

## “Faith—Overcoming Our Disabilities”—John 20:19-21

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Faith—Overcoming Our Disabilities”, is John 20:19-21 → *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.”* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

*Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord* (cf. 1Timothy 1:2). Amen.

“So, what’s next?” “What do we do now?” “How do we go about functioning in our daily lives?” “Where will all this turmoil lead us?” These questions could have very easily flooded the minds of Jesus’ disciples after the events connected with His arrest, mock trial, torture, crucifixion and death over their past few days. Such questions reflect a state of disability, floundering for some direction in the midst of fear. After all, verse 19 of our text does tells us that on the day Jesus rose

from the dead His disciples were gathered together, *the doors being locked . . . for fear of the Jews.*

Wait! Did these questions make you think of our present pandemic crisis? They could possibly haunt you today as you stay behind closed doors, avoiding contact with others in fear of the reception or spread of a serious virus. Fear can be a result of respect for something or someone much more powerful than we. Or it may be thoughts accompanying the possibility of imminent death, or that which fuels anxiety over the unknown and what the future may have in store for us. There are many fear factors which work in a very disabling manner in our lives. It is a major contributor toward the inability to truly live life, especially the life which God would want you to live **by faith in Christ.**

The expression of **faith in Jesus Christ** is challenged by the fear of rejection of others or the persecution they may impose on you. This was not a new thing on this particular Sunday for Jesus' disciples or unique to their experiences. The Gospel of John is full of examples telling us how fear disabled people, hindering them from a public expression of their faith in Jesus. The one who saw to it that Jesus received a "proper burial" is described as *a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews* (cf. John 19:38). Of what were they afraid? John 12:42 says that *many even of the authorities believed in Jesus, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the*

*synagogue*. This fear of the religious leaders ran so deep that people refused to speak *openly of Him* at the slightest inquiry of His whereabouts (cf. John 7:13).

Being disabled within minutes in the natural course of your life is very difficult to experience, let alone to accept and embrace at the moment. As difficult as it is to make adjustments which accompany a physical disability, there are times when being disabled emotionally and spiritually is just as difficult. It can be fueled by the past when you re-live guilt and entertain regrets over sin, mistakes and bad choices or behavior. It is also fueled by thoughts about your future and your inability to have complete control over the unknown. Such fear can make a disaster of your present when it is controlled by such past and future dynamics rather than by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice Jesus' words spoken twice to His disciples at this appearing: *Peace be with you*. Aside from being driven by their fears at the moment, His appearance could have caused more inner turmoil for each of them. They knew Jesus well enough to recognize at His appearing that He knew their thoughts and . . . their sinful, unbelieving hearts. The possibility of being *cut to the heart* (cf. Acts 2:37) in guilt was very real as the Holy Spirit would *bring to their remembrance all that Jesus had said to them* (cf. John 14:26), like . . .

- . . . when He told them that God will always provide them with food

and clothing, referring to them as *you of little faith* (cf. Matthew 6:30)

- . . . when Jesus showed Peter that He was in control of nature as Peter began to sink while walking on the water. Jesus said, *O you of little faith, why did you doubt?* (cf. Mark 14:31)
- . . . when He questioned His disciples because they were concerned that they had no bread on their journey. After all, Jesus had just fed four thousand people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish, with seven baskets full of leftovers. *O you of little faith, why are you discussing among yourselves the fact that you have no bread?* (cf. Matthew 16:8)

O you of little faith . . . God has provided for you, is providing for you at this moment in time and will continue to provide for you.

Faith is not a foreign concept to people. It touches every area of our lives, a fact of which we have become more aware over these past days with the concern about what or who we touch. Ever drive down a two lane road? How do you know the person coming toward you at 65 mph will stay on his side of the road? Faith. Ever give your money to a bank for safe keeping or investment? How do you know you'll get it back from them? You trust. I'm sure you can think of numerous everyday activities which you do by faith. The issue is not that of faith but the object of your faith.

The only way to overcome the disabling affects of fear and doubt is

living by faith **in Christ** today, depending upon the glorious resurrection power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit's guidance in your life. However, even what this statement asks of you can produce fear because one of the most fearful activities for an individual is that of surrender. To surrender your will at a given moment can produce the feelings of overwhelming risk. Think about it: How easily can you surrender your desire to express your opinion in the midst of discussions? Do you find it difficult to surrender your will in the midst of heated arguments? Surrender is a fearful task because it places you into the position of letting go of control . . . or should I say . . . your perceived control. What is your response or reaction when you're called upon to repent of your sins, that is, surrender to the Lord Jesus by admitting you've broken God's commands, confessing them and clinging to the atoning work of Jesus alone for your forgiveness?

Only Jesus can say with eternal certainty, "Peace be with **you**," in the midst of your fears. Just as He did not need to knock and wait for someone to open the door for Him to be with His disciples, Jesus alone transcends your fears and doubts in time. While His sacrifice on the cross brings you the forgiveness of all your sins, His resurrection from the dead removes the fear of death because you will live eternally in heaven with Him by **faith in Him**. Verse 20 of our text says *the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord*. Faith in Jesus Christ turns fear to

joy, panic to peace and doubt to confident confession in faith, exclaiming of Jesus, *My Lord and my God!* (cf. John 20:28). Only faith in the Person & Work of Jesus can give you *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding* and which **will** guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (cf. Philippians 4:7).

There is so much of your life that you cannot see in the unknown future and so much that may come back to haunt your conscience from the guilty past. This can be ammunition which the devil uses in an effort to lead you into false belief which doubts your peace in Jesus. He uses it in an effort to lead you into despair over your present and your eternal future. He may even use it in an effort to lead you into other ways to drown out your fear with shameful sins. When Jesus says, "Peace be with **you**," it is a reassurance that you do not have to carry these burdens anymore because He carried them all for you on the cross.

It is in His accomplished work of redemption for frail, frightened sinners that Jesus confidently says: *Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.* (verse 21) Jesus sends a bunch of frightened people into a sinful world to accomplish the heavenly Father's work of calling people to repent of their sins and believe in Him? (cf. John 20:22-23) I wonder how His disciples in that room heard this command from His lips. They sure didn't appear like a bunch of guys who wanted this task.

Yet, faith in **Jesus Christ** gives you a different perspective of your life and God's time which He has entrusted to your care. It rests in His power over everything in life—power over what you need for daily sustenance; power over both adverse and comfortable times; yes, even power over a virus. Through faith in Jesus the Holy Spirit empowers you to live a life of joy even amidst struggles and sorrows; of hope even when things look so despairing; of peace even amidst so much turmoil in life; of victory over the disabling affects of fear and doubt. Amen.

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

(Romans 15:13)

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