**JOHN 20:19-31**

**PAIRS AND SPARES CLASS**

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, WAYCROSS**

**MAY 21, 2023**

**INTRODUCTION**

The focal verses for today’s study are taken from John 20:19-31.

Jesus of Nazareth had assured His disciples and followers that He was the Promised Messiah, sent by God to reveal God to them and to all who would listen and see and accept.

He had told His disciples what to expect: that He would be arrested, tried, crucified, and buried, but that He would rise from death.

According to John, it was now the Sunday after His death and burial on Friday. Earlier that morning, women had gone to his grave to finish the burial process; they had found an empty tomb but had encountered the living Jesus. Mary Magdalene had seen Him and spoken with Him, and she had shared her experience with Peter and John. But when they had run to the empty tomb, they didn’t meet Jesus. Later that day, Jesus had revealed Himself to Peter, and He had walked with two disciples to a town called Emmaus where He had actually broken bread and prayed with them.

In a seven-day period, Jesus had gone from entering Jerusalem triumphantly to the cheers of the throngs to being crucified and buried. It had been a week filled with both hope and despair. Now there were followers of Jesus who were seeing and talking with and eating with the living Jesus.

What in the world was going on?

**FROM FEAR TO PEACE** (John 20:19-23)

That Sunday evening, the disciples of Jesus gathered together in a building where they had locked the doors because they were fearful of the Jews. The Jews had been successful in killing Jesus. Surely the Jews would come for His followers next.

All of a sudden, even though the doors were securely locked, the living, breathing Jesus “stood among them” in bodily form (20:19b). Jesus looked like Jesus, but His transformed body was not restrained by the physical limitations that our bodies have.

?What did Jesus say to these startled friends and followers? (“’Peace be with you!’” (20:19b); Shalom.)

As He always does, Jesus had the perfect word for them, what they needed most: Shalom—peace!

Shalom was the traditional greeting among the Jews. For many Jews, it still is. But the word meant more than simply the absence of personal conflict or the absence of war. When offered, it carried with it a sense of fullness and completeness in body, mind, spirit, and being. It spoke of restoration and complete inner peace, the peace that only God can provide; the peace of God.

Jesus encouraged His followers to be at complete inner peace, to lose all their fears and worries, to trust Him, to be restored by God, to live the abundant life that Jesus had taught them about.

?Not only did He offer a calming word, what else did Jesus do? (He “showed them his hands and side” (20:20a)).

?Why do you think He did this? (to prove He really was Jesus! The man standing before them bore the scars of One Who had been nailed to a cross and speared by a Roman soldier, just like Jesus had. This man Who had miraculously appeared, Who was standing there with them, was Jesus!!)

?How did the disciples react? (John says they were “overjoyed” (20:20b) which probably does not fully describe what they were feeling and experiencing. John’s comment may be one of the greatest understatements in all of recorded history!)

At that point, Jesus told them once again, Shalom—“’Peace be with you!’”

And then He outlined the purpose He had planned for them: Just as God had sent Jesus to show God to them, Jesus was sending them to show God and His plan of salvation to others.

John 20:22 is one of those verses that causes us trouble or confusion: “And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

Jesus reminded His followers that the Holy Spirit would be gifted by God to them because Jesus had asked God to do so. The actual coming of the Holy Spirit would occur later at Pentecost, not that Sunday night.

To help us better understand the meaning of John 20:22, Dr. Julius R. Mantey, a Greek scholar, wrote that the literal translation of this verse from the original Greek is, “Whosoever sins you remit [forgive] shall have already been forgiven them, and whosoever sins you retain [do not forgive] shall have already not been forgiven them.” [Be Transformed, W. W. Wiersbe, page 167]

Only God has the authority to forgive sin. The disciples were not the ones who forgave sins, but they were the ones who proclaimed the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ.

Those who repent and place their faith in Jesus, those who proclaim that Jesus is the Son of God, crucified, buried, and raised to life, are forgiven by God of their sins.

**FROM DISBELIEF TO PROOF** (John 20:24-28)

Not all of the Apostles were in that room on that Sunday evening. Judas had hung himself, and for some unexplained reason, Thomas, also known as “Didymus” or the Twin, was not there.

The other disciples told Thomas that Jesus had appeared to them. Perhaps they might have even told him Jesus had shown them the scars in His hands and side.

?When Thomas was told that the other disciples had seen Jesus, how did he react? (“’Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.’” Perhaps Thomas was saying, unless Jesus shows me what He showed you, I won’t believe that He is alive.)

?Most people remember Thomas as “Doubting Thomas.” But what else do we know about Thomas?

1. In John 11:16, when Jesus told His disciples that He was going to Bethany, in the area where the Jews were intent on killing Jesus, it was Thomas who declared, “’Let us also go, that we may die with him.’”
2. In John 14:5-6, as Jesus was reassuring His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them and would return to take them to be with Him, it was Thomas who said, “’Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?’ Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
3. In John 21:2-14, after the resurrection, Thomas was one of the seven disciples who had fished all night but caught nothing. A man on the shore of the Sea of Galilee told them to cast their net on the other side of the boat, and when they did they caught a net full of fish, 153 in all. That man on the shore was Jesus. Thomas and the other six disciples would have breakfast on that shore and commune with their risen Lord.

Getting back to our focal Scripture, a week after Jesus had appeared to His disciples, all of them, including Thomas, were again in the same house behind locked doors. Like before, Jesus “came and stood among them,” offering them Shalom—“’Peace be with you!’’ (20:26).

?Jesus turned to Thomas, and what did He tell Thomas in John 20:27?

1. Touch my scars, look at the scars in my hands, touch the scar in my side; do what you said you needed to do in order to believe that I am alive;
2. “’Stop doubting and believe.’”

?And how did Thomas respond? (He proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!’”)

Thomas’s proclamation is the first recorded post-resurrection acknowledgement by anyone that Jesus is not only his Lord but also his God.

Thomas had seen the scars and had gone from doubting to knowing with absolute certainty that Jesus was alive, that Jesus was the Messiah, that Jesus was the living Son of God.

**FROM HOPELESSNESS TO CERTAIN ASSURANCE IN JESUS AS THE SAVIOR, MESSIAH** (John 20:29-31)**\***

Jesus acknowledged that Thomas had reached his conclusion about Jesus because Thomas had physically seen the risen Jesus, had seen the scars of the crucifixion. In reality, the same is true of the other disciples, too.

But Jesus went on to acknowledge that other people would place their faith in Him even though they would not have the privileged experience of physically seeing Jesus. Jesus described these future Believes as “blessed” (20:29b).

We who are Believers today are members of that blessed group of people who have placed our faith in Jesus even though we have not seen or touched the physical evidence of His resurrection.

?In John 20:30, what did John say about Jesus? (That John had not recorded every single miraculous sign that he had witnessed Jesus perform; that there were many more.)

?In John 20:31, what did John say the purpose of his writing this gospel was? (“…that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”)

John has told us more than enough for us to know with absolute assurance that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the only Son of God, through Whom we can see God, know God, be cleansed of our sins, and experience eternal life.

Do you, do I, really believe that Jesus is Who He says He is, that He is alive, and that He wants to have a personal relationship with us?

**CONCLUSION**

The disciples had been fearing that at any moment the Jews could burst in to arrest and kill them. But instead, in the midst of their fears, Jesus suddenly burst into their lives to bring them peace and hope and purpose. Locked doors, and even locked hearts, are no match for Jesus. In the midst of our fears, Jesus can burst into our lives to give us peace and hope and purpose.

Thomas was not with the other disciples on that first Sunday night, and he missed seeing Jesus. There are times when we decide not to fellowship with other Believers, and our absence can cause us to miss what could be once-in-a-lifetime blessings!

Jesus demonstrates His love for us in many different ways:

1. He comes to His followers—Jesus seeks out those who love Him and are open to Him;
2. He reassures His followers—His hands and side were scarred—wounds He willingly accepted for us!; and,
3. He enables His followers through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus died for us! Jesus rose from death for us! Jesus lives for us!

The scars on the hands and the side of the risen Jesus are the result of my sins and your sins. Perhaps more significantly, these scars are the result of and the evidence of the love that Jesus has for you and for me.