



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

John Sermon Series

Supports Session 12: Reach Out Your Hand

Sermon Title: “Commission and Transformation by the Risen Christ” (John 20:19-29)

Connection to Session 12

After Jesus’s resurrection, He met with the disciples to give them a commission, a promised empowerment, and an assurance that He is the Son of God.

Introduction/Opening

The cornerstone of a building is vital to the stability of the structure.

Historically, the cornerstone was the most important part of any building. The total weight of an edifice rested on this particular stone, which, if removed, would collapse the whole structure. The cornerstone was also the key to keeping the walls straight. The builders would take sightings along the edges of this part of the building. If the cornerstone was set properly, the stonemasons could be assured that all the other corners of the building would be at the appropriate angles as well. Thus, the cornerstone became a symbol for that which held life together.¹

For the Christian faith, the cornerstone is the Resurrection. It is the one truth that holds everything else together. The post-resurrection appearances gave concrete evidence for the disciples that their Lord was alive. In those visits with His disciples, He gave them the plan for mission and ministry after His ascension as well as confirming His power, peace, and presence among them.

Outline

1. The Comfort, Confirmation, and Commission from the Lord Jesus (vv. 19-22)
 - a. Jesus came to and comforted the disciples (v. 19). The disciples had locked themselves in the upper room because they feared the Jews. These religious leaders had instigated the death of Jesus. Perhaps the disciples thought they were next on the list. Even though the door of the room was bolted, Jesus appeared and stood among them. Just as no stone could hold His resurrected body in the tomb, no locked door could keep Him out of the room that held the disciples. He said to them, “Peace be with you” (v. 19). They had no reason to fear.

1. Chris Davis, “Building on the Cornerstone,” Back to the Bible, January 23, 2019, <https://www.backtothebible.org/post/building-on-the-cornerstone>.

- b. Jesus confirmed his identity (v. 20). Jesus showed the disciples His hands and side. He revealed to them that He was risen and the same Jesus who was crucified. He bore the marks of sacrifice. He wanted them to know they were not seeing an apparition but a risen Savior. As a result, the disciples rejoiced.
- c. Jesus commissioned the disciples (vv. 21-23). Three elements are present in this commission from Jesus.
 - i. He extended peace to them.
 - ii. He defined for them their purpose. Just as the Father had sent Him, Jesus was now sending them. This is a present tense verb and denotes a continual practice assigned to the disciples. The verb regarding the Father sending Jesus is in the perfect tense and “. . . should be understood to indicate that the mission of Jesus still continues and that the divine mission is not merely in mortal hands.”²
 - iii. He promised them the power of His presence.
- d. The last section of the passage is difficult to comprehend. “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (v. 23). Does this mean believers have the authority to grant forgiveness? No, that is not the focus. The focus is on the proclamation of the Gospel of forgiveness and the warning to those who do not repent of their sin.

2. The Doubt, Deliverance, and Declaration of Thomas (vv. 24-28)

- a. Thomas was skeptical (vv. 24-25). Thomas heard the testimony of his friends, his close associates. He had been with these men for three years. They told him plainly and directly, “We’ve seen the Lord!” (v. 25). Perhaps he concluded that they had hallucinated this encounter with Jesus. Thomas would not be satisfied unless he could see and touch Jesus. Without that evidence he said, “I will never believe” (v. 25).
- b. Thomas saw and touched the Lord (vv. 26-27). A week passed. This time Thomas was in the room with the other disciples. Again, the doors were locked tight. Suddenly, Jesus stood among them, greeting them with “Peace be with you” (v. 26). Jesus called on Thomas to place his finger in the marks in His hands and in the wound in His side. He commanded Thomas to stop doubting and to start believing.
- c. Thomas declared his belief (v. 28). Thomas replied, “My Lord and my God!” (v. 28). This confession is the apex of the Gospel of John. It is the focus of the Gospel itself, from the statement in John 1:1 that the Word was God. The concept of Jesus’s deity is a major theme throughout this Gospel.

3. The Faith, Favor, and Future of All the Saints (v. 29)

- a. Jesus’s comment about faith: Since the earliest manuscripts of the Greek New Testament had few punctuation marks, the first part of the verse could be interrogative or declarative. “Because you have seen me you have believed” (v. 29). Either way the meaning is not altered. Thomas had faith, but it was a faith that required evidence he could see and touch. For Thomas, seeing was believing. Jesus did note however, that there would be those who would believe without seeing Him with physical eyes. In fact,

2. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12-21*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen, vol. 25B, *The New American Commentary: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 307.

most of the people redeemed throughout the course of history did not see Jesus, and yet they believed.

- b. Jesus's comment about favor: Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (v. 29). "Blessed" carries the idea of being happy or joyful. Why are those who believe blessed? Simply because of the great events that occur in salvation – justification, adoption, forgiveness, security, and spiritual peace. This thought is clearly presented in 1 Peter 1:8-9.
- c. Jesus's comment about future believers: Jesus's statement implies future believers who will have a future with the risen Christ. These are those for whom He prayed in John 17, the ones who would believe because of the testimony of the disciples.

Conclusion

Peace. What a powerful word in the context of the world today. The world is not a place of peace but chaos. John's gospel presents a clear message: Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. True peace is found in a saving faith in Him. We can be confident of His resurrection and the peace He offers us today.

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