

The Day has Come - Peace

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Preacher: Rod Imberger

[0 : 00] This is the morning service at Holy Trinity on the 10th of April 2005. The preacher is Rob Imberger.

His sermon is entitled, The Day Has Come, Peace, and is based on John chapter 20, verses 19 to 31.

Jesus' resurrection has done nothing to change their fear into joy. In short, the disciples are still living in the moment of Christ's crucifixion and death.

Jesus knows this. So he comes amongst them, miraculously passing through the locked doors to pronounce peace. Peace be with you.

Peace be with you because now you are comforted. Now I am fulfilling the promises of comfort I told you about. Peace be with you because of my death you can have peace with the Father.

[1 : 07] Peace be with you because your sins are forgiven. Peace be with you because it is finished. Verse 20, After he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Joy has finally come. Confirmation that Jesus is the Son of God is here.

See, others who had been crucified could show the wounds of their hands and their feet. But only Jesus could show the wounds of his side and say, I am the real Jesus Christ.

The same risen Lord who now stood amongst them is the same crucified Nazarene from three days ago. See, the real evidence that Jesus is Saviour is in his wounds.

The disciples know this as they rejoice when they see the Lord. Then in verse 21, Jesus pronounces peace again. Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.

[2 : 11] So we shouldn't think from this that just because Jesus is shortly going to ascend to the Father, that his mission is somehow over, only to be taken up by his disciples. Now his followers are not taking over Christ's mission.

Rather, his mission continues and is effective through their ministry. Well, how can this mission of theirs be effective in their ministry? After he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of many, they are forgiven. If you retain the sins of many, they are retained. As you'd probably expect, much ink has been spilled over what exactly receive the Holy Spirit means here.

Now given that the event of Pentecost in Acts 2 hasn't happened yet. But some have said it's John's version of Pentecost. Some have said that it's a sprinkling rather than a saturating of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is giving the disciples.

And unfortunately, time doesn't allow us to explore the full gamut of opinions. Other than to say that at the very least, we are to understand that the promised advocate, the counsellor, in John 14, the Holy Spirit, will be the means by which Jesus continues his ministry through the lives of his faithful followers.

[3 : 31] The disciples here have been reminded that their ministry is and always will be God's ministry. That any forgiveness or retention of sins has the hand of God behind it.

With this in verse 23, we can assume Jesus departed from their presence, having provided such comfort, such peace, such a definitive answer as to his risen Lord's status.

There's just one problem. Where's Thomas? Where is he? Obviously not with his fellow disciples, which means not with them in the room, which means not with them when Jesus appears, which means not having seen Jesus risen from the dead, which means not seeing his wounds, which means not hearing, peace be with you.

What Thomas missed could fill book upon book. Thomas missed seeing Jesus, not just seeing him physically, but seeing his truth. The truth that the same crucified Nazarene is the risen Lord. The truth that the prophesied Messiah, who would take away the sins of the world, had been fulfilled. The truth that they were right all along. Jesus was. Jesus is God. Thomas was not with them when Jesus came.

[4 : 48] So the other disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see the mark of his nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of his nails, and my hand in his side, I will not believe.

No wonder Thomas doubted. He missed all this, all this great stuff, all the stuff that made the disciples hurry up to him and say, we've seen the Lord. It was much more serious than Brad and Jen in marriage turmoil.

Who could blame him for being a doubting Thomas? Well, we do. We often do. We deride other people's lack of faith by saying, oh, stop being a doubting Thomas.

This is what we're tempted to think. Either, that's poor form, Thomas. You should have had a stronger faith, not a doubting suspicion. Or, alternatively, we're tempted to think, who could blame him for doubting?

If it were me, and I'd miss Jesus' appearance, and all that stuff, I'd doubt too. Well, that's what we're tempted to think anyway. But I actually want to suggest this morning, that regarding Thomas as the doubting disciple, it's actually a little unfair on Thomas.

[6 : 04] In fact, it's not just unfair, it's untrue. There are great lessons to be learned, from this much maligned follower of Jesus. In fact, I want to go so far, as to challenge us, that we should be like Thomas.

And for two reasons. Firstly, we should be like Thomas, because Thomas wouldn't settle, for an illusion. Thomas wasn't prepared, to follow a counterfeit Christ.

Thomas would not settle, for anything less, than believing in the same Jesus of Nazareth, who was put to death on the cross, three days before. Thomas demanded, to be shown real evidence, that Jesus is Lord.

And indeed, Jesus provided such evidence. Thomas, put your finger here, and see my hands. Reach out your hand, and put it in my side.

Do not doubt, but believe. We should demand, no less, than the authentic, one true Jesus Christ, who is Lord and Saviour. And as he did with Thomas, Jesus meets our demand, and provides the evidence, in his wounds.

[7 : 13] See friends, we don't follow, a counterfeit Christ, whose body was touched up, or whose scars, were cosmetically removed. Jesus was raised, in actual bodily form, for our salvation.

If it were not so, why believe? As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation, has been in vain, and your faith, has been in vain.

There's a flip side, to this as well. Just as Thomas, would accept no illusion, but only Christ himself, we too, must be as intolerant, of everything, that does not come, from the truth of Christ himself, that is the Bible.

Scripture is God's words to us, God's words about Jesus. And if we claim, to take God at his word, which this church does, we must not settle, for hearsay, fads, or wishy-washy, half-truths about God.

Friends, I want to challenge us, to doubt everything, we see or hear, about Christ, that does not come, from scripture. And yes, this means knowing, our Bibles, very well indeed, which is essential, for standing firm, in our faith.

[8 : 28] Be like Thomas, don't follow, illusions of Christ, doubt everything, about him, does not come, from Christ himself. The second reason, we should be like Thomas, is because, he recognises Jesus, for who he really is.

Thomas answered Jesus, my Lord, and my God. Thomas confesses, a personal faith, in his Lord, and God, Jesus. Not only, is he believing, that the resurrection, of Jesus, happened, not only, is he believing, that his wounds, attest to it, not only, is he making, the connection, between the, crucified, Nazarene, and the present, Jesus.

Not only, is he believing, all this, but Thomas, is confessing, to nothing less, than believing, in who, Jesus Christ, is, my Lord, and my God.

It's good to know, that Thomas's words, recorded for us, here in John's Gospel, are actually, the Greek equivalents, of Old Testament words, for Lord, and God. The Israelites, called upon Yahweh, and Elohim.

Thomas confesses, Jesus as the same, showing that he really, gets, Jesus' identity. He's the Alpha, and Omega, the only son, begotten of Yahweh, divine majesty, and glorious king.

[9 : 49] Thomas is, in fact, the first disciple, to recognize Jesus, for who he really is. Friends, I think you'll agree, that there's a big difference, between people, who believe, that Jesus said, he was God, and people who believe, that Jesus is God.

Or in other words, there's a big difference, between people, who believe, in the existence of Jesus, and people who believe, in Jesus. They're not one, in the same belief.

Thomas knew it. He knew it wasn't enough, to just believe, that Jesus' resurrection, happened. Recognizing Jesus, for who he is, means more, than recognizing, recognizing Jesus, for what he did.

I know plenty of people, who believe, Jesus did some good things. I also know, some people, who even do good things, for Jesus. But if their heart, is not right, what will Jesus say, to such people, on the last day?

Matthew 7, 23, I never knew you. Go away from me, you evil doers. I never knew you, because you never knew me, the real me, Jesus, Lord and God.

[11 : 08] We should be like Thomas, because the story, doesn't end with Thomas, the doubter. He's believing Thomas, not doubting Thomas. Thomas, the Christian, not the critic.

Thomas, the believer, not the belittler. Thomas, the true follower, of Jesus, not the fraud. Well, just like it's tempting, to dismiss Thomas, as a doubter, it's also rather easy, to think less, of the disciples faith, just because, they saw Jesus, in the flesh.

I mean, anyone would believe, it was all true, if you were standing there, with Jesus, with his gaping wounds. It's not too hard, a leap of faith to make, if you're actually watching, the risen Lord Jesus, speak about himself.

Any fool, could believe that. It's easy to think this, but I suspect, you'll also agree, it's wrong to think this. Jesus catches us, in our whinging, and pronounces a blessing, in verse 29.

Have you believed, because you've seen me? Well, blessed are those, who have not seen, and yet have come to believe. That's us. We have not seen.

[12 : 20] But have believed. Jesus knows this. In ascending to the Father, he's no longer giving disciples, touchable, tangible evidence, of his truth. But the disciples faith, is the same as Thomas's faith, which is the same, as Paul's faith, which is the same, as our faith, and so on.

If we believe, in Jesus as Lord and God, we join with the disciples, in the same confession. You would have heard the phrase, seeing is believing.

Well, for us, as 21st century followers, of Christ, faith, still comes by sight, but, it's by seeing, the truth of scripture, which the Holy Spirit, testifies as true.

Romans 10, 17, faith comes, from what is heard, and what is heard, comes through the word, that is the proclamation, of Christ. believing, is seeing.

The peace Thomas had, the forgiveness of sins, he experienced, the wounds of Christ, in his face, the faith God worked, in his heart, by his spirit, all of it led, to his great acclamation, my Lord and my God.

[13 : 28] We do this today, and yet do not see Jesus, in the flesh. But by believing, the truth in scripture, including these very words, of John's gospel, we see Jesus, true and real, which is in fact, the entire purpose, of John's gospel.

We spent the last, six or so weeks, preaching through John, and for what? To go through the, motions again, with the solemn Easter event, to open Easter eggs, and gorge on chocolate, to pay lip service, to the gospel readings, and our church services, no.

The writer himself, John, minces no words, when it comes to the point, of his account, of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. That these things are written, so that you may come to believe, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, you may have life, in his name.

And it's no surprise, that this purpose, links up, with everything we've already, looked at in this passage. Why did Jesus appear, to his disciples? So that we may come, to believe, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, we may have life, in his name.

Why does Jesus, send out his disciples? So that we may come, to believe, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, we may have life, in his name.

[15 : 00] Why does Thomas, want to see Christ's wounds? So that we may come, to believe, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, we may have life, in his name.

Why does Thomas, pronounce Jesus Christ, as Lord? So that we may, come to believe, that Jesus, is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, we may have life, in his name.

My prayer is, that our lives, will be ones, that testify, that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing, we have life, in his name.

Bringing so many more, to such a belief. Let's pray. Our Lord and Father, we thank you, for sending your Son, Jesus, that he died, and was raised, for us.

We thank you, Lord, that we, have these words, recorded for us, in John's Gospel, and that we know, that their purpose is, that we may believe, your Son, to be the Messiah. The one who would give us, eternal life.

[16 : 12] Pray, Lord God, that when we, think about those, who do not know Christ, that would be our mission too. When we open up your word, that we would want them, to know, that Jesus is the Messiah, your Son, so that they may believe, and have life, in his name.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

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