

John 20

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[0 : 00] We thank you for the mystery of the gospel which is Christ in us the hope of glory.! We thank you that you're here with us today as we gather in your name and we thank you Holy Spirit! for the power of your presence in our lives. Would you now direct us according to your word and Lord I just hold this time as very sacred as Pastor Dave normally brings the word here and the elders.

This is very special so I submit to them in accordance with your will and pray that you would bless their work and the work of this church for the glory of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen. Amen. Could I have that water Ryan? That way you have that up here. The church that impacts the world is what we want to look at today and in John chapter 20 we have that story and I believe that this is a church that already is impacting the world so let's just go into greater levels of impact. But in order to see some of the impact that you've done I'd like to go to the next slide. And that's a map of India and you can see right at the very northern part of India is Nepal. And I just want to tell you that some of you have prayed for the work that God has opened for me around the world on three continents and I only say that to you to say this is one place where you're impacting the world. You're already impacting New London but believe it or not when some of you have prayed you've impacted Nepal. Nepal is less than one percent Christian so almost everyone you meet is bound in some kind of darkness and yet God is doing a great work there. If I could show the next slide please. Again as you've prayed this is the worship center. No chairs like here. Nobody sits in chairs in India and Nepal at least unless you're a foreigner and I like a chair because when I sit like that for 30 seconds my legs fall asleep and I can't even stand. But this is a group of people who have assembled to reach their country 99 percent without Christ. These are leaders that we worked with and I thank some of you as you prayed. Now if you could show the next slide. When we worship the Lord in Nepal that lower slide again just great life and spirit. But I have that bird there because that bird for three days sat at that window just as if he wanted to look in. What is actually going on in there? And it reminded me of another scripture where God said through Peter that even angels long to look on the church as they do the work. Next slide please. And this is the next one please. There it is. And this is the kind of work we do training leaders. Next one please. So the church that impacts the world. Have you ever heard the words prepare for impact? Yeah I've heard those words. I do a lot of flying many miles many years and and if you hear those words on an airplane prepare for impact. You know that it's going to be quite difficult.

[3 : 44] I have never heard that on a plane. I pray that I never hear that on a plane. But I do want to tell you one time when my wife and I heard that. We went up in a hot air balloon. And when we're up in a hot air balloon if you've ever been in one there are no wheels on the on the gondola. There's no way to land that thing except impact. Now when we took off we're going boy this is great. Look at us floating in the sky.

But then you begin to realize how are we going to come down? How are we getting down from here? And so they they begin lowering and we we come in and they tell you how to raise your knees and lean back because you're going to hit. When you hit it's going to push the basket up and then you're going to be sitting up right then. But they tell us right before we get to the ground prepare for impact. And it's like oh my I hope we walk away from this. And I wonder if sometimes some of us are going through life just thinking it's a prepare for impact kind of experience. But God enters into all of our situations and he enters in and he says to us prepare for impact and he tells the church prepare for impact but not in a defensive manner. Not in a defender a manner that says oh no something horrible is about to happen. But prepare to impact. Prepare for impacting the world.

Beginning in New London and all the way to the uttermost part of the earth. Prepare prepare for impact. So what we find in this passage that we just read we find Jesus preparing his church for impact for impact so that it would be a church that impacts the world. He is preparing them to impact the world. So everything that we look at today is behind a locked door. You got to know that. No one leaves the room. No one ventures out. So everything that Jesus is doing in this passage on Easter Sunday night is preparing the church for impact. Preparing believers to impact the world. So what does he do to prepare us? Well he actually has some gifts for us. He doesn't ask us to do anything initially.

[6 : 21] He doesn't ask us for anything. He simply says receive what I have to give you. Receive. The only way that God's impact can work through us is when he first does something to us or in us.

And so what Jesus is doing is preparing his church for impact. Why? Because he wants a church that impacts the world. So let's look at this first one. Here's the first gift that Jesus gives.

What we read in John chapter 20 is that Jesus says peace be to you. And some people might say wasn't that the common greeting of the day? Yes it was. Shalom. If you entered a room, shalom. If you exited a room and you were speaking to someone you might say shalom. But Jesus is using this common greeting and giving an uncommon blessing. And it's very important that we understand that. Because the foundation of impact, something he wants to do in us, is to bring his peace. You know a lot of people are going through the world with a lot of nervous energy. A lot of Christians are. I gotta do, do, do. I gotta stay busy. I gotta move out. And the thing that Jesus speaks first and, listen, the only thing he repeats twice in this story is peace. Whenever God repeats something in his word, he wants us to get it.

It's like he says peace be to you and we go on with our lives. He goes, wait a minute, you didn't quite get it. Peace be to you. And we've got to understand that Christ wants to give us his peace in order that we might impact the world. In other words, that the very foundation of our lives, the foundation of life in Christ, is peaceful. It's not me trying to perform to get God to love me.

It's peace. It's not nervous energy. It's peace. And so Jesus enters into the locked room, and it was locked because they were afraid, and he offers his peace. So let's look at this just a moment. Next slide, please. As we prepare to impact the world, we must receive Christ's peace.

[9 : 06] And the first thing that he wants to speak peace is to our fears. These first disciples are fearful that the same fate that hit Jesus was going to get them. No wonder they thought that. The night that Jesus was betrayed, he taught them in the upper room, and he said, if they kill me, they'll kill you.

He said, if they treat me bad, they're going to treat you bad. And he says, I'm telling you this in advance so you don't get discouraged by it. So when they were fearful that the very thing that happened to Jesus could happen to them, good reason. One, were his disciples. Two, he told us. And if I was in their shoes, if I was in that first group of believers, I would be scared to death, fearful. And so Jesus comes into the locked room to speak to fear. And he has actually taught that in the upper room just a few days before. And that's the passage that I have before you here. In John chapter 14, verse 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. Notice that what Jesus has got to do in order for us to impact the world is that he has to give us a gift. And it's the gift of peace.

He said this is not the peace that the world has, meaning when circumstances go your way, I feel good. No, this is a peace that even when circumstances go bad, you will still be calm. This is a peace that doesn't come from me working it up. Oh, I got to get it. It comes from the gift. He says, I leave this with you and I give it. And so what Jesus is doing in this locked room on Easter Sunday night in offering peace is he's actually giving them the gift that will change everything. You know, when we go through life, people are watching. When you go to work tomorrow, people are watching and they want to know how you respond to life. And you know, sometimes I must be honest with you, I don't respond to life well. Sometimes I get angry and frustrated and I'm not going to ask my wife to come up and testify to that fact. She knows it too well. But I want to tell you, there are other times, there are other times when things seem to be going desperately wrong and God gives a calm that I can't explain because it's out of this world. It came from him. It's a peace that passes all understanding. And when that happens, it becomes a platform for ministry. Let me give you an example. A good friend of mine and my wife and my, as a matter of fact, our entire family just heard he has stage four cancer. Now this is a man who runs regularly, worked in New York City, always

ran in Central Park, stayed in great shape, but now he has cancer. There are people who have been watching in the corporation. He worked in a major corporation, New York City, and actually our son who is here today works in that same corporation. And people have watched. And now that this most difficult time has hit him, they're watching, and he has a calm that is out of this world. Now is he sad? Of course. Is he concerned? You better believe it.

[13:23] Does he want to live? Yes. But there's a peace that passes all understanding. See, I believe that one of the things that Jesus wants to give us this day is a peace in the midst of our fears. And so my question is simply this, what are you afraid of? What are you afraid of?

You know, before I came to faith in Jesus, I was fearful of death. Maybe you're there. Maybe you're fearful. And I was so afraid of something I couldn't understand what happens beyond the grave. But I want to tell you that when I put my faith in Jesus, God began addressing my fear. I still want to live, but I have no fear of death now. You see, Jesus, when he comes into a life, the one thing he wants to do is speak peace into our fears. And so today, most of us, I'm sure, have already said, I've made a walk of faith and I'm walking with the Lord. Great. But if you're still fearful, let God give you peace. Some of you may be saying, how do I get that? A simple belief in Jesus by just coming to him by simple faith and the peace of God can be ours. As a matter of fact, it's not just peace that we feel or peace that we experience, but there's even a greater peace. And I think Jesus is speaking this peace to us in this passage. Next, please. The next slide, please. Thank you. So we not only have Christ speaking peace into our fears, but he also speaks peace into our failures. And I just want to make a quick word about this. These disciples abandoned Jesus in his darkest moment when he was weeping.

He even pulled three of his closest friends in a time of prayer and said, would you come and watch? And when Jesus was arrested, everyone left him alone. They had failed him in the greatest contest they had ever known. And I'm sure that as they huddled in that room and Jesus appears, one, they're fearful of the Jews might do the same thing to them, but they're also concerned, would he come to judge me?

But that's the power of the cross, that he was condemned that we wouldn't be. And so when he comes to offer peace in the midst of our failures, like these failing people, he gives us the platform for ministry. Let's look at the next slide just for a moment, please. I've chosen from Romans 5 that Mike read from today, just some things. And notice the words that I highlighted, they're words to describe you and me.

[16:35] So let's look at this just for a moment. For when we were weak, for when we were still weak, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly.

I'm weak, unable to keep God's way. I am ungodly. I'm actually pursuing a different way than God. This is before Christ.

Notice verse 8. But God shows his love for us in this. While we were sinners, Christ died for us. And then verse 10. For while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his son. Notice in each place, weakness, ungodliness, sinning, and an enemy of God, Jesus dies for us. And this is the power of the cross.

Now, let me tell you why that's important. Because this is the basis for peace with God. Is that the power of the cross tells me now that God knows me in the depth of my weak, ungodly, sinning ways that I have even been an enemy of God, but he reached out and through the death of his son, he did something for me.

[17:59] You know how important that is? Next slide, please. One of the books that has impacted me has been Knowing God by J.I. Packer.

Some of you may have read it. If you haven't, it's worth reading. A wonderful exposition on the gospel. Note this from J.I. Packer.

There is tremendous relief in knowing this love to me, this love through Christ, is truly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me, so that no discovery can disillusion him about me in the way that I am so often disillusioned about myself and quench his determination to bless me.

You see, what we find in Romans 5 is that God's love in Christ is based always on the worst of me, my weakness, my ungodliness, my sin, my being an enemy of God.

And so now, there is nothing but his peace. I have peace with God through him. Do you know this peace?

[19:17] J.I. Packer, the next slide, mentioned something of this peace. There is no peace like the peace of those whose minds are possessed with full assurance that they have known God and that God has known them.

And that this relationship guarantees God's favor to them in life through death and on forever. My question is, do you know this peace?

A peace of Christ that speaks to your fears and speaks to your failures because if we don't start there, we can never impact New London nor Nepal.

It is the basis for the church that impacts the world. But Jesus doesn't stop there. That's his first point because he repeats it twice.

But his second point is this in the next slide. He has a plan. And as we prepare for impact, we must receive Christ's plan.

[20:26] And it's found in this passage in verse 21, the last part of verse 21. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.

Christianity, unlike the Old Testament, is a sending relationship with God. Not a come relationship or a relationship of just coming.

It's going. And this is the unique and radical part of Jesus. Let's look at some scripture. This may be hard to read, so I'll try to read it for you.

In Matthew 28, Jesus said, go. Now, most of us know that means as you go. He expected us to go, but He says, go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations.

The same commission that Christ gives us in Mark, go into all the world. In Luke, He says that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.

[21:38] And in John 15, He said, I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. The very unique nature of Jesus is this.

I'm sending you into the world. Just as the Father sent me, now I'm sending you. You're my representative. Go. Many Christians, I think, feel very comfortable in not going.

It's very comfortable here. But He's sending us out tomorrow morning, even in just a few minutes, and we've got to go. And so taking Jesus' plan is part of impacting the world.

The next slide, please. Here's how we go. In John 3, 17, Jesus said, for God did not send His Son. Now, if we're going, I'm sending you as the Father sent me.

Keep this verse in mind. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. God isn't calling us to go in and tell the world how bad they are, but that there's a better way.

[22:52] And that Jesus came and told the truth about our waywardness, but He told something even greater, and that is a relationship with God. The way we can do that is found in John 1, 14, the way Jesus came and the Word became flesh.

That's point number one if we want to follow the plan. We incarnate the Word. It's not an intellectual exercise only where I understand in my mind, but I actually apply or live out what I actually know. The Word became flesh. And God is doing the same thing in us as Jesus is our model. the Word takes on flesh.

The Word in me becomes manifest in the world. Now notice that Jesus said, or says, and the Word became flesh, John says, and dwelt among us.

You know, I thank God that not all of us go to the ends of the earth, but some of us need to just go to our families. Why? Because it's indwelling with people, living with them, in all of life's circumstances.

[24:03] that is impact. So whether we go to the world, we just go to work. We dwell with people.

We get to know them. We want to know what concerns them. What are their hopes? What are their dreams? We dwell with people. It's what Jesus does.

We incarnate the Word, we dwell with people, and then it says, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of the only Son from the Father full of grace and truth.

And this is the third part of His plan, and that's just living graciously and yet truthfully. That I would be a person of grace, that my speech would be gracious, but that I would always be committed to the truth.

You see, Jesus said, if we want to be a people of impact, grab hold of His peace, and embrace His plan. Next, please. The third gift that He gives us is His power.

[25 : 08] And so in John chapter 20, it says, and when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

What an amazing thing happening in this room. He breathed on them. Next slide, please. Reminds us of what God had already done in Genesis 2-7 when He created Adam.

And it says, the Lord God formed the man out of the dust from the ground, and He breathed into His nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. Jesus is mimicking or He's imitating that very same thing where we first had physical life, now He's giving spiritual life.

This is equivalent, I believe, to what John records in John 3. It's about being born again. In John 3, Jesus said, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one has been born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Jesus is breathing His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, into them.

[26 : 25] I believe we cannot give away what we do not have. These people had never experienced this kind of transformation.

They had sat under the teaching of Jesus, they had even watched His miracles, but now He's breathing in a power source for doing the mission. I'm thankful to God that He did this because I know myself, I cannot follow Christ, and I know I cannot go to the world without His power.

So He's breathing in the power. And I believe what God wants us to do is to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His mission.

You see, this is all preparation for impact. He wants to give us His peace and His plan. He wants to fill us with His power.

More should be said on that. But let's go to the last thing, and that is, if we want to be people of impact, we must receive His promise.

[27 : 35] And here is the promise. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven. And if you withhold the forgiveness from any, it's withheld.

What an amazing statement to make to people. you can forgive or not forgive. I leave that in your hands. Some people misinterpret this.

Some do. Some believe that Jesus is speaking only to these disciples and those who succeed from them, and they have the right and authority to forgive sins.

And so therefore, if you go to a priest or a minister, they can forgive your sins. That's how some interpret this. That's what this is saying. But Jesus is speaking in this incredible way to all of us, and He doesn't give us the authority to forgive someone's sins in a blanket fashion.

That can only be done by Him. That's the unique place of Jesus. Let's look at that unique place in the next slide.

[28 : 44] In Luke 24, Jesus said, I want you to go out and proclaim this, that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all people, to all nations.

And so this idea of forgiveness of sins is found in Jesus' name. Acts 10, verse 43, to Him, Jesus, all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.

So we've been given this gospel of forgiveness. And Jesus wants us to proclaim it, but He backs up a step. Before you can proclaim it, you've got to do something with it yourself.

And so what Jesus is doing is preparing us to proclaim. Here's how He prepares us. Please, Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6, following up the Lord's prayer, here's the only comment Jesus made about His model prayer.

prayer. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

[30 : 15] And that's the only comment He made about His prayer. It's the authority to forgive those who have hurt me. And if I can't practice it on that level, I can't effectively proclaim forgiveness in a more general way.

So Jesus in preparing us for impact tells us, I want you to take my message of forgiveness. I've already forgiven you.

Now I'm placing into your hands the ability to forgive others. when they trespass against you. And the way we respond to that message will be the direct relationship of our impact in the world.

In other words, the Holy Spirit that He just breathed into them, if we do not exercise that kind of forgiveness, the Holy Spirit's power is diminished. Let me show you how that works.

Ephesians chapter 4. verses 30 through 32. Let's read the Word of God. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

[31 : 40] Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Do you see the relationship? That when I hold on to bitterness, I grieve the Holy Spirit who is the power source for mission.

this gift I need every day from Jesus. The power in the Spirit to forgive.

And so I have a question for you. God is preparing us for impact. forgiveness. But there's a process all of us must go through.

The next slide, please. To proclaim forgiveness, we must practice forgiveness. We all know the Pharisees who spoke one thing and lived another way.

[32 : 52] Jesus is saying, I gave you the Holy Spirit to impact the world, but first let him impact you. overcoming division and desperate hurt in the ability to forgive those who have hurt you.

To proclaim forgiveness, we must practice forgiveness. We proclaim Christ's promise first for ourselves, preach the gospel to ourselves, and then practice his promise for others.

We're able to release them. And then we proclaim his promise to the world. So Jesus said, if you forgive, there is forgiveness and division broken down.

I'd like to ask you a question. If we were to pause right now and pray, would God bring anyone to your mind that you need to forgive? All of us have been hurt. And you say, well, how do I do that? Well, I'm not telling you to forget because God will take care of all of that. But in an act of obedience to Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit that he's given us, I simply say, Lord, I release that person.

[34 : 16] I release them to you. That's the best way I've been able to walk in forgiveness. I release them to you. And I do that and five minutes later, in comes this horrible feeling that I'm still angry.

And God says, forgive. I release them to you. And I keep walking by faith in the power of Christ to give me the ability to forgive.

If we're going to impact the world, this one thing is probably the one thing he wants to work in us the most. The incredible ability to forgive.

Well, here's the recap. God is just working in a closed room. He hasn't sent us out of the door yet. This is all prepare for impact.

Prepare. Receive his peace. Receive Christ's plan. Receive his power in the Holy Spirit. And receive his promise, which is the ability for you to forgive.

[35 : 31] And therefore proclaim his forgiveness. God wants us to take his message to New London.

But he wants us to take it throughout the world. So the next slide, please. Your impact is already hitting Africa. I was there a few months ago.

I'm heading back in September. I'll be there again in December. And I wanted to tell you that because of prayer of some of you, God is impacting Africa.

And I believe he's given a five-year vision to reach all 54 countries in five years. And I'm not talking about doing major crusades.

I'm talking about training 12 to 15 leaders who can go and plant churches and bring the gospel to all of their people. That's going to happen in five years.

[36 : 31] It's a God-sized vision. I don't know how he's going to do it, but that's where we've got to pray. But with people, in the next slide, like this, it will happen.

This is Abraham. Abraham just called me yesterday, and he said to me, God is doing great things in Liberia. Let's continue to pray.

But Abraham said to me, pray for this young pastor by the name of Prince. His wife just died, 20 years old, in her 20s, and she just died. And so we prayed, Connecticut, Liberia, were coming together, that God would impact the world.

Next slide, please. And here's the way God impacts the world. On the slide on the left, believe it or not, that's the source of the Nile. The Nile is the largest river in the world.

It's the only one that runs south to north. And this is the source. I made it to the source. That's in Uganda. And I was just there traveling through on way to a different ministry place, and we stopped here.

[37 : 43] It bubbles up from under the earth. Jesus said, I've given you the Holy Spirit, and it will be like rivers of living water coming from within you. This is the source of our life.

The other slide is my friend from Zambia, Henry, and we're standing under a tree which has the hardest wood in the world. And I said, Lord, make us that strong in your spirit for the work that you've called us to.

Next slide, please. And so God's sending me to South America, and that happens June 11th. And this is the way we impact the world.

Christ has given us his peace and his plan. He's given us the power of the Holy Spirit, and he gives us the promise and proclamation of forgiveness, and that's what changes the world.

So with that in mind, let's bow our heads. I thank you, Lord, that in just a few brief minutes together, we could cover such monumental topics from Jesus.

[38 : 59] And Lord, with each of us in this room, we all have a variety of concerns, questions, or even needs as we go through life, and I'd just like to stop for a moment and pray for peace.

A peace that passes all understanding, that will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus, that you give peace as a gift, and not something that we have to try to find on our own power, in our own way.

We pray for the gift of peace. Thank you for bearing all of our failings, all of our failures, all of our sins, all of our trespasses, all of our iniquities have been poured out on you, Jesus, on the cross.

And so now, your determination to bless us, now and in eternity, can never be thwarted. We thank you for making us bold in our fears.

So to anyone here today who's just saying I'm a bit agitated or worried, peace be to you, and that's your word.

[40 : 23] But Lord, we embrace your plan and your power source. Fill us with your Holy Spirit to accomplish your will on earth. And then Lord, would you right now bring to mind anyone that you want to free us from bitterness today, free us from holding on to wrong.

And Lord, it's a miraculous thing. It's divine to forgive. But you have given us that authority and ability to forgive in Jesus' name those who have hurt us.

And Lord, we don't want to hold on to those sins and diminish that power of the Holy Spirit, grieving the Holy Spirit. And so, Lord, we pray that anyone you bring to mind that we would release them to you.

We're not saying that what they did is right, and we're not saying that it didn't matter. We're just simply saying I'm not going to hold them and that pain in my heart.

I release them to you, and I forgive in Jesus' name. Lord, thank you for preparing your church for impact.

[41 : 44] May we walk in it and live it this week, today, in Jesus' name. Amen.