

John 20:19-23 PM

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[0 : 00] Good evening, folks. Let me pray before we start. Heavenly Father, would you open our hearts to hear your word this evening. In Christ's name, amen.

Well, good evening, everyone. My name is Aaron. I'm the minister for the service. As before we talk about, this is the last week of our summer series where the kids stay in the service. Next week, they're at Sunday school. So if you're new, for this last month, what we've been doing is we've been tracking with what the kids did in Vacation Bible Camp a little while ago, where they looked at the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. And the book is this great parallel, a great picture of the gospel. And over summer, what we've been doing is we've been thinking about the specific scenes in the book, the Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, and the Bible passages that they clearly point to. So let me remind you now, let me remind you of a particular scene in one of the books. So in this scene, Aslan has been resurrected from the dead, and he comforts Lucy and Susan, and then he gathers his army, and they have a great victory over the White Witch, and then the children are enthroned, the kings and queens, to rule over Narnia. So the curse is broken through sacrifice. There's a great reunion.

And the children are given this great commission. They've been given a great responsibility. When writing this, C.S. Lewis obviously had in mind the resurrection of Christ, how he dealt with the disciples afterwards. And that's where we're going in this very, very short sermon this evening. So let's have it at our passage. John 20, 19 to 23. In the passage, Christ is risen. He returns up to his disciples, and he offers them three things. And this is the structure of the sermon. He offers them his presence. He offers them purpose. And he offers them power.

He offers them presence, purpose, and power. And let's look at those individually. For the first one, I'll spend the most time on this, presence. So verse 19 says it's Sunday morning. It's a new day. It's the first day of the week. It's a bit of a hint of something new is going on. And the disciples have all heard at this point that Jesus is actually risen, but it clearly hasn't sunk in. There's no conviction that's come with that. We know that because the disciples are hiding. They're in a room, and the door is not just shut. It's been locked as well. So they're afraid that the same people who murdered Jesus are going to come for them.

So I guess it's understandable. Verse 19 says, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them peace. And then he proves to them that he's not like a ghost. You know, he shows the scars on his hands and on his side. It's really him. The disciples are completely overjoyed by this.

[3 : 13] So that's kind of the first part. Let's just sort of unpack it a little bit. So first question is this. How did Jesus get into that locked room? We don't know. We don't know. We don't know. But clearly, it wasn't a problem for him.

He just was outside the room, and then he was inside the room. So why does it include this detail, though? Well, it's not there to say Jesus can do cool tricks. There's obviously more going on here. It's a picture. It's a beautiful picture showing us that there are no barriers when it comes to Jesus being with you. There is nowhere you can be physically, emotionally, spiritually, where Jesus can't join you.

There is nowhere he can't be with you. Despite how awful you might feel. Despite how forgotten you might feel.

Despite how badly you might think you've ruined your life. Despite how fearful you might feel. Jesus can turn up.

[4 : 34] Jesus can get through locked doors. And he can be there for you in a way that counsellors and doctors and pastors can't. I mean, all those people are fantastic. We have them all in this congregation.

But Christ can be with you in a way they can't. And this God, man, Christ, he can do things none of us can do. So even when we're fearful and unbelieving like these disciples, fear is a it's a very powerful thing in our life, isn't it?

Fear. It captures our imagination in terrible ways. You have lots of fears. I have lots of fears. Jesus can still turn up to us. And when he does, do you notice there's no shame when he turns up. It's really important. He doesn't bring shame into that room. I mean, they're locked behind the door. Look at what he does and what he doesn't say.

I mean, we know what he does say. He says peace. But what doesn't he say? He doesn't mention their abandonment of him. I mean, their betrayal of him was spectacular. It was top shelf disloyalty. [5 : 48] And yet Jesus still turns up with love. What does he say? Peace. I just, I want you to know peace, friends. Jesus knows you.

He loves you. He sees your fear. He sees your shame. And he's turning up and he wants you to know peace. When Aslan and Narnia comes back to life and the two girls see him alive and they realize it's him, what's the next thing that happens in the story in the Lime of the Witch and the Water?

What's the next thing that happens? Let me read it to you. Let me read this short paragraph. Round and round the hilltop, Aslan led them, now hopelessly out of their reach, now letting them almost catch his tail, now diving between them, now tossing them in the air with his huge and beautifully velvetted paws and catching them again, now stopping unexpectedly so that all three of them rolled over together in a happy, laughing heap of fur and arms and legs that was such a romp as no one had ever had except in Narnia.

And whether it was more like playing with a thunderstorm or playing with a kitten, Lucy could never make up her mind. And the funny thing was that when all three finally laid together panting in the sun, the girls no longer felt and the least tired or hungry or thirsty.

Isn't that great? It's such a beautiful picture, eh? It's joy, it's fun, it's kindness, it's life, it's peace. We have these disciples that barricaded themselves in a room out of fear.

[7 : 31] Jesus does not shout at them from the other side of the door, calling them a bunch of losers, a bunch of wimps. He doesn't wait for them to get their act together.

He doesn't wait for them to work through their fears. No, He just got in there and He stood with them. Literally, it says He stood in the middle of them. This is what I want for me, this is what I want for you, for you to have these kind of transformative encounters with Jesus to help you in your fear and in a way that no one else can.

So, in summary, in this point, folks, stop beating yourself up. Let Jesus be with you. Let Jesus be kind to you in the way Jesus was kind to these disciples so that you can experience the life and the peace He has for you.

Okay, that was the first point. That was a long one. Two short points now. So, first point, Christ gives us His presence, His peace. Second point, Jesus came to give them purpose.

He comes to give us purpose, which is a wonderful thing. I was thinking about this week. You know, many, we probably all know people who have ruined their lives through poor decision making, just doing stupid things.

[8 : 51] But a lot of lives are just wrecked, I think, just through aimlessness. People become satisfied with sort of trivial things. They never really get their life going.

Well, Jesus gives us, He gifts us a life with a grand purpose, something bigger than anything we can come up. And it's verse 21 here. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. Which is just so wild, isn't it? Jesus sort of refers back to the inner workings of the Trinity and says, the Father sent me. What a tremendous privilege that was.

And I'm doing the same for you. I'm sending you to continue my mission in the world. Now I want to jump down to verse 23 because I know it's a bit confusing.

I'll read it to you again. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. So that is connected to the mission thing.

[9 : 47] What does it mean? It means when we tell people about Jesus and what Christ has done for them on the cross, when we do that, we're speaking for Jesus when we do that. And if they believe you, they're forgiven.

And if they don't believe you, they're not reconciled with God. So it's quite, it's not that complicated. What people make of the message will determine if they are forgiven or not and reconciled to God.

So all that to say, this grand vision and purpose that Christ has for your life, for all of your lives, to save us from our selfish life, to save us from an aimless life, this great mission should involve, has something to do with helping people understand that there is a God who loves them and forgives them and wants to be with them.

Okay, point three. First point, God gives us his presence and his peace. Second point, he gives us a purpose. And point three, he gives us power. Jesus didn't just say to the disciples, okay, off you go, you know, all the best, all the best.

Give it a good college try. I don't know, I think that's an American saying. Give it a good college try. What does he say? Verse 22. And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

[11:05] Christ gives us his spirit. Christ empowers us. This is how the church works. This is what animates us. Jesus gives us the power to do the things that just humans can't, that really struggle with, like defeating our own selfishness and living sacrificially and treasuring Christ above all things and laying down our lives.

Jesus empowers us to do these things. Now you're thinking like, I know this, I know this, I know this, Christian, Christian, Christian, I know this, I know this. But I think we forget it. I think we forget it sometimes.

We forget the empowering spirit of God makes a home in our hearts. And some of us just give up. We're just gonna settle.

We settle being, we settle with our addictions. We just think, oh, it's just, it's just a thing. I'll never work it out. No.

Or you think, you know, like I love, I love what Rachel said, wherever she is. I love what Rachel said, there you go, at the back there.

[12:18] When God can actually use you to say something to someone that could change their eternity. It's like, I just didn't feel like that was something that was in me.

No, it's in you, it's in us. God empowers us. You have the power of God in you. I'm just, I'm just reminding of you. I'm just reminding that. Lots more to say about that. We gotta, we gotta finish up here though.

So, finish up. Let me say three simple things here. Christ offers you his presence and his peace.

Jesus wants to show up to your fears. He can go places no one else can.

You should, you should do that. You should make time. You should create space in your life to let Jesus be kind to you in the way you need someone to be kind to you.

Second point, Christ offers you a purpose. Remember, Aslan enthrones, you know, he enthrones the children of Narnia to rule over his kingdom.

[13:19] This is what Jesus does for us. He gives us his grand purpose better than anything we could come up with. And thirdly, he puts his life into our life to give us the power to do that. We forget that.

We give up on hoping for change. We settle. Don't do that. Don't do that. You've been empowered by God. Amen.