

Victory of the Lamb
Easter Sermon outline
Pastor Ben Sadler
April 11, 2020

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

²⁴ Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "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."

²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

²⁸ Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

³⁰ Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Introduction: I had high hopes for my first Easter at Victory. Preaching, Easter pictures, parties. In the last month, all of that has changed. Instead of hope, I've had fear and regret.

Did you have high hopes? Family vacation? Worship? Family gatherings?

We are locked in our homes with fear. Fear of the virus. Fear of a falling economy.

Crisis reveals our character. Maybe it has exposed some regrets.

That is what the disciples were feeling. They had high hopes for Jesus, his leadership, and his kingdom. A week earlier he had come into Jerusalem on a donkey. The disciples had hoped that by now Jesus would have set up his kingdom, kicked out Pontus Pilate, and reformed the religious system. They had hoped to be in places of power around his throne. But everything changed so quickly as Jesus went from the crowds praising him to the crowds calling out for his execution. They were afraid that they were next.

John says, ¹⁹ **On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders...** (John 20:19).

They also were filled with regret. They had abandoned Jesus when he needed them most. All of them, fled and left Jesus alone.

It was in the middle of this hopeless, with the doors locked, when Jesus appeared and said, **“Peace be with you!” (John 20:19)**. Instead of fear, Jesus was giving them peace. He was happy to see them. The first words out of his mouth were not, “Shame on you!” or “How could you!?” But, “Peace be with you.”

Then John says, ²⁰ **After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. (John 20:10)** Jesus invited them to touch his hands and side, to feel the nail marks and the spear mark. It was truly Jesus who was resurrected.

The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. (John 20:20) Their fear and regret had been turned to joy. The religious leaders didn't win. Death didn't win. The disciples had not screwed everything up. Jesus died and was resurrected back to life.

The disciples were filled with hope when they were locked in their home. Because Jesus lived their hope was alive too.

1. If Jesus lives, we have hope.

That's true, right? If Jesus is alive then we can have peace. If he is alive then we are forgiven. If Jesus lives, then not even death can destroy us. If Jesus really rose, then we can be filled with joy even when we are locked in our homes. Jesus showed up in the homes of the disciples. If he did the same for us, that would give us peace, wouldn't it?

Let's wait and see if he does it. If anyone sees Jesus' visible resurrected presence appear in their room, please let us know in the chatroom...anyone?...

Well, if Jesus didn't miraculously appear in front of you, you are not the only one. That was the disciple Thomas' experience too. Thomas was not in the room when Jesus appeared, so he was skeptical of Jesus' resurrection.

John writes, ²⁴ **Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “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.” (John 20:24-25)**

Thomas was not going to be duped. He wanted to see Jesus with his own eyes before he believed. He wanted to touch his body. I think we can understand why he wanted this kind of proof, this kind of assurance.

²⁶ **A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”**

Jesus almost scolded Thomas for doubting Jesus' words and promises and the clear testimony of the other 10 disciples. Jesus said, “Stop doubting, and believe”.

Thomas gave no excuse. He fell down before Jesus and cried out, **“My Lord and my God!”** Thomas came to believe that Jesus is God and that he had no right to demand anything from Jesus.

Jesus responds to Thomas, but his response seems to invite us in as well. **“Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)**

2. Believe before you see.

Jesus wants you to know that blessed (happy) are those who have not seen and yet believe. We have not seen the visible, resurrected presence of Jesus. I don't believe he has appeared in your homes, behind your locked doors anytime recently. Jesus says, “You are blessed if you believe even if you don't see.”

But how can we believe in something we don't see? How do you believe that Jesus is alive and resurrected? How do you believe that God is giving you his peace?

The writer John seems to anticipate this question because he says, ³⁰ **Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.** ³¹ **But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30-31)**

John says that he could have written about a lot of great things that Jesus did. But he wrote what he wrote so that you would believe that Jesus is the king and when you believe you have real life in his name. The resurrected Jesus is as close to you as your open Bible.

3. Read so that you believe.

That's why we exist as a church. We are a group of people that come from lots of different backgrounds, ages, and perspectives. But what brings us together is that we gather around this book. Week after week we open it up and let the resurrected Jesus speak to us through it. But we don't just open the Bible on Sunday. We continue to hear from Jesus in his Word throughout the week. Pastor Bill has classes on Tuesday and Thursday nights. And I lead a class, Wednesday mornings at 7am.

Nobody could have predicted COVID-19 and all the changes and challenges we have experienced. Nobody could have predicted that school would have been postponed, sports canceled, and businesses shutdown. Nobody could have predicted that we would be locked in our homes. And yet, one thing that we still have access to is the presence of God. Jesus is still here. He is alive and he is still speaking to you. Just open your Bible and listen to your Savior's words, “Peace be with you.”