

How Our Lord Loves To Minister On His Day

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[0 : 00] Our scripture reading for today is John 20, beginning at verse 19 until the end of the chapter. As I read it here and you follow along, remember this is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, and sufficient word.

It's God's very own word for you, for me, his people. After I'm done reading this, I'll say, this is the word of the Lord. And if Jesus is your Lord, you say, thanks be to God as we receive his word. John 20, starting at verse 19. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being 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 and his side. Then 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. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

[1 : 14] If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. Verse 24. Now Thomas, one of the 12, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, we have seen the Lord. But he said to them, unless I see his hands and the mark of his nails and the place in place, my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, when his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you.

Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands and put your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

[2 : 28] Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his 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 by believing you may have life in his name.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Would you pray with me? Father, we confess, as we just read in Psalm 29, the word of the Lord is powerful.

The voice of the Lord is full of majesty. So I ask my gracious master and my God, assist me to proclaim.

Help us as a congregation to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of thy name, that many more may know your peace and have life in Jesus Christ, we pray.

[3 : 48] Amen. Well, you've likely been to a birthday party in the last few months, at least.

I invite you to imagine with me what that anticipation would be like if you arrive at the party, but you're waiting for the person you're celebrating. You see the delicious food.

It's all laid out perfectly, so beautifully. The drinks are ready and they're poured. But can you imagine how disappointing it would be if the person you all came together to celebrate never showed up?

After a while, it would just feel awkward. That delicious banquet feast starts to go cold. We all just have no reason to really be here at all.

We should go home in disappointment. In John 20, the living Jesus Christ shows up.

[4 : 50] And he exceeds the expectations of his gathered people. So, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer as I've prepared for today has been to walk through this passage and to show you how our Lord loves to minister to you, his people, on his day.

I hope to persuade you that Jesus never disappoints. He set a pattern in human history that has continued every Lord's Day since his resurrection.

And he loves to minister. To minister means to attend, to serve. It means to apply the power of an office to real needs.

Jesus loves to do that. Hebrews 8, 2 says that Christ is a minister of the heavenly sanctuary. And he comes to minister to his people every single Lord's Day.

Would you walk through this passage with me? The first reason I think this is true is this. Christ loves to stand in the midst of his disciples to give them his peace on the Lord's Day.

[6 : 12] I emphasize that it's on the Lord's Day because I think that's what John emphasizes. Notice how the very beginning of chapter 20 begins. Do you see the first few words? Chapter 20, verse 1.

On the first day of the week. That's the eighth day. That's Sunday morning. While it was still dark, before the sun comes up, the grave is empty, and the gardener turns Mary to himself.

Now what all happened on this same day? This might be new. You might not be aware all of these stories happened on this one first Lord's Day. Matthew 28 says that they departed quickly from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.

This is Mary and the other women. to bring word to the disciples. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them saying, All hail.

Now while this is happening, Luke 24 tells us that the world was seeking to cover up the living Jesus on the Lord's Day. Luke 24 says that as the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened.

[7 : 26] These are the guards that were guarding the tomb when Jesus resurrected. Luke 24, 13, we're told that same day. It's the first Lord's Day.

The disciples were going to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. In Luke 24, verse 27, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus, the resurrected Lord, explained to these disciples as they walked on this road what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.

On his resurrection day, he's opening up God's word and ministering to God's people. They reported in verse 31 of Luke 24, our hearts burned within us as he talked with us on the road and opened the scriptures to us.

And then their eyes were opened and they recognized him. And that's in the passive verb. Their eyes were opened. Because the Lord was ministering his word to them.

And they recognized Jesus is the son of God. The world loves to cover up Jesus Christ on his day.

[8 : 40] But Jesus causes his disciples to discover him. He reveals himself to his people on his day. Now we come to our sermon text.

Look at verse 19. So this is John chapter 20, verse 19. The same day. John is emphasizing the day of the week.

And in case you're confused, he's referring back to verse 1. And in case we're going to miss this and think of something different, he says, being the first day of the week. He's repeating himself. The first Lord's Day, Jesus came and stood in the midst of his disciples that evening and said to them, peace be unto you. He gives them shalom.

Peace with God. Given by the Passover lamb of God. Peace is a state of reconciliation between parties that were at war.

[9 : 41] It's harmony. It's heavenly rest. It's happiness. And Jesus says to his disciples who are gathered in his name on the Lord's Day, peace be unto you.

O. Palmer Robertson pointed out, by these appearances, on the first day of the week, the resurrected Lord set a pattern for meeting with his disciples. He's the one setting this pattern to meet with his disciples.

They began expecting to meet with him on the day of his resurrection, which is the first day of the week. It's our Sunday. Matthew 18, 20.

Jesus had promised them this. He says, where two or three are gathered together in my name. I am there among them. And his presence among his people is the only source of peace.

Do you need more peace in your life? Amen. There's no peace without the presence of Jesus Christ in your life and in mine.

[10 : 53] But it was the Passover lamb of God who secured shalom. And he alone can give shalom. We need more peace in every relationship.

Maybe you're feeling this or seeing it in those you love. More peace between husband and wife. Between parent and child. Between siblings. There's no peace unless we were in the presence of Jesus Christ.

We look at him. We receive from him. Then we look at one another and we declare, worthy is the lamb.

Jesus had promised all his disciples in John 14. He said, do not let your heart be troubled or fearful. I am with you.

My peace I give you. Because Christ loves to stand in the midst of his disciples to give them peace. [11:58] And especially on the Lord's day. The second argument I want to bring before you is that our Lord Jesus Christ loves to replace fear with gladness.

On the Lord's day, Jesus Christ loves to replace fear with gladness. Did you notice in verse 19 that the disciples had assembled with the doors shut?

And that phrase signifies the doors were locked, barred, and bolted. And we're given the reason for this. It's for fear of the Jews. Maybe you've been hiding somewhere.

Maybe it's even just a game of hide and seek. But there are certain sounds that make you get that butterflies in your stomach. I can only imagine if you're with those disciples, the sound of a lot of people walking on the street or soldiers, maybe the temple guard in your imagination, marching again with those torches and lanterns.

The sound of a knock would be terrifying. Make your skin curdle. See, the authorities had already killed their leader, Jesus. It would be nothing for them to kill his followers next.

[13:10] On top of that, there were rumors spreading that very day that they had stolen the body. God loves to turn those fears into gladness.

He transforms it. I think it's helpful for you and for me today to just put that before the Lord. What is a fear that you have and that I have? And pray, Lord, would you please turn this exact fear into your gladness?

For me, there's a fear of criticism, a fear of rejection, a fear of being mocked, a fear of losing everything that I've come to expect and that I'm comfortable with.

I need God to transform that fear into his gladness. In verse 20, Jesus stood in their midst and he said, God, peace. And then he showed them his hands and his side.

He's showing them it's the same person. It's the same body. That's now resurrected and glorified. It's not a ghost.

[14:18] It's the living man being truly God glorified, but with his scars as part of his glory.

He didn't have to do this, you know. We believe there will be no weeping. All of your physical ailments that you have now, we believe those won't be in your glorified body in heaven.

Those that are born disabled, they'll be glorified. But Jesus keeps his scars in heaven. So in heaven, we will look at Jesus.

And by simply looking at him, we'll remember he was mocked. He was pierced. But it won't cause us weeping of conviction because we will be reminded of the glorious gospel.

It will cause us to rejoice and to be full of gladness in seeing him. So there will be Jesus Christ in the center of heaven.

[15:28] The angels and all those he ransomed gathering around him. And in heaven. His open side, the holes in his hands and his feet.

So that all can behold the lamb of God who now rules from his throne and declare worthy is the lamb. We read in verse 20.

Then, after seeing Jesus glorified with his scars, the disciples were glad. They were only glad after they saw the Lord.

To be glad means to be pleased, to be affected with pleasure. That happened to them when they saw the Lord. Psalm 16:11 says, You, God, have revealed the paths of life for me and you fill me with gladness in your presence.

They're getting to experience that now like never before. In verse 21, then Jesus said again, Peace be unto you. This word peace, John Gill commented, It's expressive of all prosperity in soul and body, inward and outward, spiritual and temporal.

[16:53] He wants wholeness, complete shalom for you. Jesus says, As my father has sent me, even so send I you.

In Romans 8:15, Paul writes to the church, You did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the spirit of adoption.

1 John 4:18 says, There is no fear in love because fear involves punishment. And if you fear, then you are not complete in love. But perfect love drives out fear.

Do you see why the gladness comes after seeing his wounds? Perfect love. There's no fear of punishment. You see it in the person, in the work of Christ.

And as you behold his work, you're filled with gladness, which expels and drives out all fear. We're getting ahead in the story of redemption.

[17:55] But in Acts 2, verse 14, Peter, Peter, the one who had denied Jesus, stood up with the disciples and he raised his voice and he preached as one sent by the Lion Lamb of heaven.

Because Peter knew this was true from experience. Jesus Christ took my punishment. Jesus faced my worst fears.

And now Peter was full of gladness and of the Holy Spirit. And there was no more fear of man. God had replaced his fear with gladness from heaven.

Do you want God to do that for you today? Our Lord Jesus Christ, he loves to minister to you. He loves to take that fear that you feel right now, that felt this week, and replace it with his gladness. He promised he would do this in John 14. Do not let your heart be troubled or fearful. I am with you. My peace I give to you.

[19:01] The third insight here is that Christ loves to fill a glad heart with his Holy Spirit for ministry.

First, he makes you glad. Then he raises you up to minister. First, he heals you. Then his Holy Spirit empowers you to declare the gospel, just like he did with Peter.

So on the Lord's day, Christ loves to fill a glad heart with his Holy Spirit for ministry. Verse 22, we read that next Jesus breathed on the disciples and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

In Zechariah 12, verse 10, God had already foretold this. He said, I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look at me whom they have pierced.

Fulfilled beautifully now in Jesus Christ and his apostles. God, the Holy Spirit, is breathed out, spirates from. He's exhaled from, breathed out by the Father and the Son.

[20:16] In John 3, Jesus had said, the wind blows wherever it pleases, and unless you are born of the Spirit as it blows, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Ephesians 3, 19, we read that we know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, and that's how we may be filled.

With all the fullness of God. Ephesians 5, 18, he tells the church, be filled with the Spirit. Well, this is fulfilled, what Christ is giving them as a prophetic act.

It pours out on them in Acts 2, verse 4, at Pentecost. You know the story in Acts 2 as they're gathered.

And they're gathered, by the way, it's another Lord's Day. It's the eighth day. Because Pentecost, the number five penta, it's 50, the number 50.

Where do we get that from? It's seven Sabbaths after the Sabbath of the Passover. So there's the Sabbath of the Passover, times seven, the number of completion, seven times seven, 49.

[21:21] But that would be the Sabbath, the Saturday. And the Pentecost is the day after, the 50th day. That the Spirit of God is poured out on all of the disciples. They're filled with the Spirit.

And from there, they overflow into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, into the ends of the earth.

Whosoever sins, you remit, Jesus says.

They are remitted unto them. The original language is a binding and loosing. And whosoever sins, you retain. They're retained. Now, this has been interpreted wrongly in church history.

A very obvious example is the Roman Catholic Church had said that the Pope, and whatever means he ordains, is the only way that sins can be forgiven. And so one of Martin Luther's 95 theses in the Reformation, this is theses number six.

Luther asserted the Pope cannot remit guilt, except by declaring and showing that it has been remitted by God. So this is something very important that the church in the Reformation had to clear up.

[22:27] The power of remitting or binding sins is in the power of declaring God's Word. And Jesus is the one who ministers. There's no mediator between God and man. It's the declaration of the Word of God.

And it's God who binds or looses your sins as His Word is faithfully declared. Now, this is good news because Jesus is saying, what you read in the New Testament, given by my apostles, this is

legal language.

Your standing before God is bound and secured by what I have revealed through my apostles in the New Covenant. Specifically, if a judge finds you either innocent or guilty and makes his verdict, it stands.

And the New Testament unfolds for us this glorious truth, that Jesus Christ has been appointed judge by the Father. Jesus Christ, the very one who saves you, is your judge.

Jesus said in John 8, 36, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. So when Satan accuses you, Christian, Satan says you are still bound by the consequences of your own sin to be condemned.

[23 : 44] Satan does not have the power to change the judge's verdict. If Jesus has declared you are justified, Satan has no power over your legal standing before God.

The glorious truth of the gospel is that the judge is the Lamb. The Lamb of God, the only one who is worthy.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood. So remember this phrase by Thomas Adams, one of the Puritan ministers.

He wrote, Oh, Christian, your sins are so remitted as if they had never been committed. Your sins are so remitted as if they were never committed.

That's what Jesus declares. I have fully paid, fully paid for all your sins with my precious blood. Who is there to condemn you?

[24 : 48] Worthy is the Lamb. Do not let your heart be troubled. I am with you. And my peace I give you. We just sang of this.

Jesus, the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease. Tis music in the sinner's ears. Tis life and health and peace.

Amen. Jesus Christ loves to fill a glad heart with his Holy Spirit for ministry. Number four, Christ loves to personally apply his gracious work to every single believer.

On the Lord's day, Christ himself, who ministers among his people, he loves to apply his own gracious work to every single believer. That's you and me personally.

We read in verse 24, Thomas, which in Hebrew means twin, was also called Didymus, which means twin in Greek, was not with them when Jesus came.

[25 : 55] This is that first Lord's day. Verse 25, the other disciples therefore said unto him, we have seen the Lord. See, the Lord has made Christ's resurrection undeniable.

In 1 Corinthians 15, we read that he appeared to over 500 eyewitnesses. In Matthew 27, verses 52 and 53, we read that bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.

And they came out of the tombs after Jesus's resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people. God made it undeniable. But Thomas said to them, unless I see 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 that's because you and I cannot believe unless God regenerates us. That's us too. I would not believe unless God regenerates me, opens my eyes, and causes me to be born again and behold Jesus Christ as my Savior.

See, Jesus had already accomplished Thomas's salvation. He had already died, was buried, and resurrected. And Thomas would believe, we know that.

[27 : 13] But in this moment, Thomas's salvation had been accomplished, but not yet applied to him. In Jesus Christ, he had finished his work, and now he loves to personally apply it to Thomas and to you.

In verse 26, we read, after eight days. Now this is the Hebrew way of counting days inclusively. It's just like we have, you know, the Lord died on Good Friday, we celebrate Sunday morning.

In our not inclusive way of counting, that would be two days. But the Jewish way, you count the day you're on, plus the Sabbath, the Saturday, and then the Lord's Day. So that's, we call that three days. So this inclusive way of counting, staying consistent, eight days would be the next Sunday, the next Lord's Day.

His disciples were within doors, and Thomas now was with them. Robertson again commented, God's new covenant people were making it a habit to assemble together on the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection.

We read, then came Jesus. See, Jesus honored these assemblies, Robertson wrote, by appearing to the disciples at this time and encouraged their faith in him as the resurrected Lord.

[28 : 27] And he appeared again through shut doors, we read, and he came and he stood in their midst and he said, peace be unto you. We need to learn.

Christ loves to minister among his gathered people on the day of his resurrection that we celebrate every week. So we need to attend the gatherings of God's disciples.

We need to do that. The flesh will fight against it. The world will try to distract it and cover him up. We need to attend the gatherings of God's people. And as we attend, we need to expect him to minister among us because he loves to do that.

John Gill pointed out, here in these gatherings of God's disciples on the Lord's Day, God comes and blesses his people. Jesus grants his presence. The graces of the Spirit are increased and drawn forth into exercise.

Souls that have lost sight of Christ find him. Disconsolate ones are comforted and weak ones are strengthened. The hungry souls are fed. So assemble with God's people.

[29 : 32] Do not stop meeting together. In verse 27, we read Jesus speaking directly to Thomas, personally applying his finished work.

He says, Thomas, reach in your finger. Behold my hands. Reach in your hand. Push it into my side. Be not faithless, but believing. In his unregenerate state, Thomas wanted physical proof that Jesus had in fact died and the same man who was buried now truly rose to life.

Jesus gives Thomas that physical proof and much more. He gives him a spiritual proof that he's alive by regenerating him, by applying his finished work to Thomas personally.

Jesus loves to apply his finished work to you personally, to me personally. In a spiritual sense, we need to receive this and touch him for ourselves.

Spurgeon said, we need to realize how it was our sin that we drove inside of him like those very nails in his hands and his feet. We lifted him up on the cross of our transgressions.

[30 : 45] Then we pierced his heart through with the spear of our unbelief. And when Jesus applies his accomplished work, look at the effect this has in verse 28.

Thomas answers, saying to Jesus, it's a personal encounter, my Lord and my God. Have you seen that it was your sins that pierced Jesus?

If so, the only response is for you to respond to Jesus and say, my Lord, my God. And Jesus will say back to you in his own words from John 14, do not let your heart be troubled or fearful anymore. I am with you and my peace I give to you. And we sing back to him with all of those he saved.

Worthy is the land. The fifth and final truth I want to put in front of you is that Christ loves to bless with spiritual life everyone who receives him by faith.

[31 : 59] On the Lord's Day, Christ loves to bless you with spiritual life and that's everyone whoever has an ear to hear and an eye to see him in his glory.

He wants to bless you by receiving him in faith. In verse 29, Jesus said to him, Thomas, I just love how personal Jesus is.

He calls him twin. Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet they have believed.

Pete. Psalm 32, one says, blessed are you if your transgression is forgiven and if your sin is covered. So make that personal.

We've got some fun nicknames in our congregation. Blessed are you, Nene. Blessed are you, Lili. Blessed are you, Raya. Blessed are you, Ezzie, if your transgression is forgiven, if your sin is covered.

[33 : 00] Jesus is that personal. He loves to bless you and give you life if you receive him by faith. In verse 30, we read that many other sins Jesus truly did in the presence of his disciples that 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 by believing, you might have life through his name. This comes true as the church goes forth.

In Acts 20, verse 7, we're told that in Troas, a city in Greece, Paul and Luke had assembled with the people of God to break bread, and Paul preached the word of God on the first day of the week.

Thomas Watson shows how this pattern continues. How is it in time that the triune God gives life in the name of Jesus? He pointed out first, God has eternally decreed each believer's salvation.

1 Corinthians 2, 7, God decreed our glory with Jesus Christ before the ages. 2 Corinthians 2, God accomplishes in history the salvation of each believer.

[34 : 09] In John 17, 4, Jesus says, I have glorified you, Father, on earth because I accomplished the work that you gave me to do. 3 Corinthians 3, and third, God applies the salvation he accomplished for each believer through the effectual calling and regeneration of the Holy Spirit.

You know that this is yours when you personally lay hold of the forgiveness of sins of Jesus Christ's righteousness as your own. Romans 5.5 says that God poured his love into your heart by the Holy Spirit.

He applies it to you. Believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. And by believing, you have life through his name. 1 John 5.11 says that God gave us eternal life and this is life in his Son.

So that ancient prophecy of Zechariah 12.10, that's for you today. That's for the church. The spirit of grace put into the hearts of those who see him whom you have pierced.

What was the effect of this on Thomas? Well, church history has it that Thomas then started walking and he became a missionary in Syria.

[35 : 33] And the church was established there and historians can show you this is a church that traces all the way back to the first century. And then the story continues that he made it all the way to the border with China.

And there's a city with a Christian church in China that dates back to that first century as well.

Thomas became a missionary, one that God would send out to the corners of the world so that they too would say, My Lord and my God, worthy is the lamb.

No longer do our hearts need to be troubled or fearful. We are gathered in the name of Jesus. And he says, I am with you and my peace I give you.

Beloved congregation of Jesus, every Lord's Day we gather here. We gather to honor Christ, not as a guest, but as our host, as our minister.

This is his spiritual feast. We don't hide. We don't need to have fear. Our doors are open.

Sometimes we even go to the open air.

[36 : 45] And every time with his help, we expect him. We expect him to minister. It's his presence with us. That's our only reason to gather.

Amen. He never disappoints us. He always exceeds expectations. If Jesus didn't show up, neither should we. But we can trust that Jesus loves to minister on his day.

He is with his church. And he loves to give you and me his peace. Would you thank him with me?

Oh, Lord, we testify the truth from the hymn we sang.

You speak. And as he speaks, the power of reigning sin sets the prisoner free. His blood can make the foulest clean.

His blood availed for me. He speaks and listening to his voice, new life the dead receive. The mournful, broken hearts rejoice.

[37 : 58] The humble poor believe. Amen. Hallowed be your name, O triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Thank you for electing each believer to belong to you. Thank you for accomplishing the justification for each believer. Thank you for calling each converted sinner to belong to you by your living, active word and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for regenerating and washing each believer. O Holy Spirit, thank you for sanctifying those that you have justified. And may your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We ask this in the name of our precious Savior, Jesus Christ, the only one who is worthy. Our worthy lamb. Amen. Amen. Let's take a moment to respond to the gospel you've heard.

Amen.