

**Sermon File # 728**

**Scripture Text: John 20:19-23**

**Sermon Title: *The Risen Jesus: Giving Our Commission***

**Manuscript written and sermon preached by Roger Roberts**

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**Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.**

**For additional information regarding this manuscript, contact [Roger.Roberts@ibcbrussels.org](mailto:Roger.Roberts@ibcbrussels.org).**

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## ***The Risen Jesus: Giving Our Commission***

### **Introduction:**

During the Sundays of May, which conclude with Pentecost Sunday, we'll depart from our study of John's First Letter to look into the final two chapters of his Gospel. These closing chapters of John's Gospel contain some of the appearances and conversations of the risen Lord Jesus with his disciples. During my closing months of my pastorate with you, I'm going to try to focus on some of the central truths of the gospel, and hardly anything is more important than these last words of Jesus before his ascension.

On Easter Sunday (April 8<sup>th</sup>), in John 20:1-18, we followed Peter, John and Mary Magdalene to the empty tomb, where their encountering the evidence led to a faith experience with the risen Lord Jesus. John and Peter returned to share this evidence with the other disciples. On this same night of Jesus' resurrection, we find them perhaps among the other eight of the disciples (the ten, sans Judas, of course, and Thomas, who will see and believe the following week).

The disciples were gathered likely in the Upper Room. Even though they had heard reports from Mary Magdalene, Peter, and John and the two from Emmaus, they still could not believe because of amazement at such an incredible event. The evidence

of the empty tomb and the appearance to Mary seemed too good to be true because they were not expecting Jesus to be raised. Luke adds that even when Jesus appeared, the disciples still did not believe because of joy and amazement, and so he accommodated their incredulity by eating in front of them, and by inviting them to touch his resurrected body (Luke 24:36-43).

Follow as I read **John 20:19-23**.

For the cross to be our means of salvation it was necessary that Jesus triumph over the grave in his resurrection. Jesus suffered and died for us, but he also rose from the grave as victor over the power of sin and the grave, and lives on high as our reigning Lord. Without the resurrection of Jesus, the cross would not have been what it was supposed to be, but would have been a tragic end to a deluded leader who made false, deceptive claims about himself. Without his resurrection, Jesus' words from the cross, "It is finished!" would indeed have meant "The end of the trail." The Christ event would have come to a tragic conclusion. But with the Resurrection, the cross is the good news of Jesus and the power of God to save all who repent and believe (1 Corinthians 1:23-24).

As biblical Christians, we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as an actual event. We believe that Jesus lives at the right hand of the Father in his resurrected, material body, and that he is coming again as Judge of unbelievers, and Savior for those of us who look forward to his appearing. To us, the internal evidence of the resurrection accounts in Scripture is convincing. Also, there is overwhelming evidence externally, even in the existence of a church that continues to grow and in the lives of believers who are willing to be persecuted and martyred for their faith.

As Michael Horton points out in his helpful study of the doctrines in the Apostles' Creed, we aren't giving the biblically mandated witness to the resurrection when we simply reply with the words of the gospel song, "He Lives." This song says, "You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart." As we noted in last week's sermon from 1 John 3:19-24, even the Mormons talk about a holy "burning in the bosom," a warm sensation that they claim is evidence of the verity of their false version of the gospel. Horton says the reason we are to give, as in 1 Peter 3:15, is the witness of Scripture about Jesus, the Jesus who lived, and who literally rose again, and is coming again in his risen, glorified body (Michael Horton, page 105 in *We Believe: Recovering the Essentials of the Apostles' Creed*).

We have the Scripture's witness of the resurrection accounts, which are not uniform, as an intentionally concocted story would be, had the gospel writers been trying to convince us of a hoax. But these are complimentary and mutually confirming. One of the powerful testimonies of the verity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the radical and unlikely transformation of the disciples. They were changed from cowering, defeated, and disillusioned cowards, into men and women who were willing and even rejoicing to suffer and die for the sake of the Christ they were convinced is alive.

The objective truth of Scripture is confirmed by our experience with Jesus, whose Spirit does witness with ours, as we read last Sunday in 1 John 3:24. The disciples from Emmaus experienced a burning in their hearts, but it was a sense of the joy of

the presence of the real, risen Lord while he expounded Scripture to them (Luke 24:32). We don't base the reality of truth on our experiences. We place our faith in objective truth, and then God confirms the reality of our faith with our experience, which may be more or less emotional as well.

This morning I believe the text invites us to join the disciples in the Upper Room. The risen Lord Jesus wants to bring us an experience similar to that of these disciples on that first Easter night. If it is to be a real, life-changing experience, it will not be because of an exercise in imagination. Nor will it be because of our agreeing that Jesus is risen and alive. It will be because we receive a visit from the risen Lord, who chooses to come to us through the Spirit as really as he came bodily to the Upper Room. May this worship center be our Upper Room where...

### **Jesus appears**

The disciples were gathered that Easter Sunday night in the Upper Room, behind barred doors, listening to the reports from Peter and John, and considering the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the disciples from Emmaus. Suddenly the risen Lord appeared. Remember how Peter and John had found the grave cloths in the "not quite empty tomb"? They were like a chrysalis left behind by a newly emerged butterfly. As John Stott noted, it was as though Jesus' body had vaporized and moved through the cloths and left them undisturbed. His body was as tangible and real as ever, but instead of a mortal the risen Lord had an immortal body. And notice...

#### *How he finds us*

The Lord Jesus simply appeared in the room with his disciples. Jesus' appearance without having to open a door is evidence of the nature of the resurrection body like we some day will receive, a body that is unrestricted by matter and space.

#### In fear

Notice in verse 19 that when Jesus appeared he found the disciples cowering in fear behind barred doors. They were scared to death. The door was barred because the disciples well knew that to be associated with a man condemned and executed by crucifixion meant to be in complicity with a dangerous, subversive movement. A follower of one crucified stood in danger of being the next victim.

#### In depression

No doubt also the disciples were depressed, as we read about the disciples from Emmaus, who met up with the risen Lord Jesus on their way home after Jesus' crucifixion. These disciples had given up their vocations to follow Jesus and were pinning all their hopes on his being the long-awaited Messiah. Of course, they fully expected him to bring in an immediate, visible kingdom that would mean the end to Roman domination and bring about every appearance of a consummated reign of God upon the earth. Depression comes when there is a loss of hope for the future. Luke has these disciples, explaining their hopelessness to the risen Lord, whom as

yet they did not recognize. They explained to the unrecognized Jesus that “The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; *but we had hoped* that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21).

I don’t know how the risen Lord Jesus finds you today. Maybe he finds you in fear, maybe as a result of your last visit with your physician, who cannot give you encouragement about your health. Perhaps your educational or employment opportunities are a bit tenuous at this point. You’re uncertain about your job, your finances, your family relationships, or whether your future dreams and hopes will be fulfilled. In fact, like these disciples, you feel hopeless and helpless in the light of your circumstances and future.

Though Jesus found the disciples fearful and defeated, notice...

*What he brings us*

Jesus brings his disciples...

Grace

Peter and John had already believed Jesus had risen, as we noted in verse 8, as they observed the grave cloths in the empty tomb. They were given grace to believe. But I wonder if perhaps Peter wasn’t beginning to dread facing Jesus, knowing how Jesus had warned him about his denying Jesus. Even though Jesus had given ample warning, Peter had, with misplaced self-confidence, found himself denying the Lord to the young girl, just as Jesus had predicted (John 18:15-27). No doubt Peter dreaded facing Jesus, as did the other disciples who had forsaken him and fled for safety during his arrest, trial and crucifixion.

Yet the words of the risen Lord, as he came to these disciples on that Easter night, were “Peace be with you,” and not “Shame on you!” This is an important word to us today. All of us are aware of failure in our lives. But Jesus doesn’t come to us to condemn us. Sin condemns and Satan accuses, as we noted last week, and seeks to destroy us. But Jesus comes to us and doesn’t even mention our failure. Some of you need to realize this. If you belong to Jesus and have received his grace for salvation, nothing can separate you from his love and grace. His cross took care of all your sin. Now he comes to give you his...

Peace

When he appeared in the Upper Room, Jesus issued the greeting that you can hear today throughout the Holy Land—“shalom.” But Jesus meant more than a mere greeting, as is clear by his repeating the word in verse 21. Shalom and the Greek equivalent, “eirene,” is a word replete with meaning, and perhaps best summarized as a synonym for salvation. Peace is much more than the absence of unrest or warfare, though that is sorely needed in the Holy Land today. This word translated “peace” includes rest, wholeness, and health.

On the night of Jesus' birth, the heavenly host appeared with the angel, "praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests" (Luke 2:13-14). One who has peace is at peace with God, himself/herself, and others. One who has peace is enjoying a life of fullness of purpose and provision.

### Peace at a great price

When Jesus said "Peace be with you!" he was announcing that now the peace of salvation had been accomplished through the cross and his resurrection. What a price he paid for our salvation! As we noted last Sunday, Jesus suffered for our sins the hell we deserve that we might be forgiven for our sins. From the cross, after his hours of darkness and dereliction when he endured our hell, he then cried in triumph, "It is finished!" (John 19:30), meaning the provision for our salvation is now accomplished. So now Jesus can announce to his disciples, "Peace be with you," peace that was won at an ineffable price.

Paul writes to the Colossians that God through Christ has made "peace through his blood, shed on the cross" (Colossians 1:20). Think of the blood shed in order to bring peace to warring nations. One cannot but wonder how much blood will have to be shed in Israel for there to be peace in the Holy Land. Only God can give peace to that nation, and so we are to pray, as the psalmist says, for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).

Our peace with God, the gift of eternal life and salvation, came at a great price.

### Peace by the power of God

It's interesting to note that the peace Jesus announced to these disciples didn't "sink in" at first. He next showed them his hands and side. Of course, this was to reveal the nail prints from his crucifixion. It was truly their Lord, the Lamb of God who was slain and is now risen indeed! Now, in the experience of seeing Jesus as well as hearing his words, faith comes alive. They believe and are transformed by his power.

Because Jesus had finished his work, salvation peace is now available. He reveals himself to all who will open themselves to his word and his self-disclosure. As Hebrews 7:24-25 says, Jesus lives forever and thus is able to save completely those who come to God through him. We are not saved or given eternal life by a good example or moral teacher, as some make Jesus out to be. We are saved by the crucified and now living Lord Jesus.

Without the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ the rest of the story is just a hoax. Jesus promised his disciples he would rise again, and his resurrection validates all his claims. As Paul told the Corinthians, without the hope of our bodily resurrection then Christ is not raised either. And if Christ is not raised, we are still lost in our sins. The cross was a tragedy rather than God's power to save, and we believers and followers of Christ are of all people most to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). As Michael Horton says, if there is no resurrection of Jesus, there is no consolation prize (Horton, page 117, *ibid.*).

Revelation 5 tells us we worship aright when we join the hosts of heaven in worshiping the Lamb who was slain and is now risen and at the right hand of the heavenly throne of God. He alone is worthy of all praise, glory and honor.

In the Upper Room, as well as in this worship center, Jesus gives...

Joy

Note verse 20 that says when the disciples saw, as well as heard their Lord, they were overjoyed! The promise of Jesus had been fulfilled, their sorrow was turned into joy (John 16:17-33).

In Luke 24: 41 we read that the disciples did not believe because of joy and amazement. Greek scholar AT Robertson paraphrased by saying it was simply too good to be true!

In our previous pastorate in the US, I was walking down the corridor of a Roman Catholic hospital and heard an announcement over the intercom. With the tune "Lullaby and Goodnight" in the background, a voice said, "The Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother invite you to celebrate with them the birth of a child this morning." What sounds strangely like an oxymoron is actually the pattern of Christian experience. As Jesus' cross was followed by his resurrection, so our taking up the cross of self-denial and suffering is followed by the joy that Jesus gives. Mary indeed was a sorrowful mother at the cross of Jesus, but she became one of those joyful disciples, whose sorrow was turned into joy when she realized Jesus was risen. She was in the Upper Room on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in fullness and permanence into the church.

The joy of salvation is the robust awareness of the presence of Jesus Christ that comes upon salvation and remains as a discipline of the Christian life. As David reveals in his penitentiary prayer in Psalm 51, the joy of salvation can be lost, and at times needs to be restored (verse 12). Joy is more than emotional exhilaration or even happiness, which depends on favorable circumstances. Joy is the deep awareness of God's presence that gives grace and strength for faithful living and serving. Someone said the closest word in English to biblical joy is "gusto."

As Larry Crabb says so eloquently and convincingly, "God's Unexpected Pathway to Joy" is through "Shattered Dreams" (See his book of this title). Just as Jesus' joy of bringing salvation to the world came through the cross (Hebrews 12:2), so the full measure of our joy, strangely enough, comes through our suffering the loss of personal dreams and superficial happiness that we try to manufacture for ourselves. The way of true joy and peace is through following the Crucified, who calls us to take up our cross of self-denial and willingness to share in his sufferings and follow him (Luke 9:23f).

Jesus appeared in the Upper Room, finding the disciples as they were and giving them grace, peace and joy. But also in the Upper Room and here this morning in this worship center...

## Jesus assigns

In verses 21-23 we see Jesus repeats his announcement and benediction of peace, but also he implies that the disciples work is just beginning. As we have noted, his work on the cross is finished, but that doesn't mean his work is finished.

Jesus is ready now to give the disciples a...

### *A new relationship*

Debates have raged over exactly what Jesus meant by his commission to his disciples in verse 21. Did he give them here a missionary/evangelism assignment, or did he confer on the disciples a life of servant living and relating to the poor and downcast? I think the answer is found, not in defining specific actions, but in noting that the Father sent Jesus on a life of absolute obedience to his will. So, the first and most obvious aspect of Jesus' mission was to be perfectly obedient to the Father's will. Jesus noted during his earthly ministry that he could do nothing by himself, but only what he could see the Father doing, and then he would join him in that work (John 5:19).

We too, if chosen and called by grace, and if we claim to be followers of Jesus, are people called into this relationship of obedience to and total dependence on the Father. As Gary Burge points out, our Scripture text shows that the Christian life is more about a relationship with the risen Christ than it is about "buying into" a formulaic creed (see page 577, *NIV Application Commentary: John*). How many are there in our churches who know the creeds but not the living Christ? How long do you think these disciples would have held together had they not seen and experienced the living Jesus?

Patrick Morley tells the story of Tom, at age 58, one of Florida's most prominent attorneys. With tears, this lawyer related to Morley that his life had no meaning or purpose. "It's as though I've been chasing the wind for all these years."

Tom had attended a businessmen's breakfast and was so impressed and disturbed by what he had heard that he called Patrick Morley to make an appointment to talk about the message of Jesus. Patrick said that Tom unfolded an account of his life of achievements that, if such things could satisfy, would have brought a great sense of achievement to any man. But Tom related these achievements as an attorney with tears, saying that reaching the pinnacle of professional success left him feeling empty and that his life still had no purpose. He told Morley that "success created more questions for him than it answered." With that sense of emptiness, Tom accepted the invitation to the prayer breakfast. There he met men who seemed to have the peace he lacked, and that they attributed their peace to a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

When Tom told Patrick, "I've always attended church," Patrick replied: "We're not talking about attending church, although that's important. What we're talking about, Tom, is a personal relationship with the living, personal God."

"We are not talking about working your way into God's favor, but acknowledging it's impossible to work your way in. The only way into God's favor is to receive the free gift of eternal life that comes by trusting Christ with your life."

“Well, I’ve been a faithful churchman for over thirty years. Are you trying to tell me I’ve wasted all those years? I just can’t believe you would even suggest such a thing!”

“Tom, if church has been such an important part of your life, why are we together today talking about your feelings of emptiness and lack of purpose?”

And Morley adds, “Tom is not alone. He lived the first fifty-eight years of his life without giving much attention to why he thought, said, and did things. He attended church because it was the expected thing to do, not because of a deeply held conviction. Many men,” says Morley, “are like Tom—just going through the motions” (pages 57-58, *The Man in the Mirror: Solving the 24 Problems Men Face*).

Before getting into mission, we must ask about our relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus entered that room to establish a relationship, the kind John speaks of in the first of his first letter:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life...Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1,3). With that relationship Jesus gives...

#### *A new purpose*

What a difference Jesus’ presence makes! Now he is ready to transfer to them his own mission. He said that as the Father had sent him to earth for a redeeming mission, so he was sending them. He was authorized for his mission by the Father, and he was now as Son going to authorize them for their mission.

Of course, there were unique things about Jesus’ mission on which he was sent, including the cross itself, which he alone could endure for us. But Jesus said they would continue the work he began (Acts 1:1), a work that was begun through his cross and resurrection.

This is one of the Great Commission passages, and in another, Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus more specifically spells out the work to be done. Now, in the power of his Spirit, we are to continue his work of making disciples. As we share the Good News and people believe, their sins are forgiven, as Jesus authorizes us to say. If they reject the gospel, their sins are not forgiven (verse 23). Jesus was not giving a sacrament of absolution, to be exercised by a select priesthood. Jesus confers on all his missional followers the right and privilege of announcing the gospel and the consequences of acceptance and rejection (See also Matthew 16:19 and 18:18).

Notice, we are not doing Jesus’ work for him. We are joining him. Jesus says in the present tense, “As the Father has sent me,” implying that his work is not finished.

Greek scholar AT Robertson says that the Greek perfect active indicative means that “Jesus still bears the Commission of the Father” (page 314, v.5, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*). Through us, he continues to show his love and relate his message of salvation. Through us he calls people to follow him. Through the church he seeks the lost, evangelizes, and makes disciples and deploys us on mission. As I have said before, Jesus lives, through the Holy Spirit, his life in us and also as us. He has

placed us where we are, with our current spheres of influence and traffic patterns of life, that he might touch lives as he would were he incarnated in our skin, as it were.

Some of you are in diplomatic service for your home country, perhaps even as your nation's ambassador. You know how important it is that you represent your nation's interests and make a right impression and obey your nation's mandate and constitution. We all have an even greater task and calling as Christ's ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20). Our task is even more significant in the eyes of God, because it's Kingdom work that has eternal implications. We are in the missional work of changing lives and everlasting destinies as we enter our various "worlds."

We are called to join the Father, who seeks worshipers, as Jesus said to the Samaritan woman (John 4:23). As John Piper says, "Worship is the fuel and goal of missions," and mission exists because worship doesn't (Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*). We evangelize and make disciples, who will join us in glorifying God around the throne. As Bill Hull says, we are called to populate heaven with those Christ has already chosen for himself (*The Disciple-Making Pastor* and also, *The Disciple-Making Church*)

In the Upper Room, and here with us this morning...

### **Jesus anoints**

We have all heard sermons that remind us of our huge responsibilities and tasks as Christians and disciples of the Lord Jesus. And often, we leave the worship center either feeling guiltier for our neglect or more complacent because we think our task and responsibility is being carried out by pastors and missionaries we support. And if we have a more sensitive conscience and biblical sense of our responsibility in mission, we leave feeling overwhelmed by the redoubtable task before us and a high calling we can never fulfill.

### *To enable*

I want us to realize that the Lord Jesus never asks us to give what we do not have or to do what we cannot achieve. In that Upper Room, Jesus, upon giving the Great Commission, breathed on the disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (verse 22). This was actually proleptic (preliminary and predictive) of what he would confer after his ascension and on the day of Pentecost, as we read about in Acts 2. Then the Holy Spirit would come to dwell in the disciples permanently, as he dwells permanently within us believers today. This was a foretaste of what they would later receive. Jesus was showing them that the mission he was transferring to them to share with him could be done only by his Spirit within them.

(My position that this "on-breathing" of the Holy Spirit in John 20:22 was a foretaste of Pentecost is explained in detail in DA Carson's commentary, *The Gospel According to John*. As Carson argues, if John 20:22 is the full bestowal of the Holy Spirit, then the benefits are "desperately disappointing," page 653. During the intermittent visits of the risen Lord the disciples seemed to regress to their old fishing occupation and still seemed preoccupied with place and privilege in the kingdom, as

we will note in John 21. It was not until after the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, 50 days after the Resurrection, that the disciples seemed to be totally transformed, empowered preachers, witnesses and church servant leaders.)

The most difficult thing for me to learn as a pastor is my daily and absolute dependence on the Holy Spirit. So easily, quickly and inexplicably I fall into a state of self-reliance and self-effort. Then it's merely a matter of time until I realize I'm frustrated and my work is fruitless and pointless and fragmented. I have heard Belgium referred to as "the Graveyard of Missionaries." Perhaps that's because the response of the people to the gospel is resistant and at best, slow. And there are forces of darkness at work. We can see this in public morality and even in government that seems to disregard and defy biblical morality and ethics. But we must realize that God is able to penetrate this darkness, and that he loves the Belgians as much as anyone. And the people here maybe are not rejecting Jesus as much as they are rejecting Christendom and Christianity, which for centuries has been more oppressive than liberating. We must see what God is doing to make himself known in the person of Jesus. We must see to share Jesus and his love in the power of the Spirit in a way the people can see and understand clearly, perhaps for the very first time.

I believe that God is at work drawing people to himself, even here in Belgium. Just as did Simon Peter in Acts 10, we must obey the Spirit who will lead us to those ready hearts, as Peter was led to Cornelius. The Holy Spirit does the converting. We simply are the messengers.

### *To transform*

The word used for his breathing on them is the same word used in the Greek Old Testament for God's breathing into man and woman's nostrils, at creation, the breath of life (Genesis 2:7). To do what God has called us to do with him, we must become New Creations (2 Corinthians 5:17).

That's exactly what those disciples were—transformed men and women. No decision to deceive the world into thinking they believed a lie or mere illusion could have caused these folks, who were so defeated, to become absolutely indomitable and irrepressible witnesses, even unto death.

What else enables our fellow believers around the world to remain steadfast except the power of Jesus in them? Think of those in North Korea, in Pakistan, Nigeria and the Middle East, and many other parts of the world who are paying with their lives to give a faithful witness for Christ. What will enable them to remain faithful? What will enable you to be faithful, and our church to fulfill the mission God has given us, here in Brussels and around the world? The answer is the indwelling Holy Spirit of God, of Christ within us.

Reading through the Book of Proverbs, I realize anew how only the Spirit of God, who is often spoken of in the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament as the Wisdom of God, can enable us to live the kind of life described in these Scriptures. This is the life perfectly demonstrated by Jesus and described in the letters of the New Testament as the fruit of the Spirit and true godliness and holiness.

On Easter Sunday we looked at Mary Magdalene's clinging to the risen Lord, who told her not to continue holding onto him (John 20:17). Jesus was saying that he was in the process of ascending to heaven, and was alluding to a new kind of relationship she would have with him as her risen, glorified Lord. This relationship was through the Holy Spirit. Jesus had taught his disciples that it was to their advantage that he "go away," that is, return to the Father. Only then would he be present in power and intimate fellowship within each of their hearts (John 16:7).

I think it's significant that Jesus showed them his hands and side (verse 20). He was certainly identifying himself as their crucified and now risen Lord. I think he was also reminding them that they are under the Lordship of the Crucified. And he calls his followers to walk in the way of the cross, not of human power and strength. Jesus triumphed through surrender, death and then resurrection. So are we to enter this narrative of weakness, cross and trust in God's deliverance and vindication. Jesus will be the only one in heaven with scars, when we will have our glorified resurrection bodies. We will worship the crucified, the Lamb slain, and forever will gratefully remember his sacrifice for us. Revelation reminds us that heaven's worship is of the Lamb who was slain.

Paul told the proud Corinthians, who tended to be ashamed of the way of "weak power," and the way of the cross, that "We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus" (2 Corinthians 4:10). He noted to the Galatians, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14). As one has noted, the permanent wounds of Jesus are "his credentials to the suffering race of human beings" (DA Carson). Jesus shows the world he has suffered beyond anyone's suffering. And he calls us to share in his sufferings that we might also relate to a suffering and dying world. The only way to healing, forgiveness and salvation is through the cross of suffering.

The poem "Jesus of the Scars" expresses this:

### **Jesus of the Scars**

If we have never sought, we seek Thee now;  
Thine eyes burn through the dark, our only stars;  
We must have sight of thorn-pricks on Thy brow,  
We must have Thee, O Jesus of the Scars.

The heavens frighten us; they are too calm;  
In all the universe we have no place.  
Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm?  
Lord Jesus, by Thy Scars we claim Thy grace.

If when the doors are shut, Thou drawest near,  
Only reveal those hands, that side of Thine;  
We know to-day what wounds are, have no fear,  
Show us Thy Scars, we know the countersign.

The other gods were strong; but Thou wast weak;  
 They rode, but Thou didst stumble to a throne;  
 But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak,  
 And not a god has wounds, but Thou alone.

Edward Shillito (1872-1948)

### **Conclusion:**

Jesus is risen, his work is finished, he is with us, and our work is just now beginning. We have his peace when we realize his presence and join him in his mission. Jesus appeared in the Upper Room and his presence made all the difference. He is present in this room. Jesus who came is now the risen Lamb that was slain. He is really with us today. And those of us who are grace-saved, blood-bought followers of Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit in greater measure than did the disciples on that Easter night (Romans 8:9).

CH Spurgeon preached a sermon on this text from John, and asked his people, "What would you do if Jesus were really here this morning?" He reminded his people that Jesus really is here. If he were here bodily, would you ask him for direction for your life, pertaining to an important decision? Would you ask him to save a lost husband? Would you ask him to provide for a needy child or friend? He is here, and he is here to be your Savior, Provider, Lord and Master, and even your Great Physician.

We worship the risen Christ. It's a life-changing, on-going experience of worship. It means that he is with you as you carry the cross of self-denial and suffering for serving and living for him. He is with you and is to be worshiped by you not only corporately but every day of your life, throughout the day. The Jesus of the scars is alive and victorious and shares his victory with us. He will turn our sorrow into joy, now and forever.

Today, you too can experience the powerful presence of Christ as you turn to him and turn your life over to him. He is calling us to be his missional people, joining him in his ongoing mission to a lost world.

Jesus came into the Upper Room and his presence made all the difference. Has he come into your life? Are you living in the light of his loving, holy presence, a presence we celebrate in worship as we sing together.

### **Questions for personal reflection and/or group discussion:**

1. What does the Scripture tell us about the emotional state of the disciples before Jesus appeared to them (verse 19)?

2. If you continue to experience fear and depression, what does that say about your faith in the risen Lord Jesus?
3. Notice that Jesus immediately gave the blessing of his peace, and did not mention his disciples' failure, such as Peter's denial and the other disciples who fled when Jesus was arrested. What does this say about Jesus' love, forgiveness and grace? Can you affirm and thank God for these blessings in your life?
4. Define joy. How is the joy God gives through Christ different from the world's definition of happiness?
5. Do you agree that the Christian life is about a relationship with God rather than agreeing to certain doctrinal truths? Why or why not? How does our text support your answer?
6. Jesus says he is sending us as the Father has sent him. What is the life and mission Jesus has given us? How is it like the life and mission of Jesus?
7. What is the "secret of success" for living and serving in the ongoing mission of the risen Lord Jesus?

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