

# Mission From His Wounds

John 20:19-23

**Call:** Ps 72:1-4; 17-19 (NIV)

**Scripture:** Isa 53:1-5 (NIV)

## I. Introduction

We continue our studies in the Gospel of John this week, where we are still on that remarkable weekend which changed the world. As I have been working through our text this week, I've been moved to ask how one calendar weekend could possibly support so many cosmic events? It really was the weekend which changed the world!

### Context

So today, we are on the evening of that first Easter Sunday. This is the second of four resurrection appearances by John. And, from John's narrative, Jesus has already appeared to Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb. John and Peter have seen the empty tomb, but have not seen Jesus yet. Jesus appears to Mary and when he does, he commissions her to go tell the other disciples that she has seen him. As we said last week, this has earned her the title of "The Apostle to the Apostles," as she is the first person sent with the Gospel message.

Later that day, Luke tells us that Jesus appears on the road to Emmaus to two disciples, Cleopas and a friend, probably his wife. The two disciples eventually invite Jesus into their house where Jesus serves them bread. And, in the breaking of the bread, the two disciples recognize him as Jesus, and Jesus disappears. He is alive in a whole new way which explains his sudden disappearance.

That brings us to the evening of that first Easter Sunday. So I invite you into our text today, chapter 20, beginning in verse 19.

## II. The Mission Given (19-21)

*19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." (ESV)*

### A. Introduction

John begins our text by reiterating that this is the first day of the week, but as we previously said, it is also the first day of the new world. And, now, we find those first followers meeting for the first time. This is the first meeting of the "church" on that first resurrection day.

### B. The Upper Room

However, the reason for them meeting is not for worship, rather it is because they are afraid. They have locked themselves in a room somewhere in downtown Jerusalem. Most people think that this is the same upper room as where they met on that previous Thursday night.

Regardless, imagine this picture. This is the new family of God. Jesus had just redefined the family of God in the last scene. And, he had commissioned Mary to go and tell his brothers and sisters what had happened. And, now, only a few hours later, they are gathered together behind locked doors afraid, anxious and confused, not that I blame them! But, here is the church, a “motley crew of notable failures” (Hastings, 20). No matter what we think about the church today in the post-modern world, it will never be in a worse state than what John describes right here. It seems John and Peter have not been able to convince the other disciples of the empty tomb, and Mary’s testimony must have fallen on deaf ears. And, who really knows about Cleopas and his wife? The church is behind locked doors. As Ross Hastings said, “They would have been voted the group of human beings most unlikely to start a new world religion!”

What is even more ironic is that the word apostle means, “sent one.” And, here are the sent ones behind locked doors, a contradiction of being apostolic.

### **C. Jesus Appears**

And, yet, while they are processing behind these locked doors, Jesus appears in the middle of them. Jesus had been crucified in the middle of the crucifixion scene. Here he appears in the middle of his disciples. And, the next week, he’ll appear again in the middle of his disciples. It seems that’s where Jesus wants to be with his disciples, in the center.

### **D. Disciples get re-oriented.**

And, what we take away from this is that when the risen Jesus comes, disciples immediately get re-oriented. These disciples, fearful, anxious and confused, locked away from the world, get reoriented toward the center, toward Jesus at the center.

I have to say in my life, I continually need reorientation like this. I need to keep coming back to the center of my faith, Jesus. We, as a community, need to keep being reoriented back to Jesus, which is what we, as a pastoral team, try to do every Sunday morning. Every Sunday, our aim is to create services which reorient us back to the risen Jesus who stands at the center of our faith. That’s what Sundays are for because Christ-centeredness is where we want to live.

### **E. “Peace be with You”**

And, the first thing Jesus does is speak. Of course, he’s the Word, so he speaks and says, *“Peace be with you.” “Shalom Aleichem.”* It turns out that the last thing Jesus said to them in that upper room was, *“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). And, now that he *has* overcome the world, *“Peace be with you.”* Notice he doesn’t command them. He doesn’t even scold them for running away in his time of need. He simply offers the gift of peace. It’s sheer grace. This new world is grounded in grace.

As you know, peace, shalom in the Hebrew, means a whole lot more than what we think of when we think of the word peace. Biblical shalom is not just the absence of war. That would be good enough right now in our world wouldn't it? Biblical shalom means presence, the presence of wholeness and soundness and well-being. It's the full-orbed wholeness of life with God. Shalom is where things work the way they were designed to work. It's where all our relationships work together the way they were designed to work, especially the relationship with the living God. Once that relationship works, it makes all the other ones work the way they were designed to work.

And, although *"Peace be with you"* is a common greeting in the middle east, on the lips of Jesus *after the resurrection*, it means a whole lot more. On the lips of anyone else, it means "I wish peace for you." But, on the lips of Jesus *after the resurrection*, it means, "I'm giving you peace. I'm giving you God's shalom." As one person has said, "For the first time in history, peace is no longer a wish, it is a fact" (Johnson). On the lips of Jesus *after the resurrection*, *"Peace be with you"* means, "I am peace, and I now give it to you." True peace is now being given for the first time in history!

And, how appropriate at this time, given the state of the disciples. Peace is the antidote to their trembling fear behind locked doors. *"Peace be with you."*

## **F. Wounds**

But, Jesus doesn't stop there. Notice he then shows the disciples his hands and side, as if to say, "It's really me," which brings great joy to the disciples. It's really him, and the disciples are overjoyed! This person who has just entered the room through locked doors is really the person they saw die on the cross. The risen one is the crucified one. Their sorrow has turned into joy!

Jesus then repeats himself saying, *"Peace be with you."*

*"Peace be with you"* – he shows his wounds – *"Peace be with you."*

*"Peace be with you"* – wounds – *"Peace be with you."*

Why does he do this order of actions? Well, it is no doubt for physical identification. But, there's much more to these actions, some of which the disciples may have understood in the moment, but some they probably needed to reflect on later:

- 1. Person:** First of all, the wounds would have showed the disciples another identity of Jesus. Remember as we have walked through these last few chapters, we've seen that Jesus is the true Son of the Father, the true king, the true high priest, the true lamb of God and the true Spirit-giver. And, in this moment, they would have realized that Jesus was also a Messiah of strength-in-weakness. He was *not* a messiah of power or nationalism. He was a Messiah that represented a God who suffers. Here is a God who

will be known for self-giving love, not dominating power. Suddenly the disciples would understand what kind of Messiah Jesus was by looking at the wounds.

- 2. Posture:** Secondly, the wounds identify Jesus' posture toward the world. It's not the posture of the pointing finger of condemnation. It's rather the outstretched, wounded hands of mercy, welcoming a sinful world to come. It's safe to come. It's safe to run right toward the risen Lord in our sin, because we run right into those wounds. No sin is so horrific or gross or shameful that those wounds cannot absorb it. *"There is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus"* (Rom 8:1).

After all, why the wounds in the first place? Because of human sin. Paul in Corinthians says that *"he who knew no sin became sin on our behalf"* (2 Cor 5:21). On that cross, Jesus took up that sin and bore it as his own. And, it doesn't matter what sin it is. Jesus takes it up and bears it as his own. Through these wounds, Jesus forgives and cleanses and heals and frees.

- 3. Pattern:** Thirdly, then, the wounds will identify the pattern of the disciple's ministry, namely self-sacrifice and self-giving love. If they are going to follow this God, they will need to find strength-in-weakness. If they are going to follow this God, their mission will *not* involve nationalism. It will *not* involve crushing the Romans. If they are going to follow this God, their mission will be one of self-sacrifice and self-giving love.
- 4. Peace:** And, lastly, Jesus shows his wounds to explain that his wounds are the source of peace. It is through those specific wounds, the wounds of the crucifixion, that peace is now declared for them and for the world. Because of his wounds, peace is now available for all. So, Colossians 1, *"For in [Jesus] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"* (Col 1:19-20). Humanity can now experience peace because of the cross. Many years before, Isaiah prophesied this peace through the suffering servant: *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed"* (Isa 53:5). It is because of his wounds that peace comes. Peace is the great gift of Easter, coming as a direct result of Jesus' wounds. It is through Jesus' wounds that we can now have a peace that passes all understanding.

It is striking to me that these words are given in the context of fear. Recently I've had two friends share about entering into chemo treatment for cancer, not knowing what the future holds for them. But both of these friends described a joy and peace that they had, especially a peace that passed all understanding. They have found the peace from his wounds.

## G. Becoming Sent Ones

Next, Jesus sends them. He says, *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you"* (John 20:21). Over forty times in the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks of himself as being sent. God, the Father, is a sending God, and God the Son is, like his Father, a sender. And, so, this is the

church's commissioning. You may have heard of the title, "The Great Commission," a title typically given to Jesus' command at the end of Matthew. Our text today is John's version of "The Great Commission."

But, could this motley crew of failures really do that? I mean, look at them, huddled in fear behind locked doors! Surely Jesus doesn't think they could do this, does he? Verse 22.

### III. The Mission's Empowerment (22-23)

*22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." (ESV)*

#### A. Introduction

Now they can do it! Now they can go!

Verse 22 receives a lot of ink because how does this verse correlate to the day of Pentecost in Acts? Is this Pentecost or that Pentecost? Answer: I don't know. John was at Pentecost, but perhaps John wasn't aware of Acts being written? Perhaps he wanted his book to be self-contained because Jesus had promised the Spirit's coming? Or maybe John is being proleptic, meaning he's anticipating Pentecost? Whatever the case, the point Jesus is making is that mission will not happen without the Holy Spirit.

#### B. The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, the very life of God, is what makes us Christians. The Spirit is the great gift prophesied in the Old Testament as identifying the new age, and the great gift promised by Jesus to his disciples on the previous Thursday night.

#### C. The Breathing

The verb here for breathe is used only here in the New Testament. There are other words that John could have used, but he uses this rare word. It is used several times in the Greek version of the Old Testament, of which two are noteworthy:

1. **Genesis 2:7:** We should say, "of course!" John has been drawing on creation imagery throughout these chapters. In Genesis 2:7, God breathes the breath of life into the first human to become a living being. And, here in John 20, we see an act of new creation where Jesus assumes the position of Yahweh, breathing his life into a new humanity, the church.
2. **Ezekiel 37:9:** The second time of note is Ezekiel 37, in the valley of dry bones. Ezekiel prophesies over a pile of dead, dry bones. Before long, the bones rattle and come together, along with tendons and flesh and skin. But, there was no breath in them. So, Ezekiel is commanded to breathe into these bodies that they may live. He does, and the dry bones come to life, becoming the people of God (Ezek 37:4-11).

John is wanting us to realize that on that first Easter evening, Jesus is breathing into being a new humanity empowered to go out into the suffering of the world to bring life. Jesus breathes on them the very power that brought him through the grave, to enable them to enter the suffering of the world and serve that suffering world.

#### **D. Forgiveness**

And, what is at least part of this mission? Verse 23. It is that the church is being sent into the world to proclaim Jesus' work of setting sinners free, from condemnation, from shame and from bondage. Easter people are people sent into the world to share the good news that because of Jesus' wounds, the free gift of forgiveness is available for all.

#### **E. Forgive = "Aphiemi"**

I also think it's important to note that the word for forgive here is the same word used in the Lazarus story. When Lazarus comes out of the tomb, Jesus says, "*Unbind him and let him go*" (John 11:44). *Let him go*. It's the same word used here. The free gift of forgiveness unbinds us and lets us go. This is what we proclaim to a suffering world.

#### **F. The Disciples Are Sent**

So, the disciples are now prepared for mission from his wounds. They have received their marching orders and can now be sent ones. They can now go in the power of the Spirit and take the good news of Jesus to the world.

#### **G. We Are Sent!**

And, so can we!

We're also now prepared for mission from his wounds. We've also received our marching orders. "*Peace be with you,*" Jesus says. "*As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you,*" all of us, on mission (John 20:21). So, what does that really look like? Let's explore this key theme.

#### **H. Sent-ness**

What comes to mind for you when you hear the word "mission"? Perhaps you may think of cross-cultural missions, going around the world to love on people in different cultures. Perhaps you think of specific individuals who do cross-cultural missions. They're typically called missionaries. Perhaps you think of individual activities that churches do, and they're always asking you to join them.

Well, I'm not going to ask you to do anything specifically this morning, but what I want to do is to help us understand this calling, the church's mission from his wounds.

1. **The Missional God:** The main thing to understand is that the very essence of the church *is* mission. Why? Because our God is a missional God. It's part of who God is. Just as he is loving and just as he is holy, he is also missional. God has always been on mission

to restore and heal creation. In Genesis, God called Abraham to be blessed, then sent him to be a blessing to all nations. In other words, God chose Abraham not at the expense of the nations, but in order to reach the nations. Of course, Abraham's mission reaches its climax in Jesus. And *"Because God so loved the world,"* he sends Jesus into the world to save it. Then, the Spirit is sent through Jesus, to birth the church and participate in the mission of God.

As David Bosch, a famous missiologist, says, "Mission is understood as being derived from the very nature of God. It is thus put in the context of the doctrine of the Trinity... God the Father sends the Son, and God the Father and God the Son send the Spirit, [and this] is expanded to include yet another 'movement.' God, the Father, Son and Spirit send the [whole] church into the world" (Bosch, 389).

2. **The Missional Church:** All of us are sent ones, sent into the world to participate in His mission. We, the church, are here for the sake of the world, especially the poor, the needy, and the broken. As someone has said, the church is the only organization that does not exist for itself. The very essence of the church is mission. Mission then is not one of many activities that the church does, it's simply who we are. It's our very identity, because we serve a missional God. *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you,"* Jesus says.

### I. PBCC Family Value: Participation

One of our family values here at PBCC is participation in God's Work. God is already on mission in this world and in people's lives, so we are sent to participate with him in his mission. We gather every Sunday to be reoriented back to Jesus at the center. Then, every Monday, we are scattered into his world as missionaries. Yes, all of us are missionaries, serving the missionary God.

Gathered – scattered...

Gathered – scattered...

Gathered-scattered...

Every week.

### J. Practically Speaking

So, what does this mission look like practically? Well, we enter mission every Monday from his wounds, the wounds of our strength-in-weakness Messiah. This means we will take a posture of mercy toward others, with no pointed fingers of condemnation. This means we will invite others into the safe arms of our strength-in-weakness Messiah. And, this means we will walk the path of self-sacrifice and self-giving love.

And, from this text, three key characteristics will mark us:

1. **Joy:** In this text, when the risen Jesus comes to these fearful disciples, they are filled with irrepressible joy! This is where mission starts, as Lesslie Newbigin says, "Mission

begins with an explosion of joy!” (Newbigin). Of course, the good news that the crucified Jesus is alive is news that cannot possibly be suppressed!

2. **Peace.** Secondly, peace accompanies us wherever we go. In Matthew, Jesus blesses the peacemakers (Matt 5:9). Man, do we need a lot of peacemakers in our world today, people who will risk to make peace. As Jesus was sent right into the world’s suffering to bring peace, now the church is sent right into the world’s suffering to provide peace. In other words, the gift of peace that disciples experience through an encounter with Jesus is not to stay inside. It is to manifest itself outwardly, testifying to the world what true peace, from the true prince of peace, really looks like (Hastings, 25).
3. **Forgiveness.** And, thirdly, we forgive. We forgive. We forgive. We forgive, and we proclaim that forgiveness, release from condemnation, shame and bondage, can only be found in Jesus. We enter into the sins of the world, and tell people the good news that because of his wounds, we can be truly free!

So, joy, peace and forgiveness are three key marks that characterize our lives as we are scattered around the world.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

So, it’s my hope and prayer that all of us here at PBCC will go from here and be missionaries, bringing the presence of Jesus with us in every sphere of life, in the home, workplace, neighborhood, school, sports events and all other public spaces where God has placed us. Yes, it is not an easy mission, and it is a costly mission, because it always involves the way of the cross. It always involves some kind of dying and self-sacrifice.

But, we can be greatly encouraged in two ways:

1. we can look at what happened with those first disciples. Remember, they were not the sharpest tacks in the drawer. And, they’re stuck in a locked room full of fear! And yet, after meeting the risen Jesus and with the power of the Spirit, they moved out to accomplish amazing things. Within only 300 years, it is estimated that there were around six million believers as a result of this motley crew of fearful disciples locked in a room on that first Easter evening.
2. But, we can also go from here encouraged because He, the risen Jesus, is already working in every sphere of our lives, and He is with you and in you. And, you can simply go and participate in what He is already doing.

Amen.

#### **Benediction**

So, now as we will scatter to participate in the mission of God by the power of the Holy Spirit, let me remind you of the words of Theresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body now but yours,*

*No hands, no feet on earth but yours.*

*Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world.*

*Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good in this world.*



*Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.*  
Go now in the power of the Spirit.  
Amen.

## **Resources**

Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission*  
Bruner, Dale, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*  
Burge, Gary, *John (NIV Application Commentary)*  
Hastings, Ross, *Missional God Missional Church*  
Johnson, Darrell, *Preaching John (Regent College Course)*  
Klink, Edward, *John (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT)*  
Newbigin, Lesslie, *The Light Has Come*