

# An Evening of Peace and Gladness

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let us turn to read God's Word in John's Gospel, John chapter 20. John chapter 20. And we read from the beginning of the chapter, John chapter 20, reading from the beginning.

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth a stone taken away from the sepulchre.

Then she runneth and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together, and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying, yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen cloths lie, and the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

[ 1 : 25 ] Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

Then the disciples went away again unto their own home. But Mary stood without at the sepulchre, weeping. And as she wept, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre, and seeing two angels in white sitting, the one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

They said unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? And when she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself and saith unto him, Rabboni, which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.

[ 2 : 52 ] But go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you.

As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed in them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them. And whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

[ 4 : 02 ]    The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

And after eight days again, his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then said he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands. And reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through his name.

[ 5 : 16 ]    Amen, and may God bless to us this reading of his holy word. We're going to sing again from Psalm number 85. Psalm 85, verses 8 to the end, four stanzas.

Psalm 85 from verse 8. I'll hear what God the Lord will speak. To his folk he'll speak peace. And to his saints, but let them not return to foolishness.

To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. That glory in our land may have her habitation. Truth met with mercy. Righteousness and peace kissed mutually.

Truth springs from earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven high. Yea, what is good the Lord shall give our land shall yield increase. Justice to set us in his steps shall go before his face.

Verses 8 to the end of Psalm 85. I'll hear what God the Lord will speak. I hear what God the Lord will speak.

[ 6 : 30 ]    To his faithfulness, but let them not return to foolishness. To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation.

To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. That glory in the Lord shall be near is his salvation. To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation.

To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation.

To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. To them that fear him, surely near is his salvation. That glory in our land may have her habitation. That glory in our land may have her habitation.

Reflect with mercy, righteousness, and peace, his beauty.

[ 7 : 45 ]    To sleep stronger than righteousness, which died from heaven high.

Give what is good the Lord shall give, and I shall give in peace.

Justice who set us in his stead shall go before his face.

Let's turn again for a little to the chapter we read in John's Gospel, chapter 20.

And we're reading at verse 19, verses 19 and 20. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

[ 9 : 15 ] And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. And in particular, the last verses there, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

Now, you and I know that life is always changing. And it can change just, we use the expression, changing our sixpence. Well, we don't have sixpences today, but we used to use that expression.

It changes so quickly. And we often find that even within the course of the day, we can go from complacency and everything going well, to joy and euphoria, or else plummet into the depths.

And that is very often the nature of life. It changes very, very quickly. And this chapter is a chapter that is full of sudden changes.

Because when you read through it, there are just these sudden moments of change. And at the heart of all that's changed, these sudden moments, of course, we find that Jesus is the one who is there.

[ 10 : 25 ] And it begins, of course, with, it's all really about Jesus beginning to reveal himself after his resurrection from the dead.

And it's very interesting that the first passion that Jesus reveals himself to is Mary Magdalene. Now, I'm sure people would expect that the first passion that Jesus would show himself to when he rose from the dead would possibly be John.

Because John is termed the disciple whom Jesus loved. John was the one who was lying against Jesus at the Last Supper. So you would say to yourself, it would certainly be one of Jesus of the twelve disciples.

And of the twelve, there was an inner three. And you'd say, well, if I was to pick one that Jesus would reveal himself to, surely it would be to John or possibly Peter.

Because Peter, of course, was the one, yes, he had denied Jesus. But he was the one who made great confessions about Jesus. You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.

[ 11 : 36 ] And Jesus, of course, said, flesh and blood hath not revealed that unto you but my Father which is in heaven. But it's to Mary, to Mary Magdalene.

And it's very interesting that Jesus does this. And I think we can see here that Jesus is here honoring the amazing love and devotion and indeed courage of these women who have come early in the morning.

And they came, of course, to anoint the body of Jesus. Of course, they weren't able to anoint the body of Jesus because Jesus had risen. There was only one who actually anointed the body of Jesus.

And she did that before he died. And that was Mary of Bethany. Because remember how she anointed Jesus and although people found fault with it, Jesus said, she has done this in light of my burial.

In other words, Mary of Bethany understood about Jesus in a way that even Peter, James, and John didn't. So Mary of Bethany, we don't find it.

[ 12 : 46 ] It's Mary Magdalene is the main one here. And of course, she was the one who had been delivered wonderfully by Jesus. And her love for Jesus was such that she just couldn't do enough for him.

And so we find that Jesus reveals himself, first of all, to Mary. And when the moment he does so, there is just instant recognition and joy.

Mary's life just turns in an instant. She had been so sad, so she was incredibly sad coming to the grave because her Lord had been put to death and he was buried.

But she was then in a worse state when she found there was no sign of his body because she thought someone has taken the body away. And of course, when she saw this person who she assumed to be the gardener, she asked, If you've taken away the body, please tell me where you have put the body so I can take it.

And then Jesus just said the one word, Mary. That's all he needed to say. And in that one word, instant recognition. And you know, there is always when Jesus meets with us, Jesus changes our life.

[ 14 : 01 ] We will never meet with Jesus and find our life exactly the same again. Mary's life at that moment just turned. It was just one word, but that one word was sufficient to blow away all the darkness and all the doubts and all the fear and all the sadness.

And in its place was to come joy and just sheer delight. And Jesus does that. And if you're here today as a believer, there was a period in your life when you met with Jesus or Jesus met with you.

Because that's what happened when you became a Christian. And it was life changing. Because your life has never, ever been the same again. And it never will, thankfully.

Because the moment that Jesus comes into our life, he changes our lives. He changes everything about us. And so that's what we have here, is this wonderful moment.

And of course we find then that Mary goes and she tells the disciples. And you can almost hear, I would imagine anyway, almost a breathlessness in her voice.

[ 15 : 12 ] Because when Jesus said to her, no, in verse 18, it's Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and he had spoken these things to her.

So you can almost imagine there would have almost been a breathlessness in her at that moment. So, she had delivered the message to the disciples.

But here now we find, this is the very same day, but it's in the evening. And the disciples are there that behind, we're told, locked doors. And the reason, of course, is obvious.

They are there behind locked doors for fear of the Jews. And they'd be saying to themselves, Well, if they've taken away Jesus, who we are noted as his disciples, his followers, and then they decide to come after us, which is very likely, because when they saw the reaction of the crowd and the crowd crying crucify him, they might think to themselves, well, we're next.

If the Jews have done that to Jesus, then there's a fair chance that the leaders will say, Let's get rid now of those who are his immediate followers. So we find them, they're there behind locked doors.

[ 16 : 35 ] And for them, they had gone through the most traumatic weekend imaginable. Only on Thursday, they had had that wonderful evening with Jesus, where they had the last supper, where he had instituted the supper.

And he had spoken, we read about his beautiful, wonderful teaching, in John's Gospel, there through chapters 13, right through, then we have the high priestly prayer, and chapters 14, 15, 16.

So they had the most wonderful time. And then everything changed. Everything that they clung to, everything that they hoped, everything they dreamed, everything that filled their life, it was all taken from them.

And so they were left in utter bewilderment and confusion, because they had been blissfully unaware, really, of what was happening, even though Jesus had told them.

Jesus had told them what was going to happen. But they didn't get it. They didn't grasp it. In fact, it's very interesting. It tells us here, that in verse 8, this is talking of John, then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulcher, and he saw and believed.

- [ 17 : 56 ] For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Jesus had been telling them, of what was going to happen. But they didn't get it. They didn't grasp it. In fact, there was one time when Jesus was telling them what was going to happen.
- Peter rebuked him. And he said, no, no, no, put that away from you. That's not going to happen. Get that thinking away from you. Remember what Jesus had to say to Peter.
- Peter, get thee behind me, Satan. He could see that Satan, the very man who was making the great confession, and he had been speaking by the Spirit of God, is the same man who is a mouthpiece for Satan.
- It just shows what can happen in life. And Jesus is recognizing the temptation coming from the pit, trying to derail him from the mission that he's on.
- But the disciples didn't get it, or they didn't want to think about it. But it's at that moment when John went in, saw the empty tomb, he believed.
- [ 19 : 00 ] It's like it was just one of these moments. And they said, I've got it. I get it. I understand. And you know, sometimes a bit like that with ourselves in our Christian faith.
- Because sometimes we read the Word, and we hear this, and we hear that, but somehow we just don't get it. And then all of a sudden along the way we say, ah, you know what?
- I understand that now. I couldn't get it before, but now I do. And in a sense, we have a lot of these dawning moments in the Christian journey. Well, this was a major dawning moment for John, where he, at that moment, where he actually believed.
- And so, we find the disciples, here they are, they're all gathered together behind locked doors, and then all of a sudden, Jesus appears, and he says to them, peace be unto you.
- That's how he greets them. And it's wonderful how Jesus greets them, because these are really the final words that Jesus addressed them with. in John 14 and John 16, remember he says, my peace I give unto you, not as the world gives, give I unto you.
- [ 20 : 10 ] And again, he says, peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. And again, when he finished speaking in John 16, he says, I've said these things, I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace.
- And of course, we know that at the heart of the whole Christian message is a message of peace, because Jesus, remember, is termed the Prince of Peace.
- Remember when the angels sang at the birth, glory to God in the highest on earth, peace and goodwill to men. So peace is at the very heart of all that Jesus is about, is the Prince of Peace.
- And that's what Jesus brings into our life when he comes into our hearts. You know, maybe, as you go on in your Christian life, maybe we begin to take that peace for granted.
- But if you go back in your life, and you think when you started, when you came to an assurance of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, do you remember the peace that you had?
- [ 21 : 19 ] I remember when I was converted, and somebody asked me, there was so much I didn't understand or couldn't explain. And I remember this person saying, he wasn't a Christian, he said, you become a Christian, what have you got now that you don't have?
- What happened? And I couldn't really explain too much, but I said, well, I'll tell you one thing. I have a peace now that I never, ever had in my life.
- And I used to think I was quite content in life, of course, until the Lord began to work in me. But the peace was something else.
- And that peace, that's part of what it is to be a Christian. Because when Christ comes into our life through the Spirit, it's inevitable, but that peace will come.

It's not that the Lord gives peace that he has certain compartments, and he says, oh, well, this is a compartment where there's peace, and I'll give you some peace here. No, when he is peace, and when he comes into our heart, it is inevitable through the Spirit that this is what is part, this is him, his peace.

- [ 22 : 29 ] So that doesn't mean that our lives are never troubled again. Of course they are. And maybe today, some of you may have very troubled lives as Christians. But underneath it all, there is still an underlying peace that cannot be taken away.

And this, of course, is what the Lord Jesus has given to us. And, of course, it's what he wants us to demonstrate in life. And he wants us to be ambassadors of peace and to be peacemakers one with another.

Blessed are the peacemakers. That's what we're told. And that's what the church should be about, is seeking to promote peace at all times. But as we say, the disciples, of course, they're euphoric.

And it tells us here in verse 20, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord? You know, sometimes the Bible really underplays situations.

Because I don't think that it was just that they were kind of glad. You know, sometimes we use the thing and we say, well, I'm glad about that. I think there would have been, the joy that would have been just in their heart would have been, there would have been a joyous excitement at that particular moment.

- [ 23 : 47 ] So why would, excuse me, why were the disciples so glad? Well, I think the first obvious thing is that they thought they had lost him.

And there isn't anything that you could imagine could be anything worse than the possibility, thankfully it can't happen, of losing the Lord Jesus Christ.

You put yourself in the shoes of the disciples. And we have the knowledge of light. We live with all biblical light now. And the Lord has shown us so much that we're able to understand.

They didn't have all that light then. But here are these men and they were in the presence of Jesus and they loved Jesus. And they had left, Matthew had left his tack as being a publican and Peter and James and John, they'd left their fishing and they'd gone.

They'd all left whatever they were doing and they'd gone and they'd committed their all to Jesus. And they believed that Jesus was going to herald in this new time and it was going to be the, he was going to bring in and all the people would turn to him.

- [ 24 : 52 ] They believed so much. And then all of a sudden, everything they believed has come crashing down. And it must have been a terrible moment for them.

Because if you and I tried to put ourselves into the thought and thankfully it cannot happen. Imagine if you woke up one day and you were no longer a Christian and a message came to you from heaven and said, you know what?

I've given up on you. You're no longer one of mine. You've sinned so much in my presence that I've turned my back upon you. You're on your own and there will be no chance of ever getting back with me.

Can you imagine how you would feel? There couldn't be anything worse for a Christian than that. Because our life is lived in Christ. He has become the very pulse of our life.

He is the one who gives that energy to our life. A spiritual vitality. Now we don't always live vibrant, spiritual, full Christian life, sadly.

- [ 26 : 03 ] But even if the flame goes down low, still a little flicker there. It never goes out. But you can't imagine life without having the Lord Jesus once you're a Christian.

Well, this is kind of where the disciples must have just plummeted to the depths. But here is Jesus and he has returned to them.

And, you know, one of the things that I love when Jesus comes back with them is that he doesn't, his first words were, peace.

Because you put yourself in the disciples' shoes and instantly Jesus appears. Yes, there's euphoric joy, but I think there'd be another emotion as well.

I think there'd be an emotion of guilt. Because the last thing that these disciples had really done for Jesus when he needed them most, it tells us they all forsook him and fled.

[ 27 : 16 ] They ran away. They weren't to be found when he needed them. And Peter denied him with oaths and curses. So I would imagine, and I would imagine even with Peter, Peter, one moment, oh, it's wonderful, and then he'd be thinking, the last, remember the last thing?

Jesus turned and looked at Peter. And he went out and he wept bitterly. He hadn't seen Jesus since. That was the last he saw Jesus. So there's bound to be guilt in the heart of Peter.

There'd be guilt in the disciples for running away. Although John returned and John was at the foot of the cross when Jesus was hanging there. But this is the beauty of Jesus.

He doesn't condemn them. In fact, he doesn't even raise the point. He doesn't say to them, oh, well, I give you my peace, but you know this, when I needed you most, where did you go?

You let me down. No. Doesn't say that. Not a word. God. And it's here we see the wonderful love and mercy and the forgiveness of Jesus.

[ 28 : 30 ] That he's not holding these grudges. He's not holding, he doesn't have any grudges against the disciples. Of course, he dealt with Peter in a very loving way later on, but not a word at this point.

So the disciples, of course, they're glad because they have found the one they thought they'd lost. again are glad because at this moment they're seeing the fulfillment of all the promises.

Because Jesus had given great promises. He'd given promises of the kingdom. Of how he was bringing in the kingdom. And they saw these wonderful promises.

But you know the cross, it seemed to them that all these promises died on the cross. The cross seemed to make a lie of the promises.

Oh no, it didn't. The promises were still all going to be fulfilled. And you know, that might be true in your experience today as well. Because you might be clinging to God's promises or a particular promise in your life.

[ 29 : 36 ] And you know, right now it looks like that promise will never be fulfilled. It would look like everything is going in fact the very opposite direction. Well, let us remember that God's providence can change in a moment.

It won't change as far as God is concerned. But it will always ultimately tie in with his promise. Even although for years it may appear to be going in the different direction.

Like for Joseph's life was like that. He had had promises where he saw his father and his brothers bowing down before him. He spent years in the dungeons of Egypt before these promises were actually fulfilled.

David was promised the kingdom. For years he was hounded and hunted down. He was public enemy number one. There was a price on his head.

Anybody who killed him was going to get the favor of the king. Years running, just barely escaping with his life. And there were many days when David said surely one day I will die by the hand of Saul.

[ 30 : 49 ] That's when his faith sunk. Other days he hung on to the promises. But in due time they were all fulfilled completely and they will be in your experience as well.

So this was another cause why the disciples were filled with joy. And the last thing that we'd say is the disciples were glad because they saw the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of darkness.

Jesus had said this is your hour and the power of darkness when all the very forces of hell were unleashed against him.

This was an awful moment in the world where the restraints God's restraints were pulled back and hell was doing its worst against Christ.

and it would appear that the kingdom of darkness had won but it hadn't. In fact what appeared its triumph was actually its ultimate ruination because through the death of Christ Christ has struck the full final fatal blow to the kingdom of darkness.

[ 32 : 02 ] darkness. And that's a wonderful thing for you and for me. We live in a world where we see the powers of darkness at work. And you know there are times it's depressing and it's very easy to feel an element of despair at times as we look around.

We're human, can't help that. But always remember that the kingdom of God will prevail. At the end of the day there is only going to be one victor and all who are in Christ will be victorious in Christ and with Christ and will rule and will reign with Christ forever and ever.

That's a promise that the Lord has given to us. It's an amazing prospect. So no wonder the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

You and I today if you love the Lord you also are able to say you know I'm glad I'm glad that I have seen the Lord. I want to see the Lord more but I'm glad I've seen him because I am on the side of an ultimate victory.

If you haven't yet come to know the Lord Jesus you can even today because Jesus is here in his presence and you ask him seriously ask him Lord please come into my heart dispel the darkness that's there because I haven't quite seen you yet.

[ 33 : 28 ] I know about you and I deep down I do want you but I'm holding back well Lord come over these things that are holding me back so that I might come in and be one with you and I assure you from God's word that that darkness will go and joy you will be glad just like these disciples were.

Let us pray. O Lord O God we give thanks for the time together and reflecting upon your word. We give thanks Lord that you encourage your people and that you come back again and again and reveal yourself to us sometimes when we're so down sometimes even when we feel we've lost everything.

O Lord be with us take us to our home safely do us good for giving us our sin in Jesus name. Amen.