**Livin’ the Life**

**Resurrection Appearances**

John 20:19-31

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We are at the tail end of our series in the Gospel of John, Livin’ the Life, looking at the life of Jesus and the life he promises. Last week we looked at the empty tomb and saw that Jesus vindicates himself by resurrection so that his disciples see and believe. Today we are in 20:19-31, looking at two more resurrection appearances. We see a similar point today, Jesus vindicates himself by resurrection and convinces his disciples that he is alive so that even his weakest disciples see and believe.

The narrative can be divided into three sections. The first section,20:19-23, Jesus convinces his disciples of his resurrection by showing them his wounds. The next section, 20:24-29, Jesus convinces Thomas of his resurrection, by showing him his wounds and also inviting him to touch his wounds. The last section, 30-31, John gives us the reason he has recorded these appearances, so that we too would believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing that we may have life.

**Jesus Convinces his Disciples that He is Alive (19-23)**

The disciples were hiding. The Jewish leaders had killed Jesus and the disciples are afraid that Jews might come after them too (19). They are disillusioned, their Messiah had been crucified and cannot possibly conceive that he has risen from the dead. Yet John sees and believes and then Mary sees and believes and she told the disciples about seeing Jesus alive that morning. Now Jesus shows up and greets them, peace be with you (19). The answer to their fears about their circumstances is Jesus’ peace which he secured for them by his resurrection (14:27; 16:33). He is the source of internal peace when the storms of life are swirling around you.

As if his presence is not enough to convince them, he shows them his wounds. The disciples rejoice because they are convinced, Jesus is alive (20). None of his disciples were expecting Jesus’ resurrection so he convinces them that he is alive. John saw the grave cloths and believed, then Mary saw Jesus and believed, and now the disciples see Jesus as well as his wounds and believe. Jesus gives evidence to rational and thinking people to convince them of what is true, he is alive! Jesus vindicates himself by resurrection and convinces his weakest disciples so they see and believe. What distinguishes Christianity from other world religions is that the founder rose from the dead and points us to believe in him rather than someone else because he is God. The resurrection is a true, historical event.

Then John gives us his version of commissioning his disciples. He says to them again, peace be with you. Peace is not just for their personal benefit but they now become agents of peace by pointing people to Jesus. He says, as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you (21; cf 17:18). Disciples in the first century had five characteristics. First, they would follow a rabbi for several years; then they would learn and memorize his teaching; third, they would imitate their teacher’s way of ministry; fourth, they would imitate their teacher’s life and character. Finally, the disciple would reproduce what he had learned by finding and training his own disciples. This is what Jesus is doing here. He will soon ascend to the Father and he is commissioning them to make disciples, followers of Jesus. As Jesus came to seek and save the lost so too we are to seek and save the lost. Mission exists because those across the street and those across the world do not have eternal life or know the soul satisfying joy found only in God. When we are united to Jesus by faith, we are in him and he in us, we become united with him in his mission. We saw this in John 15 in the metaphor of the vine and branch metaphor which describes our union with Jesus. We find life and fruit by abiding in him. As we find satisfaction and strength in Jesus, he promises to make us fruitful.

When he said this, Jesus blew on them saying, receive the Holy Spirit (22; cf 14:26-27; 15:26-27; 17:18). The giving of the Spirit is tied to Jesus’ resurrection. The Spirit will be poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4) and the Spirit empower his disciples for life and mission.

He sends his disciples out in mission because he has accomplished the forgiveness of sin by his death and resurrection (1:29); our role is to share the gospel and declare that forgiveness based upon acceptance or rejection of the gospel (3:36). This is what he means when he says if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness, it is withheld (23). The authority to pronounce or withhold forgiveness to someone is based upon their acceptance or rejection of the gospel. This tells us humanity needs God’s forgiveness. Scripture tells us that God created everything and it was good, but man wanted to rule himself so rebelled against God bringing sin and chaos into the world. God reconciles us to himself through the work of Christ, who took the penalty for our sin upon himself. So, Jesus vindicates himself by resurrection and convinces his weakest disciples and greatest doubters so they see and believe. And believing in him as a disciple is also taking up Jesus’ mission in the power of the Spirit so that others see and believe also.

**Jesus Convinces Thomas He is Alive (24-29)**

Now Thomas was not with the other disciples when they saw Jesus so they tell him that they have seen the Lord but he is adamant, unless he sees Jesus *and* touches his wounds, he will never believe (24-25)! He too wants evidence that Jesus is alive. Os Guinness wrote a book years ago called *In Two Minds* and in it he distinguishes between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is not the opposite of faith, nor is it the same as unbelief. Doubt is a state of mind in between faith and unbelief so that it is neither of them completely and it is each of them partly. Doubt is looking to be convinced while unbeliefis a refusal to believe even with evidence. Doubt is not the opposite of faith, unbelief is.[[1]](#footnote-1) Thomas is looking to be convinced.

A week later the disciples are still hiding. Jesus shows up and greets them again with, Peace be with you. Then he immediately turns to Thomas and tells him to look at and also touch his wounds and believe (26-27). Thomas sees and believes and gives the clearest confession of Jesus in John’s gospel, my Lord and my God (28). Then Jesus responds, you believe because you have seen me but blessed are those who have not seen me and still believe (29). That is, there is a blessing upon all of those throughout history who do not have the advantage of seeing Jesus yet believe the disciple’s eye witness accounts in their writings.

**The Reason John Wrote his Gospel (30-31)**

The reason John has recorded these appearances and written this gospel is so that those who cannot see Jesus will read the eyewitness accounts in this gospel and believe that Jesus is the Christ and by believing have eternal life. Jesus is vindicated by resurrection and convinces his weakest disciples and greatest doubters so they see and believe.

Questions for Life Groups:

1. What truth(s) in this passage or teaching struck you?
2. Why did the disciples not expect Jesus’ resurrection?
3. How does the resurrection vindicate Jesus?
4. Why does Jesus go to such extent to convince the weakest of disciples to see and believe?
5. How would you summarize the main point of the teaching in one sentence?
6. How does this teaching affect my relationship with God?
7. How is God speaking to you from this passage/sermon?
8. How is God asking you to respond and obey him?
9. How does this teaching affect Jesus’ command to make disciples

1. Guinness, Os. *In two minds: The dilemma of doubt & how to resolve it* (Downers Grove, ILL: InterVarsity Press, 1976), 27-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)