

John 20:19-23

~ Good News for Cowards ~

Introduction

Well approximately 23 years ago (almost 24) the American people woke up on **September 11** to a brand **new reality** – a **new way** of living...

Security

Approximately 23 years ago on **September 11**, the World Trade Center attack forever **changed the way** we thought about **travel & world-wide terrorism!**

- Airport security around the world became stricter and much more concrete...
- Federal Governments began expanding their surveillance & security measures at airports & airfields all around the world...
- The U.S. military launched campaigns in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and many other Middle Eastern places...
- There were short-term economic changes – & long-term economic downfalls...
- The world introduced **increased visa restrictions** & travel documentation...
- There were more extensive background checks – I.D. requirements – and travel plans for international people...

There were **policy** changes – **government** changes – **security** changes – **political** changes – **cultural** changes!

It was a day that **forever changed** the world as we knew it!

In 2021 the Washington Post summarised these changes well – when it said this:

Like the attacks on Fort Sumter and Pearl Harbor, the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington were events that seemed to cleave history itself, carving America's timeline into a "before" and "after" that existed in [two] entirely different dimensions...

2 entirely different worlds created by one historical event!

John 20

Now in a lot of ways this idea of a **life altering reality** – a **life-altering event** is **what we find** happening here in our text of John chapter 20 this morning!

Found in the resurrection account on Sunday morning – the disciples that day woke up this day to:

A brand-new reality!

A new way of living!

A completely different world that was coming about **because of:**

The death – burial – and the resurrection of the Son of God!

You see throughout the ministry of Jesus – He had repeatedly promised that He was bringing about a **new Kingdom** – a **new Covenant** – and a **New Covenant people....**

It's what we've been learning in the book of Acts that Craig's been taking us through recently!

With the **coming of** this King comes a brand **new order** of business – a new way of living – and a **whole new set of Kingdom priorities/principles** that the **followers of Christ** obtain **because of:**

This accomplishment of this King!

And so this morning as we come to our passage in John chapter 20 we're gonna see a list of these **new benefits** and **priorities** outlined for us and for these disciples!

New priorities

New benefits
 And a new way of living
 All because of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead!

Main Point

And so the main thing we're gonna see in light of Jesus accomplishing salvation for us is this:

We as the disciples of Jesus Christ are commissioned in the **peace** of the gospel – through the **power** of the Spirit – to **proclaim** His glorious message!

We're gonna see that in 3 parts:

Gospel Peace
 Gospel Power
 Gospel Proclamation

John 20

So John chapter 20 beginning at verse 19 – John writes:

When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, "Peace be with you." And having said this, He showed them His hands and His side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you." And after saying this, He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, then they are retained..."

Opening Gambit

The gospels often record a number of **post-resurrection appearances** that take place in the **forty days** prior to the ascension of Jesus!

These appearances take place in a number of **different ways** to a number of **different people** – and **scholars are divided** on how to tally them up!

Now the debate is **NOT** so much over **THAT** these appearances happened – but the debate is over **how** and in **what manner** these appearances occurred!

In fact here is a chart I found in a commentary on John that I thought was pretty helpful to see...

But regardless of how we are counting up these post *resurrection appearances* – the reality of them **CANNOT** be lost on us:

Jesus delights in **being** with His people!

Jesus delights in **meeting** with His people!

His delight has **always been** with the sons of men!

And it's a profound reality when you think about it!

Because He could have spent His **last 40 days** hiding in the wilderness alone with His Father – He could have gone up on a very high mountain and given us a **new list** of laws and commandments – He could have burrowed down in a dungeon somewhere contemplating His **victory & defeat** over the Kingdom of Satan!

But rather what **He chooses to do** – and what He **delights in doing** – is gathering with His people on the first day of the week (**on the Lord's Day**) to comfort and console their weary hearts!

Peace

And the first way He does that is by **reminding them first** of:

Gospel Peace

And boy did they need the peace of God!

Verse 19 says that:

*The disciples were gathered together with the doors locked **because they feared the Jews...***

Obviously, they thought that if the Jews had killed their Messiah – they saw what they did to Jesus just **3 days earlier** on the cross then:

Obviously the followers of Jesus were **going to be next!**

If they were associated with this King & insurrectionist, then obviously they were going to meet the same fate **as Him!**

John 15

And **in some ways** this is exactly what Jesus had **warned them** was **going to happen** – in John 15:20 **you may remember** that Jesus said:

A servant is not greater than his master. ' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you...

And again in verse 18:

If the world hates you, know that it hated me first...

And so no doubt the Disciples were **thinking to themselves** that because Jesus has been persecuted – killed – crucified – and buried:

THEY WERE GOING TO BE NEXT!

Feared the Romans

Remembering also that the Romans historically had a reputation for **killing** any **would-be** Messiah's gathering a following in the wilderness or in the city of Jerusalem...and they **wouldn't just** kill the Person **claiming to be** the leader of this cult – but rather they would:

Violently **rip out** His influence **root & stem** which included killing his would-be followers!

And so the disciples **were NOT unreasonable** for hiding themselves away in this locked room...they were **just wrong** about the **deadness & divinity** of Jesus!

Stood Among them

And that's why I love the way John describes His appearance to them in verse 19 – that suddenly **out of nowhere** the text tells us that:

Jesus shows us...He stood among them...He appears before their very eyes!

Now we **don't know** how He appeared among them – we **don't know** what method of transportation He took – did He teleport to them – did He walk through the walls – did He come up through the floor-boards:

We don't know!

All we know is that:

One moment He **wasn't there** – and then **all of a sudden** He shows up!

Liberal Theology

And I always love how liberal theologians try to explain verses like this away!

Some liberals will say that:

*Jesus appeared among them simply because He was **hiding** in the room – like there He was waiting for them to come in **so that** He could play peekaboo when they entered the home!*

Other will say that:

Maybe He simply snuck into the room with the rest of the disciples... as if know one else saw Him with them in the crowd...

Others will say that:

He went and came through the window!

After His **flogging** – after His **beating** – after His **crucifixion** – being buried for 3 days He's now got this strength to **become spiderman** scaling the building and climbing into through the window!

And then finally there is **another set** of liberals who say that:

Jesus actually just came down through the roof!

Now I highlight those attempts – **NOT to poke fun** at the liberals (though that's **NOT** always bad thing to do) – but I highlight those to simply show you what we're up against... that **as Christians** we live in a world where people **will do anything** they can to deny the existence & physical resurrection of Jesus!

They will do anything they can to deny the God **they know** exists!

And we as His people **must NOT be ashamed** where the text is **plainly** and **authoritatively** in saying that:

Jesus appeared among them!

Supernaturally!

Miraculously!

Jesus Christ somehow in His resurrection body could **rearrange the molecules** in His body to go **right through** the physical walls of the home – **in the same way** that He rearranged the molecules in His grave clothes to go **right through** the linen wrappings!

He appears among them!

NOT Limited

And that's probably a **more comforting thought** than what we first realize...

Because what this is communicating to us is that:

Jesus is **NOT bound** by our finite human limitations!

That you **cannot lock** Jesus out of your life or situation that you're in...

And that Jesus is **NOT limited** in getting into **those parts** of our lives where **no one else** can go!

John Piper says that Jesus in His **post resurrection body**:

Can go where no counsellor can ever dare to go!

He can go where no doctor can go!

He can go where no spouse can go!

Pastor can go!

He can reach into your depths – and into your life at **anytime** and **anywhere!**

Friends Jesus is **NOT bound** by your finite human limitations!

Peace

And so Jesus shows up and the first thing He says to these guys is:

Peace be with you

And He's gonna **repeat this phrase** a few more times before the end of the chapter!

In the Hebrew the word means *Shalom* – and the notion of *Shalom* is an expectation that **fills the Prophet's** mouths with the coming of Messiah!

It's really a word we trace from **Eden** to **Revelation** that speaks of God restoring the world back to its original Garden!

It's a word that brings peace – calm – serenity – wholeness!

And in the Old Testament – Shalom often meant the blessing of God that was to come with salvation
brought about by the Messiah – in the age of Messiah!

Ezekiel 34:25 says that:

*A **covenant of peace** I will make with the household of Israel where He will banish the dangerous animals from the land... He will increase the yield of their fruit... He will break the bars of bondage and deliver them from the hand of their oppressors!*

*And in that day **they shall know** that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them...*

And so in the Old Testament this notion of peace often referred to both the **restoration** of God's people – but more specifically it was a **deliverance** from the hand of their enemies!

They were captives being set free from their enemies – and **when they were set free** they were said to have had:

Peace from God!

New Covenant

This was true in the Old Testament times – and it's also true in the New Testament Scriptures!

In Colossians chapter 1 Paul the Apostle says that:

He [being Christ] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins....

Verse 19:

*For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, whether on earth or in heaven, **by making peace by the blood of His cross.***

It's the cross that accomplishes peace with God!

His Wounds

Jesus shows up *proclaiming peace* to his disciples and then notice the very next thing **in verse 20**:

After Jesus had said this – this being: *peace be with you!*

He showed them His hands and His side...

In other words – I think Jesus was taking the Old Covenant notion of *peace* in the Prophets – and **connecting it** to its **New Covenant counterpart**:

Peace through the blood of His cross!

The **peace** that was **promised** in the Old Covenant era is **fulfilled** in Jesus by **purchasing peace** with God on the cross!

So that it's **by His wounds** that we are healed – it is **through His side** that we **now have peace!**

This is why Paul declares in Ephesians 2:14 that:

*Christ Himself is our peace...and that you who were once far off have now **been brought near** by His blood!*

Or in **Romans 5** where Paul empathically declares that:

*All those who have been justified by faith, now have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ...*

Because it's **only in** the death of Christ – and specifically **by His wounds** that we are healed!

The Gospel

So friends if you are here this morning **NOT trusting** in the finished work of Jesus – you haven't trusted in His death – in His burial – or in His resurrection – then the bible says that:

You are at war with God!

And you do **NOT** have peace with God!

And Jesus comes and **stands among us** in the text of John 20 and He says:

*Peace, I give to you – if you would only **look to me**; look to my **hands**; look to my **side** and trust that those wounds are **for you**!*

Because it's only **by this God** and **through this Lamb** that our sins can be atoned for and peace can be obtained!

One pastor says:

Jesus is the prince of peace, and His wounds proved that it was so...

Spurgeon

I love the way that Spurgeon wrote when speaking of the wounds of Jesus when pastoring the Metropolitan Tabernacle:

Did you know that Spurgeon wrote hymns?!?!

He actually **compiled a Hymnbook** for his church that were **mostly composed of** Isaac Watts's famous Hymns that he had written...

But one of the **few hymns** that Spurgeon **actually wrote** with his own hand was one *on the Lord's Table* in which he wrote this:

*Amidst us our Beloved stands,
And bids us view His pierced hands;
points to the wounded feet and side,
blest emblems of the Crucified.*

Because he wanted to communicate the idea that on the cross of Christ, God had won **peace with God** – so that when He was raised from the dead this phrase “**peace be with you**” was the perfect complement to the cry on that cross:

It is finished!

It is finished **therefore** we have peace with God!

And so far from **being** a simple Jewish greeting of saying *hello* to the disciples in this Upper Room – this phrase was intended to **settle** their **hearts** and **focus** their **minds** on the reality of the situation!

Power

And the situation was that He was sending them out as missionaries to the world:

And that's what we see in our **second point** where Jesus gives to them:

Gospel Power

Verse 21 says:

So Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you...

So this has rightly been called:

John's version of the Great Commission

You probably know that **every Gospel** has a version of the **Great Commission** – a place where Jesus sends them out into the world to proclaim His message:

Matthew says: *Go therefore and make disciples of every nation...*

Mark says: *Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to every creature...*

Luke/Acts both say: *And you will be my witnesses to all these things...*

But see **the difference between** those versions of the Great Commission – and John's version of these things – is that **John's version** is highly specific – John's version is highly Christo-centric!

And what I mean by that is that:

John's version **significantly anchors** the mission of the church in the Mission of the Son!

The **sending** of the church in the **sending** of the Son!

As the Father has sent me so also I am sending you!

John 17:18 says:

As you sent me into the world, so also I have sent them [speaking of the disciples] into the world...

The **mission** of the church is grounded in the **Mission** of the Son!

The 3 M's of Mission

And so **what does it mean** that we have been sent into the world just as Jesus has been sent into the world?

What does the **capital M** *mission of God* have to do with the **lower case m** *mission of the church*?

Well, let me offer you **3 clues** that might help us to consider this statement of Jesus – and we might think of these clues in terms of:

Movement

Manner

Motive

So first our mission is a mission of:

Movement

As the Father sends Jesus into the world – so Jesus sends us into the world!

Jesus is **repeatedly said** to have been *sent from the Father* throughout John's Gospel!

John 1 verse 9 says:

*The true light was **coming into the world***

Verse 14:

And the word became flesh and dwelt among us...

John 3:13:

No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended out of heaven...

John 6:38:

For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of Him who sent me...

John 6:51:

I am the living bread that came down from heaven...

And so the *pros Ton theon*; the one who was with God and in God – who was with the Father – came into the world from the throne-room of grace!

And then repeatedly **throughout John's Gospel** Jesus emphatically repeats:

I and the Father are one!

As the Father sent me!

I come from the Father!

The Father sends the Son!

The Son obeys the Father!

Jesus leaves the **throne of heaven** – He comes to the dust of earth and that is a movement that is **going outward** in nature!

Outward in movement!
 The light **goes out** into the world!
 Jesus **goes out** into creation!

And so too the church is called to advance the gospel in a similar way – **NOT** just in their own towns and villages but to all the people in all the world:

To go therefore and make disciples of every nation!

This is what we've been learning in the book of Acts – that the gospel goes from **Jerusalem** – to **Judea** – to **Samaria** – **Asia** – **Europe** – **Rome** – and to all the ends of the earth...

The church is called to an **outward advancement** of the gospel!

Or to a **centrifugal movement** of the gospel!
 And so the first one is **movement!**

It's a gospel that **goes outward!**

*As the Father sends the Son **into the world** – so the Son sends the church **out...into** the world!*

Manner

Second our mission is defined by Jesus':

Manner

How did Jesus go out into the world – well I would argue that He went out **in a manner of:**

Humble **submission & dependence** upon His heavenly Father!

John chapter 5 says:

The Son can do nothing of His own accord, but only what He sees the Father doing...

John 4:34 says:

The food of the Son is characterized by obedience to the will of the Father...

*My food He says **is to do** the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work!*

And so like Jesus in the Gospel of John – the **sum & substance** of the churches mission is found in:

Humble submission & obedience to the Father!

Our joy as the Church is **found exclusively** in doing the Father's will & obeying the Father's mission – we go out in the **manner** of how Jesus went out into the world:

Submitting to the Father!

Obedying the Father!

Relying on the Father!

One pastor says it better than anyone else I know:

*There is great benefit in knowing that God could continue advancing His Kingdom without us. And apart from the God-man Jesus Christ, no human being will ever be indispensable to God's plans & purposes on the earth. Yet shockingly, amazingly...God's eternal plan and purpose **includes us**. And so too He has chosen you, not out of any need or necessity, but out of the **sheer abundant pleasure** of His own divine heart, to see you useful in the Father's kingdom...*

It's a humbling thing – isn't it!

To know that God **does NOT need** you or me in the purpose of mission – to know that He can advance His kingdom with or without us...and yet in His **infinite kindness** He chooses to use us in the Father's mission!

And so we go out into the world **in the same manner** that Jesus goes out into the world:

Solely depending on His Father's will and infinite good pleasure!

Motive

So we have something of the **movement** – something of the **manner** and then finally:

*Something of **the motive***

We go out into the world in the same **motive** as God's Son!

What was Jesus' motive for coming into the world?!?!

Well, we know that in **John 12:27** Jesus speaks of coming into the world:

To glorify the Father!

And we know also that His mission in **John 1:18** was to:

Exegete the Father!

To **reveal** the Father and to **make** the Father **known** to the world!

Matthew 11:27 says:

No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him...

And then finally in John 17 Jesus prays:

Father glorify the Son, that the Son may glorify you...

And so we know that the mission of Jesus always involved this 2-way commitment of both
revelation and exaltation of the Father in the Son!

And **so too** the church **as it goes out** into the world – it goes out:

Glorifying God and making His gospel known!

Trinitarian Model

And I wonder if you noticed that the way this sending occurs here is **deeply Trinitarian:**

The Father **sends** the Son – the Son **exhales** the Spirit – and the disciples are **empowered** for missions!

And to be honest why would it **NOT** be this way – given that **throughout John's Gospel** Jesus has been **highly specific** in focusing His mission on this **intra-Trinitarian model** that He's been heralding!

This is something that He's been telling us from the earliest days of His ministry in John chapter 4!

Remember we saw that in the *Upper Room* on the **final night** of His life – that when the **whole world** was crumbling around His disciples Jesus has **one final evening** to encourage their hearts and settle their minds – and what He chooses to do is **focus His efforts** on the **Intra-Trinitarian workings** of:

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!

The Trinity was the answer to their anxious hearts/their troubled anxiety!

And the reason is because:

The shape of missions is – and **must always be** highly Trinitarian in nature

And so it's fitting then that **as we come to the end** of John's Gospel – a Gospel that has been shaped by this Trinitarian theology – we see this **Trinitarian model** coming out in the shape of missions:

The Father **sends the Son** – the Son **obeys the Father** – and the Spirit **comes upon** the disciples and the mission continues on!

As one book puts it:

*The Trinity in John's Gospel explains how the world began: **in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God....***

*The Trinity explains where the world is heading in John 17: **that they all may be one as the Father and the Son are one...***

*And the Trinity explains how we will get to this accomplishment and goal: **the Father sending the Son, the Son sending the disciples, and the Spirit coming upon them in this empowerment...***

His Presence

And so the good news of this mission is that Jesus **doesn't just** send us to go in this **white-knuckled** obedience – as if He says:

*Okay I'm going to be with the Father – I am sending you out – now go and I'll be back in a **few thousand years** when you complete the mission...*

But rather He gives us the **tools/** the **power/** and the **ability** to accomplish the task that He is giving!

This is why we see Him breathing on the disciples in verse 22 – that:

*After saying **this** [As the father has sent me so I am sending you] – He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit..."*

So Jesus **doesn't just** give them the command – but He gives them the **power/**and the **tools** to accomplish the command!

Symbolic

This is why He breathes on them in verse 22 and says:

Receive the Holy Spirit...

Obviously, that's caused a host of theological issues for people!

Many have wondered if Pentecost is historically the moment when God gave the Spirit to His Church – how then do we interpret this verse in light of Acts chapter 2?!?!

What does it mean that Jesus said to them:

Receive the Holy Spirit...

A Piece of God

Some people have said:

Maybe Jesus was giving them a piece of His Holy Spirit...

Calvin says in his commentary:

They were only sprinkled by His grace but not filled with full power...

Almost like they were **saved in John** – but **NOT empowered** until the Day of **Pentecost!**

That's a very popular view...

Private Pentecost

Others have said that:

*Maybe this is like a Private-Pentecost where the **Disciples are filled** with the Spirit – but **the rest of them weren't filled** until the Day of Pentecost...*

So it's like a **private indwelling** they receive...

Others have said:

*That maybe what He's giving them is **NOT** the **HOLY** Holy Spirit but a different spirit that is holy...*

Kind of like the **impersonal breath** of God in Genesis 2 that God gave to Adam!

Contradiction

And then others have simply said:

*Well maybe this is a contradiction and it just **shouldn't be** in the bible...*

Proleptic

But all of those interpretations seem to completely complicate the situation and **undermine what John** has been **trying to do** throughout His Gospel!

I think the **most simple reading** of the text [one that compliments Acts 2] is to say that:

Throughout John's Gospel Jesus often does things **in the moment** to symbolise something that's **going to take place** in the future

So an example of that is in **John 13** when Jesus washes the disciples' feet – He says to them:

If I do NOT wash you, you have no part with me...there is no inheritance in eternal life...

But does He really mean that the cleansing that took place that night in the Upper Room was the **literal washing** away of their sins?!?!

Was that foot washing **actually removing** their guilt before a Holy God?!?!

Well, NO of course **NOT** – Jesus was **symbolically pointing** to His death on the cross that would **spiritually wash away** their sins through His blood!

The washing was a **right now** symbol of an **event** that was going to take place sometime **in the future!**

Last Supper

Or what about the cup He gives at the Last Supper – where He says:

This cup is the New Covenant in my blood...

But does He mean that **that wine** in **that cup** is really **right then** the blood of the New Covenant given for them?!?!

Well NO **of course NOT** – the Cup is a symbol of what was **going to happen** when He pours out His blood on the cross **in the New Covenant!**

And **so too here** when Jesus breathes out His breath and says:

Receive the Holy Spirit...

He was merely demonstrating what was **going to happen** 50 days from now when He **empowered the Church** on the Day of Pentecost!

His breath was an acted parable [a symbol] of what's going to happen at Pentecost!

Prophets

And the prophets often did this kind of thing in their particular ministries:

Ezekiel laid on his side
Hosea married a Prostitute
Isaiah was naked and barefoot
And so on!

The Prophets often did sign-acts that were associated with the message that they spoke to the people!

Proclamation

And so **if that is the case** – if Jesus was simply **doing a sign-act** for His Apostles – how then do we take verse 23 which **also sounds** very interesting:

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; but if you retain the sins of any, they are retained...

Now again at **first glance** this sounds like the Roman Catholic understanding of the Priest going in and forgiving sinners on the basis of their confession in a booth!

If you go to your local priest – you confess your sins – and pay the guy some money then you too
can merit eternal life!

But that's a **gross** misinterpretation of the Scriptures! Because Jesus said multiple times that:

Only God can forgive sins!

Only God has the ability to forgive and pronounce the abolishment of sins!

So what I think He's saying is **something similar** to the **loosing** and **binding** language of Matthew
18!

*Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven – and whatever you loose on earth shall be
loosed in heaven – if you forgive their sins they will be forgiven – if you withhold their sins it is
withheld!*

So it's language **reminiscent of** a King **giving authority** to His servants **to speak** of His behalf!

This is **NOT** a pronouncement of a priest going into a booth and having the authority to forgive
people's sins – this is the authority found in the **preaching** and **proclamation** of the gospel wherein
Christians can **confidently assert** that all those who **repent** of their sins and **put their faith** in Christ
will have their sins forgiven!

And all those who **reject the message** of the gospel who **do NOT repent** and come to faith in Christ
will perish in their sins!

So this is a statement in connection with the mission of the gospel that He's sending them out to do!

As the Father sends me so I am sending you out to proclaim the forgiveness of sins through Jesus
Christ – in the power of the Spirit and the peace of the gospel of God!

These are the **beliefs** and the **benefits** of every Christian in the church of God:

Gospel peace – Gospel power – Gospel proclamation!

Application

And so the question becomes:

What are you doing with this?

What are you doing with this message?

I mean do you realize that we as Christians have the **only true message** of salvation that **anyone in the world** is gonna hear?!?!?

They're NOT gonna hear it from any other people?

This is it!

This is **all they get** – the Church of the living God!

Our church and every true church under heaven are the **only ones** who have the only message that leads to eternal life?!?!?

What are you doing with that?

I mean imagine having the **only cure** to cancer in the world – the **only cure** that can heal a broken body and you withhold that because it's awkward and uncomfortable to share?!?!?

I mean as Christians are we aware that we have been **caught up** in a **massive cosmic battle** and that God has given us a critical role to play in holding out forgiveness to people through:

The Gospel!

One pastor said it well when he said:

We would be a whole lot more sold out to Christ and to our Christian faith if we knew that demons were visible?

Friends you've been drafted into a **cosmic war** by the King of kings and Lord of lords!

And so let that affect **how you live your daily life** and let that affect how you preach the gospel!

Mr. Genor

Like it did for Jesus – like it did for these Apostles – and like it did for a man by the name of Mr. Genor

This all started a number of years ago in a Baptist church in Crystal Palace in South London. The Sunday morning service was closing and a man stood up at the back and raised his hand and said:

Excuse me pastor can I share a short testimony?

The pastor looked at his watch and said:

You have three minutes...

The man proceeded with his story – he said:

I've just moved into this area, and I used to live in Sydney Australia. Just a few months back I was visiting some relatives and walking down George Street, when a strange little white haired man stepped out from a shop doorway, put a pamphlet in my hand and said:

"Excuse me sir, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven?"

Now I was astounded by these words. **No one had ever asked me** that question before! I thanked him courteously and all the way on the plane back to London this puzzled me. I called a friend and thank God he was a Christian cause after speaking with him **he led me to Christ.**

Woman

The pastor was amazed and rejoicing at that testimony but he didn't really think **too much more** of it until **10 days later** the pastor flew to Adelaide and in the middle of a **three day conference** in Adelaide, a woman came up to **him for some counselling** when she said "I used to live in Sydney and just a couple of months back when I was doing some last minute shopping down in George

Street, when a strange little white haired man stepped out of a shop doorway and offered me a pamphlet and said:

"Excuse me madam, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven?"

I was disturbed by those words. But when I got home to Adelaide, I knew this Baptist church was on the next block from me. I sought out the pastor and **he led me to Christ...**

The London pastor was now very puzzled. **Twice in two weeks** he had heard the same testimony from 2 different people, in 2 different places!

Elder

He then flew to preach in a **large Church in Perth**. When his teaching series was over the senior elder of that Church took him out for a meal and he asked the elder how he got saved – the minister replied:

I grew up in this church from the age of 15. I never made a commitment to Jesus, just hopped on the bandwagon like everyone else. I was quite successful in business and I was on a business trip to Sydney just **three years ago** when an obnoxious spiteful little man stepped out of a shop doorway, offered me a religious pamphlet and said:

Excuse me sir, are you saved, if you die tonight are you going to heaven?

I tried to tell him that I was an elder in a Baptist church and had been in the church since the age of 15, but **he would NOT listen!**

I was seething with anger all the way home from Sydney to Perth. And so when I got home, I spoke to my pastor, thinking that he would sympathize, but he agreed. He had wondered for years about my relationship with Jesus, and he was right. And so my pastor led me to Jesus **just three years ago...**

Keswick

This London preacher then flew back home to speak at the Keswick convention in the Lake District and he spoke about these three testimonies. At the close of his teaching, four elderly pastors came up

and explained that they too had been saved between 25 and 30 years earlier through that same little man on George Street, offering a pamphlet and asking the same question.

And I mean this story goes on for several other people and places in the story— hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of testimonies like this all coming from this one little white haired man on George Street in Sydney handing out a pamphlet!

Mr Genor

Well the story goes that about **8 months later** that same London Pastor was preaching in Sydney Australia when he asked the **local Baptist Minister** if he knew of a elderly white haired man who handed out tracts on George Street. He replied:

Yes I do, his name is Mr. Genor, although I don't think he does it any more because he is so frail and elderly... in do know the address of his home...

Well two nights later they found where he lived and they went to meet him in his tiny **Sydney street apartment**. They knocked on the door and this **tiny frail old** man greeted them – He sat them down and made them tea. He was so frail that he was slopping the tea into the saucer as his hands shook violently!

And so for several minutes the London preacher sat there re-telling the story of the previous three years. How all these people got saved. And how they all praised God that Mr. Genor was the agent God used to save them!

And with **tears streaming down his cheeks** – He began to tell them his story of his own conversion – he said:

I was a naval officer on an Australian warship. And I was living a very sinful life. In a crisis I really hit the wall. One of my colleagues, to whom I gave literal hell to, was there to help. He led me to Jesus and the change in my life was night to day in 24 hours. I was so grateful to God; that I promised that I would share Jesus in a simple witness with at least 10 people a day. As God gave me strength I did that. Sometimes I was ill and couldn't do it, but I made up for the days I missed it at other times I have done this ministry for over 40 years. In my

retirement years, the best place was on George Street where I saw hundreds of people a day. I got many many rejections, but a lot of people courteously took the tract.

In 40 years of doing this, I have never once heard of one single person coming to faith until today.

Mr. Genor died two weeks later after that meeting...

2 weeks later he died to be with Jesus!

And all because 2,000 years ago – 10 fearful disciples were commissioned by Christ to go into the world and to preach the gospel!

Gospel peace – gospel power – gospel proclamation!

That is the church's **calling** and **commission** that we as Christians get to do by faith in the promise of God!

This is how God builds His Church!

This is how the kingdom expands!

And this is the good news God gives for cowardly people!

So let's pray – let's preach – let's give glory to our God!

Amen.

John 20:19-23

Discussion Questions

[Read John 20:19-23].

Main Point: *We as the disciples of Jesus Christ are commissioned in the peace of the gospel – through the power of the Spirit – to proclaim His message!*

Q1. How does the resurrection of Jesus introduce to us a brand-new reality? – What things have changed/or are being changed because of it?

Q2. How should the idea that Jesus delights in being with His people comfort our heart today? – How should it change the way we pray?

Q3. Why were the disciples afraid and hiding behind locked doors? – What fears in our lives can keep us from fully trusting Christ? – What was the cure to their fear?

Q4. Jesus' first words to His disciples were, "Peace be with you." Why is that significant? – How does the gospel bring peace?

Q5. Jesus shows His wounds to the disciples—why do you think He does this? How does His suffering relate to our peace with God [**Cf. Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:11-14; Colossians 1:19-20**].

Q6. Jesus says, “As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” How does this statement connect to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)?

Q7. What are the implications of the mission of Jesus being the model for our own mission? – Jesus breathes on the disciples and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit.

What does this moment symbolize and how does it relate to the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost?

Q8. What does Jesus mean when He says, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"? – How does this relate to gospel proclamation?