

On a Mission

John 20:19-31

Hear these words from Jesus: ***“Peace be with you.”*** This passage was chosen for this Sunday months ago. God’s timing is always perfect! The disciples were huddled together in a closed room, self-quarantined and scared. And Jesus appeared to them and spoke peace. Isn’t that what we all need right now? Isn’t that what the world needs now?

When did you first hear about the coronavirus? When did you realize it was a big deal? Kristin and I were scheduled to be leaving for Cuba on Monday and barely one week ago we were still planning to go. Kristin knew the virus was a big deal, but I was still thinking it would all be fine - it was being exaggerated; everyone was panicking for no reason.

When did you realize this virus was a big deal? When did you start telling other people about it, so they would treat it as the global threat that it is?

It is just like the gospel. There was a time when you realized that Jesus’ death and resurrection were a big deal. At some point in your life you heard about Jesus and not only were intrigued about Him, but you understood that His death was a big deal; it had vital importance to you. Then, as you realized it was a big deal for you, you also realized it was something you had to tell other people about.

Because the Gospel - the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection - is the CURE for the main problem people have on earth. ***The cure for sin is available in Christ!*** Everyone who believes in Jesus will be forgiven and set free from sin.

Imagine if a cure was found for COVID-19. If a vaccine was created that could protect everyone - wouldn’t that be the main headline on every news channel, the top story in every news app? Wouldn’t that be shared in all social media? Wouldn’t you be on the phone with your friends and family to be sure they got the vaccine?

The coronavirus is a big deal. But nowhere near as big a deal as SIN. As of today there is no cure and no vaccine for the virus. But there is a cure for sin. The blood of Jesus! Here is our message for today:

Jesus came to accomplish salvation
We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

Jesus’ mission was to accomplish salvation. Our mission is to announce the good news that salvation has been accomplished. Jesus paid the price for peace with God. We share the good news that Jesus offers peace with God. Jesus’ mission continues through us. He has given us peace with God and commissioned us to share that peace with all who will respond.

Jesus’ mission continues through us. He commissioned all of His followers to “go and make disciples of all nations.” Our job is not done until everyone on earth has heard the good news that peace with God is now possible in Christ. As the gospel is preached, God is gathering in His children from every tongue and tribe and nation. ***And the for the first time in history the finish***

line is in sight. For the first time it is possible, in the next ten years, to finish Bible translation for every people group and to present the gospel in every land.

Two parts to our message today in John 20. First, we will reflect on what Jesus did to accomplish our salvation. Then we will focus on what we must do to continue and complete His mission on earth.

Jesus came to accomplish salvation

- He paid the price to **reconcile** sinners to God

“Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’” John 20:19

The disciples were hiding in a locked room. Their Rabbi had just been executed. They were terrified that they would be next. They still did not understand why this was all happening – they did not yet realize His death had been necessary and that He had risen. This was the first appearance of Jesus to the men.

Isn't it beautiful that God customizes His work for each of us? The first part of John 20 we will get to on Easter Sunday. But it's so powerful because it's so personal. We know Mary Magdalene had a couple of other women with her, but **John focuses just on Mary** to show how Jesus ministered just to her – speaking her name. The first person to see Jesus alive was a woman who had been possessed by seven demons – someone who today would have been confined in a mental hospital. But Jesus set her free from that oppression and she remained one of his closest followers throughout his ministry, listed first as a witness to his crucifixion, burial and resurrection.

More on that in a couple of weeks. For now just see how Mary was weeping by the tomb and ***the risen Jesus came right up to her and spoke her name***. Until he said her name she did not even recognize him, but in hearing her name, suddenly she realized it was Jesus.

How did Jesus make Himself known to YOU? Do you remember the time when He came to you and spoke YOUR NAME? You are here today because He did exactly that. This is what Jesus does. ***He customizes His work in the life of every single person on the planet.***

He came to earth so He could say these words to you and to me, “Peace be with you.” Think about what that meant to Mary... She was weeping over the Savior and Teacher she believed was dead and gone forever. **Jesus came to her** to prove He was alive and she became the first witness to the resurrection.

Jesus came to the disciples as they trembled in fear, and He spoke PEACE to them. “Peace be with you.” They were terrified that one by one they would be arrested and executed just as Jesus had been. And that was a very real danger.

This is why Jesus came – to accomplish salvation and speak His peace to each of us. But before He could speak peace to us, He had to pay for it. Forgiveness is free to us but it was not cheap. The wages of sin is death. A sacrifice had to be made. The cross fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

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“The punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.” Isaiah 53:5 NIV

“We all, like sheep, have gone astray... and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” **Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.** For centuries the Jews presented animals to cover over their sins. A sacrifice of ATONEMENT was a covering for sin. Animal sacrifices could only provide temporary coverings – which is why it was a constant proceeding: day after day, month after month, year after year, the priests presenting one animal after another.

Until Jesus. **He paid the price for our reconciliation.** The penalty for sin is death. The punishment for rebellion against the king is death. By laying down His life, Jesus paid the full price for your sin and mine. His fully human body was offered in your place. His perfectly righteous life was a sufficient sacrifice for sin. His fully divine sonship gave His sacrifice infinite value and eternal virtue.

Jesus paid it all. **Nothing is left for you to pay.** Jesus’ blood washed away ALL of your sin! And so Paul can write in Romans 5:

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- He paid the price to reconcile sinners to God

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1

Present tense. Right now. If you belong to Jesus by faith, if you have called upon Him to save you – then right now you HAVE peace with God. You have already been justified – declared righteous – pronounced not-guilty in Christ. Your debt has been paid in full. No condemnation is in your future. You HAVE peace with God.

Apart from Jesus you would be an enemy of God. Before you bowed the knee to Jesus you were opposed to God, living for yourself and your own kingdom. You were at war with the God of heaven – a rebel against the Crown. But Jesus called you and offered terms of peace. What were those terms?

Jesus came to accomplish salvation

- He offers peace with God to all who **surrender** to Him as King

“Therefore, since we have been justified **through faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Rom. 5:1

Justification is by faith in Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” **Whoever BELIEVES in Him.**

It does not say:

- Whoever lives up to His standard...
- Whoever does enough good things to earn His favor...

- Whoever's good deeds outweigh their bad deeds... "should not perish but have eternal life."

No, if that were the case, we would all be in serious trouble. ***No one is saved by their own efforts*** or good works. We could never be good enough. That is why Jesus came! We could not be good enough to earn our own salvation. So He came to accomplish salvation for us. He paid the price for your sin and mine. And He offers forgiveness, freedom and eternal life to all who will come to Him in faith. And there's the rub: you have to come. Jesus alone can speak these words to your soul, "Peace be with you." And He will speak these words to you, if you come to Him in faith. Here is what that looks like in Romans 10.

Jesus came to accomplish salvation

- He offers peace with God to all who surrender to Him as King

"If you confess with your mouth that **Jesus is Lord** and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Rom. 10:9

What does it look like to call on Jesus in faith? **It means confessing Him as LORD.** It means more than just believing He died on the cross. It means believing He died on the cross FOR YOU. It means confessing – saying out loud – that Jesus is LORD, your Lord, your Master; your life is now HIS. Saving faith is a profession of allegiance to a new King.

Romans 10 clearly shows that two things must happen for salvation to be real. First, there must be **a verbal profession** of the Lordship of Christ. It must be verbal, out loud. Second, there must be **genuine internal faith**. You have to really believe that Jesus died for you and rose again. It doesn't mean you have to fully understand how it all works. But it means you have to place your trust there – on the finished work of Jesus – not on yourself, your efforts, the church, the pastor. Christ alone. Jesus paid for your sins, not me. He offers you terms of peace, not me.

Consider this: the King of the universe has ***extended His hand to you in a proposal of marriage.*** Jesus came to purify a bride for Himself. And when He comes back it will be for a wedding celebration! He has offered HIMSELF to you - but you must say "YES" to Him.

You can't take Jesus' stuff without taking Him. With Jesus it's all or nothing. If you want forgiveness, eternal life, peace and power – you must have HIM. If you were dating a rich guy you wouldn't expect him to pay off your college loans BEFORE the wedding, would you? You wouldn't expect Him to give you his car or his house in the Bahamas BEFORE the wedding? Those are things that come WITH the marriage, not before it.

But people want Jesus' stuff without Him. They don't appreciate that it's about a covenant relationship. It's about pledging yourself to Him – making a vow. Jesus has already made His vows. He has promised to protect us from our sin. He has promised to bless us and love us in every way. But He can only do that as we know and love Him in a relationship – a covenant, intimate, marriage relationship. Have you accepted Jesus' proposal? Have you said, "Yes," to Him?

If you have, then **you HAVE peace with God.** Right now. It is yours. There is nothing you need to fear. Nothing. You belong to Jesus, and He is with you forever. You have His love, His acceptance,

His forgiveness, His life. He purchased your peace with God. And He speaks that peace over you every day! "Peace be with you!"

Jesus came to accomplish salvation. He paid the price to reconcile us to God, sinners though we are. And He offers terms of peace to all who surrender to Him in faith. And He has commissioned us to carry this message to the ends of the earth.

Jesus came to accomplish salvation
We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

Jesus came so we could go. He provided salvation so we would proclaim it. He did the work, we declare that the work has been done! The Savior has come! Peace with God is now possible in Christ. Come to Him to be forgiven, to be set free, to receive eternal life – to be reconciled to God. This is our mission – to announce salvation in Jesus!

It is not the Great Suggestion. It is the Great Commission. Three applications today.

We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

1. **Necessity** – we ***must*** go

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." John 20:21

Every follower of Jesus has been commissioned. Every one of us has been sent on this same mission - to share the good news we have experienced in Christ. You have been given a cure! Now go tell others about that cure. It has been said that Christianity is just one beggar telling other beggars where to find bread. We have found in Jesus the bread of life - we must tell others about this bread we have found!

Yes, **we will accomplish this mission in different ways** according to our roles, personalities and experiences. But we have all been sent on the same mission. Some of you know ***Mike Atherton*** – he has been attending Oakwood for a couple of years now. He stands out since he lost both legs and one arm in a boat explosion in 2009, so he is half bionic.

Because of Mike's life experience as **an amputee**, he has opportunities that the rest of us don't have. He gets invited into hospital wings with other amputees. He goes to events with challenged athletes. He gets stopped constantly in stores and public places. He is a walking inspiration and uses his story to tell people about Jesus – how the Lord spared his life and then, through the crisis, brought him back to his childhood faith.

- Your struggles and losses are part of how you can reach other people.
- Your life stage is part of how you reach out. If you are a mom with small kids, guess what? You are uniquely equipped to reach other moms with small kids. Spend time at Chick-fil-a. Hang out at the park. Kids are one of the best conversation starters.
- Your hobbies and interests can help you reach others with the gospel. Whatever you enjoy doing, use that to connect with people. Playing cards, playing golf, making quilts, volunteering at the hospital...

You do you when it comes to evangelism. Don't try to be the next Billy Graham. Don't try to be someone you're not. Use YOUR personality, YOUR story, YOUR experiences as a platform for YOUR approach to evangelism.

But the point is that **ALL OF US** are called to share the gospel. All of us have been sent on this mission. No believer gets an exemption. Are there especially gifted evangelists? Sure. Does that mean the rest of us don't have to do evangelism? No! Sharing the gospel is the joyful privilege and vital responsibility of all believers.

Jesus said, "***I am sending you.***" He said that to all of his disciples. Were they all type A like Peter? No! Were they all affectionate like John? No! They were a mixed bag just like we are. But Jesus sent them ALL out. And He does the same thing for all of us. "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

We MUST go. Whether it's walking across the driveway or flying across the ocean, we have been sent on a mission. If we do not GO, people cannot hear the gospel and they will die in their sins. Here in America people have more opportunities to hear about Jesus, but the outcome is still the same. Let's say your next door neighbor or your co-worker are surrounded by Christians like you. If all of you take the approach of "someone else will do it," then no one will actually engage that person on a spiritual level and they will die in their sin.

How do you know if God would have you share the gospel with someone? Because you know them. If you know someone who is not following Jesus then you KNOW that God is calling you to share the gospel with them. ***It is just a question of HOW, it is not a question of WHETHER.***

We must go. It is necessary. Second application.

We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

2. Authority – we can go

"He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" John 20:22

Authority. We CAN go. Jesus breathed on the disciples as ***a preview of Pentecost***, which was just a few weeks away. The word for "Spirit" in the Bible – both in Greek and Hebrew, interestingly – is the same word for breath or wind. Jesus "breathed on them the breath of His Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the breath of Jesus – ***the life and heart of Jesus is OURS*** in the person of the Holy Spirit.

I'm NOT saying the Holy Spirit is like the FORCE. **The Spirit is a person**, not an impersonal energy field. ***But the person of the Spirit breathes into us the life of Jesus.*** He connects us with Jesus. To receive the Holy Spirit is to receive the presence and power of Jesus; His glory and love – all that is HIS becomes OURS in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Isn't that a cool picture? The Holy Spirit who lives in us is the way ***Jesus breathes Himself into us!*** Every breath you take is an opportunity to receive more JESUS! Breathe in the Holy Spirit and as you receive the Spirit you receive the life of Jesus – His grace, His love, His glory and power, His direction.

This is why **we CAN go** to make disciples of all nations – because we are not alone! Because the Lord Himself goes with us in the person of the Spirit. Listen to the Great Commission:

We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

2. Authority – we *can* go

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Matt. 28:18-20

On what basis do we dare to share this message with everyone? On the basis of the absolute authority of Jesus Christ! We have our orders directly from the King Himself! If you had a **message from the President** of the United States, given personally to YOU to carry to the embassy of China, you would go with confidence, wouldn't you? You would know that you represent the President and that you are going on his behalf.

We are ambassadors for Jesus – the King of all Kings. We represent Him and deliver this message – directly, personally from Him – for the people around us.

How dare we to share the gospel? ***How dare we NOT share the gospel?*** Jesus has trusted us with this mission. He has given us His authority, His power, His message – His own Spirit – to go with us, to lead us, to empower us.

We must go. We can go. Finally –

We must go to announce salvation in Jesus

3. Urgency – they *must* hear

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.” John 20:23

Jesus is commissioning the disciples to bring His message of peace and forgiveness to the world. If people respond in faith, we have the authority to pronounce them forgiven. If they refuse to respond and reject Jesus, we have the authority to pronounce them NOT forgiven. That may seem harsh, but it is a continuation of the ministry of Jesus.

Remember, he said, “I did not come to bring peace but a sword – to divide husband from wife and parents from their children.” ***Jesus' ministry did divide.*** You had to choose to either be with Jesus or against Him. You could not remain undecided. And that remains true today.

When we share the gospel we are giving people **the opportunity to be forgiven**. Whether it's the first time someone hears or the 1,000th time – when we share the message and invite a response we are bringing them to a doorway. Come through the door of faith in Jesus and be forgiven, set free from sin and enter new life in Christ. Stay on that side of the door and remain in your sin, controlled by your sin.

When I served as Outreach Pastor in Chicago it was my job to welcome new people to the church to hear their stories and help them better understand the gospel. We took lots of people through the **gospel of Mark** in 8 weeks. Several got to chapter 9 and were amazed to hear Jesus talking about a place called “hell.” They had been taught that there was no such place and that Jesus

certainly never said anyone would go there. But Jesus says very clearly that it's better to cut off your hand or gouge out your eye in order to truly repent and get into heaven than to keep your body intact and be thrown into hell. It is possible, Jesus says, "to gain the whole world and forfeit your soul."

One woman had been an elder at her church for 15 years but had NEVER been in a Bible study. An elder... who had never even been IN a Bible study much less led one. She was shocked to learn that Jesus actually had standards for who could get into heaven.

Of course she ended up **joyfully relieved to understand the gospel**. Yes, we are all sinners who don't deserve to go to heaven. But that's precisely why Jesus died – to pay for our sins and endure the hell we deserve.

People MUST hear this message. They are not OK in their churches that never open the Bible. They are not OK in their churches that are fuzzy about the gospel – that mix together faith and works and traditions and priests and purgatory. They are not OK in their other religions, no matter how sincere they are in their faith. Buddha cannot save anyone. Krisna cannot save anyone. The Mormons and Jehova's Witnesses cannot save anyone. Only Jesus can save. And when we go forward with the gospel we carry His name – the only name under heaven by which people CAN be saved.

We MUST GO. We CAN go – empowered by the Spirit with the authority of Jesus the king. They MUST hear. Time is short. The mission is urgent. Who can you share with this week?

Let's pray!