

Sunday Morning Message

April 16, 2023

Title – *So Send I You - Post Resurrection Appearances and Christ's Commission Given*

Text – John 20:19 - 31

Congregational Reading – John 20:21 - 23

Introduction

This week in our series from the Gospel of John we will be examining a couple of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances to the disciples. In our discussion of the resurrection on Easter Sunday, we listed all the appearances made by Christ, which conclusively prove that He did in fact rise from the dead, which proved His power over death.

The Apostle Paul also wrote to the Church at Corinth regarding the many appearances made by Jesus after He rose from the dead:

"1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; 2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; 4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: 6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. 7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. 8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time." (1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

I. Christ Appears to the Eleven (Save Thomas) (Luke 24:36 – 43; John 20:19 - 25)

As we examine this passage from John's Gospel, we will also add to what John records by supplementing some information from Luke's Gospel.

"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." - (John 20:19)

"36 And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. 38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? 39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:36-39)

"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." - (John 20:20)

"40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. 41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? 42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. 43 And he took it, and did eat before them." (Luke 24:40 - 43)

A. Jesus Appeared in a Real Body

The first thing that I would like to point out from this passage is the obvious fact that Jesus' resurrection was a bodily resurrection. He was not a ghost. He could be touched, and he ate. I am so glad that we will be able to eat in Heaven someday. There will be a Marriage Supper of the Lamb. Eating will be purely for fellowship and pleasure in Heaven. It will not be necessary to nourish the body in Heaven for survival as we will all be eternal in Heaven.

B. Jesus Gives the Disciples Peace

The second thought from this passage is that Jesus offered the disciples peace. Peace is the absence of strife, fear, and stress. We live in a world that is filled with all those things, and there is very little peace, Jesus offers peace to His children:

"33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

You and I need to meet with Jesus regularly if we are going to experience that peace.

Peace is a fruit of the Holy Spirit who lives within believers:

"22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22-23)

C. Jesus Gathered with His Disciples on Sunday Evening

The third thing that I observed in this passage is that this appearance occurred on the Sunday evening following the resurrection when the eleven were gathered. As we will discover a little bit later, one of the eleven was absent that evening and missed out on seeing and fellowshiping with the Lord.

These disciples of Christ assembled together on this particular Sunday night, and on the following Sunday night, and I believe it became part of their Lord's Day routine. One of the disciples, Thomas, the one who was not with them, missed out on seeing the Lord and it affected his relationship with his friends and it revealed his faith in God:

Skip ahead to vs. 24 - 25

"24 But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." (John 20:24 - 25)

I believe if the church is gathered together, as a believer in Christ you ought to make every effort to be in there. I do not think that we are mandated by Law to gather at any time, but it was clearly

a practice for these New Testament believers to gather on the first day of the week – Sunday, and it seems that also included a gathering on Sunday evening.

Read Hebrews 10:19 - 25

"19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20 By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21 And having an high priest over the house of God; 22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) 24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:19-25)

1. It is important that the church gather even more frequently as we get closer to the return of Christ.

We need each other. The trend in Christianity is less services. We are holding on to the pattern of Sunday morning and Sunday evening church, as well as a mid-week Bible study and prayer gathering. This is not mandated by some kind of New Testament Law, but it is a good practice for you and your family.

2. Our gathering together is as much for what we can do to help others as it is for the benefit that we receive.

We are a one-another ministry. One of the main reasons that come together is to encourage and strengthen each other.

II. The Great Commission Given (vs. 21 – 23)

"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." (John 20:21-23)

There are a few things that need to be pointed out from this passage.

A. Jesus Send Us Just as He Was Sent (v. 21)

The simplest truth from this passage is that we are commissioned and sent by the Lord to represent Him on this earth and to proclaim the message of the gospel:

"14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen. 15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:14-15)

"18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."
(Matthew 28:18-20)

God says that we are His ambassadors:

"17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. 18 And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. 20 Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

B. Jesus Sends Them with the Holy Spirit (v. 22)

The second observation from this passage is regarding their receiving of the Holy Ghost (v. 22). We typically think of the disciples receiving the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). However, it appears that the disciples first received the Holy Ghost here. Now, later, at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will descend upon this church and empower them, and at that time they would all be filled with the Holy Ghost. Today, all believers receive the Holy Spirit at the time that they trust Christ as their Savior:

"13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13)

It cannot be missed here that the receiving of the Holy Ghost relates to the power that will be needed to fulfill the Great Commission:

"8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)

It is interesting, the phrase "breathed on them" is very similar to what was stated way back in Genesis 2:

"7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7)

God breathed physical life into man at Creation, but He breathes spiritual life into man when we are saved:

"1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;" (Ephesians 2:1)

C. The Forgiveness of Sins is Dependent upon Their Faithfulness in Fulfilling the Great Commission (v. 23)

Jesus is not here stating that these disciples have the power to forgive sins.

"... who can forgive sins but God only?" (Mark 2:7)

At no time in the New Testament did any of the apostles claim to have the power to forgive sins.

What Jesus is saying in this passage is that the power to forgive sins rests upon the gospel. When the message of the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, people will believe the gospel and be saved, having all their sins forgiven.

One expositor said it like this:

Above all, do we take the gospel of God's grace in Christ to those who need to hear it and proclaim on God's own authority that those who will repent of sin and turn in faith to Christ as their Savior have had their sins forgiven and that those who will not come to Christ are not forgiven and will have to face God's judgment? Believers have many privileges. But they also have many responsibilities, chief of which is the faithful proclamation of the gospel.¹

This is what Paul referred to in his Letter to the Romans:

"13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:13-15)

The apostles could not save anybody; they could not forgive anyone's sins, and neither can we, but we can tell them about Christ who died for their sins and will save them if they will simply place their faith in Him.

Another commentary said this about this verse:

Forgiveness of sins is one of the major benefits of the death of Jesus. It is the essence of the New Covenant (cf. Matt. 26:28; Jer. 31:31-34). Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts. Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven's terms on how a person can receive forgiveness. If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. If a person rejects Jesus' sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is not forgiven.²

III. Christ Appears to Eleven (Including Thomas) (Mark 16:14; John 20:26 – 29)

¹ Boice, James Montgomery. 2005. *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

² Blum, Edwin A. 1985. "John." In *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, edited by J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, 2:343. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. 28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. 29 Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." (John 20:26-29)

This likely occurred on the following Sunday night, depending on how the days were counted. Eight days including the original Sunday evening would make it the following Sunday evening.

This time Thomas is present, and he sees the for Lord for himself. Thomas declared his faith in the Lord only after he saw. Jesus pronounces a special blessing upon those who do not see the Lord but believe anyway. That includes us today.

"1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. ... 6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:1, 6)

Conclusion

"30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30-31)

John will later say in the last chapter of his gospel:

"25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (John 21:25)

The Bible does not contain all that Jesus said or did, but it contains all that God wanted us to have, and there is enough Truth in there for you to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God who came to die for the sins of the world. He came to die for your sins. He died for mine.

Jesus is still working today. He is still saving souls today. What Jesus did and continues to do in your heart and mine are part of those books that could be written. What God is going to do through you as you share the message of the Gospel with others is part of those books that could be written.