

Jesus in the Midst

Open your Bibles this morning to John 20:19-23.

Before we begin this morning, let's take a moment for prayer!

[19] Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

[20] And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.

[21] Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

[22] And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost:

[23] Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

I know this morning that you were expecting Part 4 of the series, Being Wise about the Resurrection and I fully intend to finish that series.

But as I was reading the Scriptures the other morning I came across this section of verses in John's Gospel and the words in verse 19, where it says, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, started me thinking about this question:

"What does the resurrection do for me?"

Several thoughts came to mind almost immediately.

Resurrection means that Jesus is with me.

He is here today, this morning in this service, "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them."

The resurrection meant to these disciples that it was possible for Jesus, bodily, and physically to be in the midst of them.

Notice if you will three things about these disciples.

First, they were behind locked doors. That indicates fear! They were afraid. They were locked in the room for fear of the Jews.

In their thinking, they were the next targets. Better at this point to sort of make themselves scarce.

Secondly, Jesus walked through the locked doors and stood in the midst of them. This was something that they had neither expected nor anticipated.

Thirdly, this is in reality the first “church” meeting even though at this point the church hasn’t really been empowered.

The “church” was established in Matthew 16 but it was not empowered until Acts 2.

It was here in this “first” meeting that Jesus met with His disciples after the resurrection.

Thomas was the only one not there. We won’t deal with Thomas this morning but he missed, for whatever reason this first meeting with the Lord Jesus after the resurrection.

We could say this in defense of Thomas: he was probably scared as well as skeptical.

But we’ll deal with Thomas some other time. See what it is possible to miss when you miss church?

Anyway, Jesus came, walked right through the locked door and stood in the midst of them.

That ought to be the deepest desire of our hearts; that Jesus would be in our midst; that He would be in the midst of our lives, our homes, our jobs, and, of course, our worship.

I believe Jesus is here this morning.

His promises are clear. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.”

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

The earnest desire of our hearts should be that Jesus would be in our midst.

Notice if you will the first thing that Jesus’ resurrection did for them and it will do the same for us.

First, it made them peaceful. Jesus in the midst will make us peaceful, verse 19.

Isaiah promised, and this is one of my favorite verses, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee,” Isaiah 26:3.

Romans 5:1, says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

And, of course, Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

Have you ever considered what a blessing it is when our problems pile up so high we can’t possibly solve them?

Now don’t misunderstand me, I’m not saying that we should be glad when our problems overwhelm us except to say that James said we should “count it all joy.”

I am saying we should be glad that they are more than we can handle.

Why? Because when we realize we can’t carry the weight of the world on our shoulders, we have taken the first step to overcoming worry and bringing peace into our hearts.

This is extremely personal.

I think God gave this to me because He knew I have been trying to carry and solve a situation right here at this church that I can neither solve nor handle.

God is going to have to step in and handle it.

That realization brought peace.

I realized that Jesus was in the midst telling me that He would handle it and that He was the only One who could.

That’s what the presence of the Living Lord does. It brings peace.

Then secondly, Jesus in the midst, the presence of the resurrected Lord brings joy, verse 20.

Did you catch the last part of verse 20?

“Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”

They thought that they had lost their Friend through His death on the cross.

I believe they honestly thought this was the end.

They thought all promises He had made them were now gone and would never come to pass.

The disciples had walked with the Lord for some three and one-half years and they were sad at the events of the past days: the crucifixion and burial of their long-time Friend.

And then Jesus appeared to them and they were ecstatic.

I don't think the simple phrase does justice to the joy they felt, the gladness they felt in their hearts at the appearance of our Lord.

They were just glad to see Him.

That scene was only made possible through the resurrection of our Lord.

Then, thirdly, Jesus in the midst will not only bring us peace (and notice that Jesus said that twice in verse 19 and verse 21) and joy but Jesus in the midst will also make us useful, verse 21.

Notice what Jesus said, "As my Father has sent me, so send I you."

There is a mission and Jesus has commissioned us to do it.

We are to be a mouth to speak for Jesus.

We are to be feet to carry the good news of the gospel to all the world.

We are to be hands to carry on the work that he has given us to do.

We are to be a heart that not only loves Jesus but shows the love of Jesus to a lost and dying world.

We need mouth, feet, hands, and heart to work right here, in this community, in this county to reach others for Christ.

That ought to be our ultimate goal: to reach others for Christ.

We don't need "churchianity." We need "Christianity."

We need to lead men and women, young men and young women, boys and girls to Christ right here in our midst and Jesus will be in our midst to help us because He sent us to do the work.

He commissioned us to do the work.

“As My Father sent me, so send I you.”

I thought about this: It is only as God, as Jesus, strengthens us that we will be able to do this work to which He has called us and sent us.

Jesus will not leave us powerless. He said, “All power in heaven and earth is given unto me.”

And that brings me to my fourth and final thought this morning.

Jesus in the midst will make us powerful, verse 22.

The power that Jesus has is given to us via the Holy Spirit.

We are to “go in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God.”

You and I are not responsible for the results.

You and I are only responsible to go!

And there is plenty of “going” that needs to be done right here at New England Baptist Church.

If we go in our own power, we will fail.

If we go in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to Him, we will never fail even though we might think we do.

God never fails.

Were it not for the power of Christ and the power of the resurrection no work for God would ever be accomplished on this earth.

I’ll close with this old familiar story.

A man named Shoemaker went into a shoe store to witness to a man in his Sunday School class.

When Mr. Shoemaker left that store his thoughts were that he had failed in his witness; that it was a pitiful witness of which nothing would come.

But the man to whom he witnessed that day was Dwight Lyman Moody and Mr. Moody, through the power of God shook two continents for God.

Jesus was in the midst of that witness, wasn't He?

His power was there and even though Mr. Shoemaker thought he had failed, God had made him powerful.

Only the resurrection can do that.

Let's bow for prayer!