. He's saying, Hello.

Hello. Shalom. Then what He did, the first thing He did was show them His hands and His side. Okay? So here is a material body, which has been resurrected.

[4:50] It still has the evidence of His being on the cross. There are holes, probably in His wrists. There's a stab wound in His side.

He showed that to them as proof that this is Jesus, not a ghost. Not a ghost who sort of flips through walls. Now it's a resurrection body, and this resurrected body will ascend to heaven in about six weeks, about 40 days.

But meanwhile, He's there with them, and when they see that, it says the disciples were glad. They begin, they're beginning to understand.

They're just beginning to understand. And so Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. I think it's a different meaning this time. Do you remember when a few days before that, He had said, Peace I give you, my own peace I leave you.

Not as the world gives do I give you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

That's that peace. He gives them that peace because He's now got the mission for them.

[6:08] As the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you. That's the evangel. He's going to send them out to present Christ the resurrected one.

But He knows they're kind of puny. If you're puny, raise your hand. Everybody who doesn't raise their hand is a liar. We're all kind of puny. And so, on our own, we're not going to do it.

So, He breathes on them and says, Receive the Holy Spirit. And we've been arguing about that ever since.

What does it mean to receive the Holy Spirit? In this case, Jesus is giving them the first installment of power. If I'm sending you out, I'm going to give you power to do what I have you to do.

And then He says something that's also been confusing for 2,000 years. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

[7:15] Does that mean the church can say to you, you're going to hell? Some would say yes. Someone would say the designated representative of the church, i.e. clergy, can withhold forgiveness from you.

In the more gospel-centered churches, we would say the church has a responsibility to proclaim the gospel clearly so that people may respond.

If they respond, their sins are forgiven. If they refuse to respond, forgiveness is withheld. That's a hard one, isn't it?

So it doesn't mean that I don't like you, I'm not going to forgive you. It has nothing to do with that. Forgiveness is abundance. There's an old saying, it says, refusal to forgive someone is like taking the poison yourself and hoping they'll die.

Okay, you get that? Forgiveness for us is to be abundant. In this case, he's talking about people who respond to the gospel and people who don't respond to the gospel.

[8:34] And it's the responsibility of the church, that means you and me, to proclaim that gospel of forgiveness. So, we go on. Alright.

Thomas was not there. Where was he? It says, Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. Had he gone out to buy food? Had he gone out to check on his family?

Did he go to the bathroom? Where was he? We don't know. And the Holy Spirit obviously doesn't care about whether we know that. But we know that he was not there. So the other disciples told him, obviously when he came back, we've seen the Lord.

And he, like any other red-blooded human being, said, unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, place my finger in the marks of the nails, place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

He's called, what is he called? Thomas? Doubting Thomas. I think he's human being, Thomas. He didn't see Jesus.

[9:41] Now, the sad part for me was he didn't trust his other disciples. He didn't trust the other disciples. Part of living as a family is developing trust with one another.

So if someone were to come in of this group and say, I saw the Lord on the corner part of me wants to say, aha, let's sit down and talk about you.

All right? That's part of what I would want to say. The other part is, I trust each one of you. If you saw the Lord on the corner, I'm looking at the corner. Okay? Well, Thomas was not quite there at that trust level.

So, time goes on. Eight days, in fact. So it's the next Sunday. Sunday. And it's evening and it's the same upper room and the doors are still locked for fear of the Jews.

Thomas is there. Jesus appears. Well, the disciples, except for Thomas, well, now it's gotten to be routine. Jesus shows up even with doors locked because they'd seen it once.

[10 : 52] Thomas is another story altogether. So Jesus walks in and says, Shalom. Then he focuses on Thomas. Thomas, put your finger here.

See my hands? Here. Put your hand, place it in my side. Thomas, Thomas, don't, don't disbelieve. Believe. And Thomas, did Thomas put his hand in the nails, in the nail holes? The Holy Spirit doesn't mention it if he did.

What does Thomas do? Thomas becomes the first apostle to see Jesus as Lord and God. My Lord and my God, he responds.

That's not doubtful. That's faithful. He's faithful, Thomas. And then Jesus says, alright, so, you believe because you've seen me?

[11 : 58] Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. That, brothers and sisters, is us. We are blessed.

We've not seen in a tangible way Jesus with the marks on his hands. yet, we believe. Wonderful gift we've been given.

The gift of belief. And then, John the Apostle writing this ends, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book.

But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name. That's the key to the whole book.

John's gospel has fewer miracles than the other three gospels. He very carefully under the power of the Holy Spirit picked out a few of those and then theologized on each one.

[13 : 04] Why? Because he wants us to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing in him we may have life in his name.

That's the story. And I'm sticking to it. Because it's true. So we move to the next point. What's the theology?

What's that passage mean? Well, basically it means God rolls death stones away so that truth can get out and God unlocks closed doors so that truth can get in.

That's for those of you who want to be kind of abstract. I just gave you a great abstract sentence. What does that mean? I mentioned about the fact that the stone had to be rolled away for Jesus to come out.

Death had to be defeated so that truth could come out. In the same way, God has to unlock the closed doors of our hearts so that Jesus can come in.

[14 : 31] That's the theology. And it's wonderful theology. Okay, so that means, alright, we understand that, we get the theology, but what's it mean for me?

We move to the last point, which is called application. Okay. Where do you need stones moved? the truth has to get out.

Death has to be vanquished in your life. What stones need to be moved out of your way? We'll address that a little bit more.

And the second question in application is, where do you need doors to be unlocked so that the truth can come in? Those are two earthly, heavenly questions that we will spend the rest of our life on this earth answering.

It's not all cut and dried. We have stones in front of us. We have locked doors in front of us. How do we live as Christians in a tough world?

[15 : 48] There was a writer named Scott Peck. And he wrote a number of books. He was a psychiatrist. But his first book, his first three words of the book were, life is difficult.

Is he Captain Obvious or what? In the process, we learn how to live in this life so that we can live forever in that life.

life. I bring an example of my brother Joe. He died about a month ago. He was my older brother. And he spent a lot of his life with the stone rolled tight.

So he couldn't even get to the locked doors. He was stuck in the tomb. I'll brag on him. He's in the National Wrestling Hall of Fame.

and he was the winningest high school wrestling coach in New York State. At his funeral, we had like a thousand people.

[16:59] People loved him. But for the first part of his life, he was what you call a deist. He didn't deny there was a God. I mean, he knew there was a God.

But it was like he used to joke, well, God's up there, I'm down here, and we try not to bother each other. So it was kind of like the old clock where God winds up the clock and then he just lets it run down.

He doesn't rewind. Okay, well, Joe, through the love of his believing wife, day by day and step by step, the stone was moved away.

and he received Jesus Christ. He was able to move from eternal death to eternal life.

And then step by step, he began dealing with locked doors. And that meant his own personality quirks, his own what you might call blind spots.

[18:05] all the while building character in boys. And then toward the last few years, girls, because girls began to wrestle as well in high school.

He was a character developer. At the same time, he was watching doors be unlocked for him to receive Jesus more and more into his life.

That's our story. It's not just my brother Joe's story. That's our story. Stones need to be rolled away so that death becomes life.

That needs to happen for us emotionally, physically, relationally, and spiritually. And I'm telling you, life is difficult.

We, a lot of, a lot of our personality is that we don't want that stone to be rolled away. Okay? Life is not great, but I'm afraid of what it will be like if I change.

[19:09] Same way with doors being locked so they can be opened and Jesus can come in and heal you, Thomas. Heal your unbelief.

Doors that are locked before us are meant to be opened. Once again, emotionally, spiritually, physically, relationally, it's a step-by-step process.

Ruth Graham, the wife of Billy Graham, on her tombstone there in Charlotte, it reads, End of construction, thank you for your patience.

Isn't that a neat thing? End of construction, thank you for your patience. It's a lifetime process, isn't it? of doors unlocking.

We're seeing more and more Jesus coming into our hearts. The bottom line is, God doesn't want us dead. He wants us exuberant, alive.

[20:17] He's come, in fact, that we might have life and have it abundantly. Father God, roll the stone away for each of us.

Father God, unlock the door for us. Welcome Jesus into our hearts. Welcome in this Easter season. Amen.