

The Lord's Peace in Lockdown

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[0 : 0 0] from John chapter 20. John chapter 20, we're going to read from verses 19 down to verse 23, the reading that you see in the screen.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors been locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands on his side, and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. He had said this, he breathed in them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. Amen. May God add his blessing to that reading from his holy word.

During this period of lockdown that, you know, for each one of us is difficult, it's new, it's restraining. You know, we can actually forget that the very first Easter for the disciples of Jesus was also one of lockdown. It was difficult, it was new, it was restraining for them.

[1 : 3 3] There they were in a house in Jerusalem, a small house, houses then were particularly small. Ten disciples gathered in that room, crammed into that house, not wanting to leave it for fear of being recognized by those who had put Jesus to death. They were in fear, fear of those who had put the Lord on trial and put the Lord on the cross. These disciples, they were confused, they were afraid, they were confused in their fragile weakness because they'd assumed that the Lord was dead and remained dead. They were fragile because in their weakness they reckoned that, well, they were on their own and the world was against them. What was to happen to them?

Their Lord and Master now dead with the world opposed to them as they had followed the Lord Jesus. But of course their assumptions were assumptions, their assumptions were based on their own reasoning.

They hadn't taken in the words that Jesus had spoken to them more than once when he said that he'd be killed and on the third day rise again. They hadn't taken in his word. I mean, after all in their three years of being with Jesus, Jesus had never erred at all in any of his words. Jesus had never made one false promise. Jesus had never uttered one wrong word. And so their failure to believe Jesus was really an act of lack of faith in their Lord and Savior. As we've read in the passage, that short passage we read, we see that Jesus will not condemn them for their weakness.

What do we read? We read instead that he shows them grace and he assures them of his love and his forgiveness and in fact sends them on a mission. The mission of the Lord's mission that they will leave their locked house and they will spread the good news of the risen Savior.

Their lockdown wasn't going to be permanent. Their lockdown actually would be an opportunity for them to meet with the risen Jesus and be confirmed in his peace towards them and their peace with him.

[4 : 1 2] Their being in that locked room when Jesus comes to meet them actually shows the Lord's love for them and the Lord's command to them that they will leave that house and they will take with them the message of salvation and the Lord Jesus. And so that lockdown for these disciples in fact was a blessing.

Because in that, in their restraint, they met with Jesus. And if we had read on in John 20, you would see of course that later the next week, the other disciple Thomas, Thomas goes into that house and in that still lockdown, Thomas's faith is strengthened when he meets and sees the Lord Jesus.

I pray that during this time of lockdown, this time that we are finding difficult, that we'll realize in fact that it is a blessing. God has given us this time for a particular reason, in fact many reasons.

But surely included in these reasons is the opportunity that God has given us the more to meet with him. And that your strength is, your faith is strengthened in him.

And I pray that in this time that your faith actually is being energized. So that when the time does come, when this lockdown ends, that you'll go out with the word and with that zeal for the Lord, with your faith strengthened in him.

[5 : 41] And that you'll be a means to spread the good news of salvation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. You are, who know him, a follower of Jesus.

You've been given that word to give to others. And we pray that that word will be sent and that you will be sent with that word. What do we see then in these verses?

What's the, if you like, the main theme in these verses? Well, surely the main theme is contrast. Contrast. Let's look at the contrast.

Let's read again verse 19. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors been locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews.

Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you. I mean, the contrast couldn't have been greater. I mean, outside that house in Jerusalem, outside were those who put Jesus to death.

[6 : 42] Outside were those who had put Jesus in trial. Outside were those who condemned Jesus for blasphemy. And outside were those who had crucified their Lord.

Those who hated him. Those who had reckoned that by putting Jesus on that cross and killing him, that for them, Jesus was finished, his life was finished.

That these so-called blasphemies were put to an end. And that there'd be no more of that carpenter from Nazareth who had so many delusions about himself.

Inside the house, what do we see? We see Jesus. We see Jesus meeting with his disciples. Jesus in person making his first resurrection appearance to his disciples.

And Jesus pronouncing peace upon that group of frightened followers. I mean, for a whole day since the morning of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, for a whole day, these disciples had been in a state of fear.

[7 : 50] They were in that fear because, well, they realized there was much danger outside of that house. They were in fear about what was going to happen to them.

Now, as they reckoned, the Lord and Master was dead. But as we read the transfigured, resurrected Lord Jesus, Jesus walked into that room.

The grave couldn't hold Jesus. Death couldn't hold Jesus. That locked door had no power over the Lord Jesus. Jesus, the Lord of creation, still the Lord of creation.

And Jesus enters that locked room. And we see Jesus standing there. Jesus speaking to the disciples. We see that truly Jesus is present.

He's truly physical in his resurrected body. We see that. He stands. He has posture. He speaks. He has voice, human voice.

[8 : 55] He has that presence. He has that grace to declare to his disciples, peace be with you. These are the disciples who'd sealed themselves in that house.

The fear from those on the outside. Now on the inside, we've been given the blessing of peace from the prince of peace. And so we see that contrast that's revealed there.

The contrast between the fear of the disciples and the peace that Jesus gives. And so they're not to despair.

That their fear will be dispelled by the Lord Jesus, the prince of peace, as he gives his peace to these disciples. In fact, as we noticed when we were reading there, we noticed, in fact, that Jesus utters these words twice to the disciples.

Peace be with you. We might say peace to emphasize what Jesus is bestowing in these disciples. You might ask, well, why these particular words?

[10 : 01] I mean, after all these words, words of common greeting at that time, shalom, peace. But for the disciples, these words certainly would have an immediate resonance for them.

That Jesus, when Jesus had given them his farewell speech before his arrest, Jesus said to them that we read in John 14, 27, Jesus said, Peace I leave with you.

My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled. Neither let them be afraid. So we might say, first of all, anyway, that the peace that Jesus was giving certainly was more than an ordinary greeting.

We might say, first of all, Jesus is showing forgiveness, giving forgiveness to his disciples. These disciples are being restored to Jesus. So we see there was peace between the disciples and Jesus. After all, these disciples had deserted Jesus. When Jesus was arrested, these disciples had all forgotten the words that Jesus had given to them prior to that he would die and be raised again the third day.

[11 : 19] And how Jesus is declaring to his disciples that he's forgiven them for their lack of faith. And he's pronouncing peace upon them to show that they don't need to be frightened.

They don't need to be frightened of those on the outside, those who are the authorities. Because Jesus is the one who conquered death. He was with them.

And he would ensure their safety. Of course, that pronouncement of peace upon the disciples was much, much more than simply a word to, an immediate word to these disciples.

That pronouncement of peace revealed that Jesus had come to bring peace and reconciliation between God and man that Jesus had achieved by his death on the cross.

And so to emphasize that peace with God through his death, Jesus, Jesus does something. As we read in the passage, Jesus shows them his hands and his side.

[12 : 26] In other words, Jesus was saying to them, he's saying, look, look at these nail pierced hands. Look at these hands that were nailed to the cross. Look at what they're saying. Look at what they're pointing to.

They're pointing to that sacrifice that I made for you and for all who are mine. And as Jesus shows them that's his spear pierced side.

He's saying, look, this is the evidence that my life was given for you. These marks in my body, that testimony that by my death, you have life.

Jesus saying to these disciples that I, the risen Lord, I'm showing you all this to comfort you, to reassure you that you have peace with God because of my sacrifice on the cross.

And so we're told there in verse 20 that the disciples and seeing Jesus and what he showed of himself to them, that they were glad when they saw the Lord.

[13 : 25] And in this, well, late afternoon, this coming towards evening again, this day when particularly we remember the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, pray that you will know that peace, that peace of the Lord Jesus.

That you'll know that even now in your various homes. Amidst all the tension and strife in this world, amidst all the real fear that there is, that this pandemic has brought into the lives of so many homes in every country of the world.

And I pray that you will know the Lord's peace surrounding you. And that you will know that you don't need to fear. Because as Jesus says, I am with you.

I pray that will truly make you glad, as the disciples were glad when they saw Jesus. The disciples were truly overjoyed there in that little room, that sealed room in Jerusalem.

I pray that you will be rejoicing, even glad to know that the Lord is with you. You know, we're thinking this morning of the blessing that the Lord's people have of seeing Jesus, of seeing him by faith.

[14 : 43] That seeing Jesus that brings joy to the heart of every believer. Well, as you by faith see the risen Lord Jesus.

As you see him in his word, as you know him in your heart. I pray that that seeing the Lord Jesus will have resulted in your faith being transformed.

In your zeal being transformed. That you'll have that true desire to serve him with all that you are.

And that truly you will have done with lesser things.

And that you'll be willing to be sent by the Lord as the disciples were being sent by the Lord. As we see there in verse 21 through to verse 23.

Again, let's read these words. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had sent this, he breathed in them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 44] If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it's withheld. Jesus had been sent from all eternity.

A saviour. A saviour who'd redeem his people. Jesus had come willingly. He'd come lovingly. He came sacrificially.

He was and is the saint one. But as Jesus' ministry had been accomplished, when he gave himself on the cross and when he cried out, it is finished, it is accomplished.

Jesus bore the sins of his people on the cross. Then Jesus declared, My work is accomplished. But still work to be done by his people.

And so Jesus sends out his disciples to further the work of the proclamation of the gospel. And that work that these disciples were sent on to continue, they would do so and would pass on to others.

[16:50] And that work continually being passed on through generations. And that work of proclaiming the good news will continue until the Lord returns. And just think of who Jesus is sending out with that message.

He's sending out these very disciples who just a few days before had deserted him. Jesus will send out these disciples.

And as we read, of course, in Scripture, Jesus, after his ascension into heaven, he sends his disciples empowered with the Holy Spirit. the Spirit to empower his followers, to speak his word, to do his word, to tell others the glorious gospel of salvation.

And through the Lord Jesus. And Jesus sent his disciples, as he sends you and he sends me, by his authority, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as we're to be sent as children of our Heavenly Father. And we really do need to take this in just for a moment. Because everything that we do as a church, everything we do as a congregation, all that you do as followers of the Lord Jesus, you do, not by our own authority, but you do and we do by the authority of the Savior.

[18:14] And that has to be so reassuring, both at this time and in all times, that every time the word is preached, that word is preached by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

And if it's by his authority, he'll equip you and he'll empower you and he'll enable you to witness for him, to declare in search of riches of the Lord Jesus.

And it's these words that Jesus promised his disciples as Jesus was ascending into heaven. And Jesus said, Acts 1.8, that you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you.

You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. As Christians, we go with the message of salvation.

We go by the authority of Jesus. And we go by and in the power of the Holy Spirit. You see that in verse 22, there's Jesus sitting there.

[19:17] We might see he's anticipating the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In other words, after Jesus ascended to heaven, when the Holy Spirit came upon the church.

And we see how Jesus, there in that room in Jerusalem, he's giving this word of promise. He's breathing on his disciples and he's telling them, receive the Holy Spirit.

And, you know, as Jesus is saying, just as I send you, you'll go out with the gospel after I return to heaven. And you'll go out and you'll go out, not in your own power, but in the power of God the Spirit.

You know, when you do go, when you do proclaim the Lord's word, then you go proclaiming the truth. And when that word is proclaimed, then we have to say by authority of Scripture that men and women will either know the forgiveness of sins when that word is proclaimed in truth, or men and women will remain unforgiven to refuse to believe the word.

So when that word is proclaimed, when you go out with a message of salvation, when you do so empowered by the Holy Spirit, you do so as those who are saying, and strengthen with a strength that ordinarily you don't have, ordinarily that I don't have.

[20:43] And God will use you and he'll gift you the particular gifts to go out with. He'll use even your very personalities, we're all different personalities, but God will use even these personalities that he's given you to witness to the risen Lord Jesus.

The lockdown of these disciples would end and did end, just as the lockdown that we're facing will end. These disciples in time, they left that safe house and ventured into the world and they ventured to spread the good news of Jesus.

Some of these disciples wrote epistles, but all of them witnessed to the Lord Jesus by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. And you, well in due course, you will leave your lockdown once that lockdown's lifted and you'll go forth with the word and you'll go forth as his witnesses and you'll be equipped to do so.

Because we might say this and even in this day and age that God has blessed us with, that even now through the means that God has given us, we're enabled even now to go forth with the word. Because yes, we have a physical lockdown, lockdown, but that lockdown doesn't restrain the word of God. So we thank God that God has given us the means to proclaim his word to a watching

world.

[22 : 19] We give thanks for every opportunity that God has given us through the technology that we're blessed with to proclaim the good news of salvation. So we have that opportunity that the church has given and that even in this time of lockdown, we can go forth and witness to the Lord and of the Lord.

And when that lockdown is lifted, we go forth and witness person to person and witness for our Savior. Just as you testify now that you know the Lord of peace and you'll tell others of that peace that the world knows nothing of.

And so we close this morning again with these thoughts that we see Jesus. We see the risen Jesus who comforted his disciples there in that locked room there in Jerusalem.

We see Jesus who comforted his disciples by his presence and with his word there on that first resurrection Sunday. And the same Lord Jesus who comforted his disciples there in Jerusalem is the same Lord Jesus who comforts you by his word when he speaks to you of his peace upon you both now and always.

And we see Jesus. We see Jesus by faith. We see the risen Lord Jesus even in the glory of heaven. We see by faith there in heaven his earthly body with his nail-pierced hands and feet with his spear-pierced side.

[24 : 10] We see by faith the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We see Jesus the risen Jesus whose resurrection guarantees your resurrection.

and we see Jesus Jesus whom the world won't accept that you know and have received by the faith that you've been gifted.

What if any even online this moment even later when this goes out on YouTube what if you don't yet see Jesus? Well I plead with you turn to his word you've got access to his word turn to it.

See the saviour who was crucified for you. See the saviour who died for you. See the saviour who rose from the dead for you and look on him look on this the sinless saviour who took the sin of the world upon himself and who promises to forgive the sins of all who come to him by faith.

Look to the risen Lord Jesus and come to him and repent of your sins and know that peace is beyond human comprehension.

[25 : 25] Another Easter is soon passing. May I ask you have you given your life to the Lord Jesus the Lord of Easter? The disciples there in that room they gave their lives to Jesus and Jesus chose them to go into all the world with the message of the good news of salvation the Lord Jesus.

The world needs and continues to need to hear that good news and even the very backdrop of a pandemic surely is that opportunity to tell the world that there is a saviour one saviour the saviour who cleanses sin the saviour who's alive tell the world that there's a saviour who gives that eternal hope of salvation so that you truly can say that nothing but nothing can separate you from the love of the Lord Jesus.

I pray then that as we're about to close this particular part of our service I pray that God will bless you and have blessed you by his word and that you truly will know the risen Lord Jesus in your life that you'll know him now and you'll know him always.

Amen. Let's join together again in prayer. Let us pray. Lord we thank you truly do thank you for your word your word of comfort your word of mercy we thank you Lord that truly by your word and by the enabling help of the Holy Spirit we see Jesus and we pray Lord for all who have listened in even this late afternoon and who even but Lord will continue to listen in that they will know the saving grace of the saviour and so Lord be with us Lord we pray be with us even for the remainder of this day be with us Lord in this week that has begun Lord be near us each one bless us we ask provide for us protect us from all danger be near us Lord cast out all fear as we trust in you Lord hear us as we as we continue in worship before you now and we pray these things in Jesus name

Amen Let's just close with the benediction and I may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore Amen thank you thank you