

The Resurrection

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[0 : 00] I might look together now for some minutes at the chapter which we read the gospel by John in chapter 20 and especially from verse 19 to verse 23.

John chapter 20 reading from verse 19 then the same day at evening before 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.

And when he had so said he showed unto them his hands and his side then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord then Jesus said to them again peace be unto you as my father hath sent me even so send I you.

And when he had said this he breathed on them and saith unto them receive ye the Holy Ghost whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.

The theme of course is resurrection as John makes it known to us in this chapter.

[1 : 37] And how very wonderfully John does tell us the story of the resurrection of our Lord.

there are several things which John does not tell us about the resurrection of Christ which we read about in the other three gospels.

But here however we have a wealth of things to get on with which show to us the wonder and the power and also the sheer joy of this wonderful fact of this wonderful fact of what we might call the gospel or the good news of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

And the first thing that we might notice in particular as being brought to our attention here is the transforming understanding of the resurrection.

When we really get to the meaning of the resurrection of Christ something happens to us. We are transformed. We are transformed.

[2 : 59] You see this illustrated in the passage that we've just read. Early on in this chapter we are told that three different people came to the tomb where the Lord Jesus Christ had been laid to rest.

Mary Magdalene, Peter and John. And concerning each of these people it is said that when they came to the tomb they saw.

And yet when you look below the surface you'll find that there are different ways of seeing. We are told that Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb.

And it filled her with despair. They have taken away the body of my Lord was her response. She saw.

She took one meaning out of what she had seen. And it filled her with despair. We read that Peter came.

[4 : 19] And Peter saw. Into the empty tomb. And the input of the words is this.

That there was a theory set up in his mind. Concerning what he had looked at. He looked carefully. and what Peter saw filled him with questions.

But he could not understand the meaning. He had a theory but he couldn't understand what it all meant. We read then that John saw and John went into the tomb and when he saw, we read, he believed, he understood.

And in that moment of understanding, John's life was somehow changed. The meaning of what had happened had got through to him.

And so we find here, when John saw, he went away back to his other disciples and had obviously told them what was in his own heart concerning what must have happened to Jesus.

[5 : 50] And then here in verse 20 we read, when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, he showed them his hands and his side.

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. It's the same word that is used concerning John looking at the tomb and seeing.

Seeing with that inner eye of faith and of spiritual understanding that made the resurrection a reality to him. Now when Jesus came among the disciples in the upper room, we read that they were filled with fear.

They obviously didn't believe the things that John had told them. They were all in the state that Thomas was in. They must see for themselves.

But Jesus greeted them. And he showed them his hands and his side. Yes, he was the crucified Savior.

[7 : 10] The Jesus whom they had seen bleeding to death and expiring on the cross. But he was now alive again. His death was not forgotten.

The nail prints were still there. And all the reasons for his death were not forgotten. these reasons are still relevant to us today. But the risen Christ is the Savior who was crucified.

But with his death he has dealt with sin. And now alive again. He was standing among his own people.

And the fear was taken away from him. the misunderstandings were taken away. The ignorance were taken away. And they rejoiced.

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. This is what Jesus had prophesied would indeed happen as we read it in chapter 16 and verse 22.

[8 : 15] And friends it's still the same. When we understand the reality that Jesus is alive and when like John we see for ourselves the reasons for his death and the wonder of his resurrection surely we too are glad.

And all the rest of our Christian faith and the whole of our Christian mission to the world is based on this glorious fact this triumphant fact of the resurrection of Christ.

When you read the book of Acts it has the great twin themes of Jesus and the resurrection. For as Paul said if Christ is not written from the dead then is our faith vain.

It is an empty useless thing. Now it's not reading too much into these words to suggest that gladness is the keynote of the Christian church.

I wonder if it's the keynote of your life and of mine. We are sometimes caricatured as a miserable sort of spoilsport kind of people.

[9 : 51] People who are dejected and who hide themselves in a corner. That is not what the gospel is about. Paul says that's not the kind of spirit the Lord has given us but the spirit of power of victory and of a sound that is a clear understanding mind as we face this world.

We don't face the world alone. We go into the world with Christ. Jesus is with us if we are Christian people.

if we know the reality of the resurrection then we are never alone for the Lord is with us day by day and the knowledge of the living Christ transforms this life for us and it makes the next life a present reality too.

Jesus is alive today. now in our missionary work in southern Africa we work among a people who are very conscious of the dead.

We sometimes speak about the dear departed. The Africans are very conscious of the near departed for the great emphasis in their lives the great emphasis in their heathen worship is the worship of the ancestral spirit.

[11 : 34] They believe in a God who is the creator of all things a God whom they name as Hamata but this God and they don't worship idols in any way these are not pagan people in the sense of idol worshipping people.

They have this belief in this great spiritual being who is the creator of the universe and who is somewhere up there as it were.

But this God is not relevant to them. He's too far away. and unless they are in the most extreme of circumstances they would never imagine that Hamata had anything to do with them or that they had anything to do with him.

He doesn't deal with people directly. they worship the spirits of their ancestors.

The father of a family is most important. And when he dies a year after his death an ox or some other animal is killed in a ceremonial way and the spirit of the dead person is said to be brought back again to the kraal to the home where he was buried and where his people still live.

[13 : 18] And if they neglect to do this then if their illness comes in the family or an accident or something like this they would believe that it is because they have neglected the spiritual aspect of their ancestors and they would have to make another sacrifice and so on.

Well it is a miserable kind of religion because they live in fear fear of disappointing their ancestors fear of the disapproval of the ancestors fear of the the witch doctors who have the control over the spirits and so on.

But we have a message that is liberating a message that has life in it. Jesus is alive and you know when an African person who has been a heathen comes to believe in Christ you see the difference. There is a transforming power in the gospel. Nowadays it is quite common for missionaries to be blamed for the breaking up of the traditional cultures in these indigenous societies and Christianity gets blamed for a lot of things and I would make no apology whatsoever for preaching the gospel in a situation like that when you see the difference the wonderful difference that Jesus makes to a life. Jesus who is living far closer than the ancestral spirits far more real and powerful.

[15 : 19] Jesus is alive and what was the result? Then were the disciples glad when they saw that is when they understood when they saw the Lord and this is what happens too when we see him with our spiritual understanding and when other people come to know him as well.

But what we have in this passage also is the commission given by the risen saviour. Not only does the risen Christ transform people's lives he gives these transformed people a commission and he said to them as the father sent me so send I you.

Now it's most interesting to see the way that John presents this interview which Jesus the risen Christ had with his disciples and it wasn't just the apostles who were gathered there but the other believers with them and when the risen Lord appeared among them the same Jesus who had been crucified now physically risen from the dead his first words to them were the words of the common greeting just one word as he would have said it shalom the common greeting just as we say to one another hello Jesus said shalom but you notice a strange thing here that Jesus went on to say it to them again now if we greet one another we say hello you don't expect with the next sentence also to say hello yet

Jesus said shalom peace be to you he said it twice and I believe that there must be real significance in the way in which our Lord said it to them in the setting in which it comes here then said Jesus to them again we read in verse 21 peace be unto you as my father hath sent me even so send are you peace that is resting on all that I have done and that I now am says Jesus I'm risen alive present with you and all of that will bring you the thrill of this new joy now in the thrill of that new joy in the thrill of this peace in the confidence of this peace

I'm sending you out into the world and this is the confidence that we can go in the peace that Jesus brings to us that allays our fears and our doubts about the future it gives us a confidence that we have an invincible savior who was dead but has power over death and that power over death can give life to sinners who are dead in trespasses and sins it's confidence that not only did Jesus rise from the dead and then go away no but that he is abiding with his people and the victory that he won at Calvary has an abiding significance for us and then

[19 : 44] Jesus goes on to charge these believers with this great commission to go out into the world with the message the reconciling message of the work of his work upon the cross which is the ground from which with confidence we can tell men that God cares for them and seeks their blessing in salvation as my father has sent me even so send are you and friends that commission is still binding upon every one of us today if we are the Lord's people it is a message that brings peace to the world God says the apostle was in Christ reconciling the world to himself

Jesus is the only savior of men he came to redeem sinners that he came forth from the father to be the savior of all who put their trust in him and that's the message that it is our privilege to preach not only here in this land but in the land to which we have gone as missionaries of the cross because the people may look different they may have different customs they may speak a different language they've got the same needs they've got soul just as you have just as I have and it's the one savior who has a message of life and of salvation for all of us and it is a joy and a privilege to be a messenger of that gospel and it's a message that's got power in it because it's the message of the risen

Christ and it's a message that comes from Christ and this is what I personally find is satisfying when I go as a stranger a white man among people of a black nation as you know there are many racial tensions in South Africa there are racial tensions in other areas of the world as well and sometimes

people react when somebody comes especially from our western civilization when we go to speak to people of another race they might react and say well what authority do you have to say this to me the only authority I have is that

Christ has sent us and he was not a white man in the sense that he was a westerner and he is the one savior who is bringing under judgment western man and african man and eastern man or whoever it is and it is only as we are faithful to the commission of Christ and only I believe as we stick to the preaching of the gospel that we have authority to go in among people and say to them this is what you should believe the minute we start making man made pronouncements the minute we start preaching politics then we've lost our authority the gospel has its political implications it's got its social implications we know that in our own land for

Scotland of all nations has been aware of the political social and other implications of the gospel you see statues all around this city which remind us that preachers of the gospel have been men of state and of social upliftment and so on but I believe that today our missionary task is to preach the gospel to our people in Africa and then in the preaching of the gospel they in responding to it will work out for themselves their role in their society it's not for me to tell them what they must do in a political situation or how they must live and react to it and if I start doing that then quite justly they will say who are you to tell me how to live but if we say what

[25 : 19] Christ has sent us to say then it will have its effect and it will outwork its message among them for example when a man is converted his attitude to his wife changes in African society that is non Christian a wife has a very secondary role and many wives are greatly abused but when a man becomes a Christian his whole morality changes and his home is transformed his relation to his wife and his children are transformed when a man is converted his relation to his employer changes and the people there generally speaking do not have a high view of honesty of integrity of any kind of what it is to work but when they become

Christians that changes generally speaking the non Christian Africans are violent people I remember one day taking some of our church people home to a village and I landed right in the middle of a fight neighbouring families were at war and it really was quite a battle and the man obviously one neighbour had crossed over into the land surrounding the house of the others to argue about something and he was attacked with clubs and stones and he nipped smartly over the fence again and came back with an axe and attacked the woman of the neighbouring home with this axe she was about twice the size of him so he didn't stand much chance she took the axe from him and chased him with it and then the stones the rocks began to fly in the clubs it was violent now when these people become

Christians that changes their whole home is transformed and this becomes true also in political things they are working out their salvation in this realm as well and not just the Africans when I was coming away some Afrikaans Christian friends who support our work in the Bible school at Dumbasa asked me to pass on their greetings to the friends here in Scotland and these are conservative Afrikaans Christians their theological beliefs are very similar to our own and they said tell the people in Scotland we know the problems we have in this land and that we are honestly and sincerely trying to work these through and changes are being made so our commission is to go with the gospel the gospel has many aspects but our primary aspect is to preach the spiritual reconciling of men to God and when men are reconciled to God in Christ then the reconciling process of man to man becomes a reality as well as my father sent me says

Jesus so send I you and Jesus when he transformed the lives of these disciples when he commissioned them also gave them power we read here of the power of the Holy Spirit we read in verse 22 that Jesus breathed upon them and in doing this said unto them receive ye the Holy Ghost now we know from other passages that the disciples were told by Christ to wait in Jerusalem for the descent of the Spirit before they started on their great mission and this coming of the Spirit and power was at Pentecost but here we have given to us by clear illustration the key to the success of the proclamation of Christ's Gospel and this might be taken as a prophetic and a symbolic action looking forward to Pentecost they would receive the Holy

Spirit the word can more literally be translated as take Jesus said to them take the Holy Spirit and hear from Christ as one of the great fruits of his passion the gift of the Holy Spirit in whose power and in whose power alone we are able to carry out the commission that the Lord has given to us and this is a power that we are very conscious that we need as we go forth as missionaries or as any Christian worker goes we cannot go in our own strength it's the Spirit himself who not only

gives us power but who opens the hearts of those to whom we preach and I would ask you to pray for your missionaries as well as for our ministers in this land and to pray for our [31 : 22] African church that they would have the power of the Spirit among them so that they can stand strong in the midst of all the temptations they have to face and so that their preachers will be men of God empowered and sent out by the Spirit to proclaim the gospel to their own people and then finally there is in the closing words of Christ in this passage in verse 23 the authority of the Christian gospel Jesus said whosoever sins you remit these are remitted unto them and whosoever sins you retain they are retained and one is very conscious in going forth as a preacher of the gospel just how serious it is to preach because there is an authority and a power given by Christ and my friends it's not only a serious thing to preach the gospel it's a serious thing to hear it because if we go on hearing and yet not believing if we go on to use the words from this chapter just looking but not understanding then we are still in our sins and we are under the continuing judgment of God those who do not believe we can tell them their sins remain with them and God will deal with them those who repent and seek the Lord's forgiveness we can say their sins are forgiven they have new life in Christ and they can rejoice in him

I wonder then today where you stand the gospel of Christ is a blessed and liberating thing do you know it in your own experience have you met the risen Jesus if not well remember he is not far from any one of us he is here today and he will be found of each one who calls upon him in humility in repentance in faith and if you know him rejoice in him and seek that you will carry out his commission just where you are to be a messenger of his living reconciling work that other sinners may be turned to new life in him amen shall we pray our loving heavenly father we pray that thy blessing will follow the preaching of thy word and that thou will give to each one of us the grace the faith the trust that we need so that we may all be looking unto thee for our salvation and rejoicing in that salvation which comes to us through the living risen christ we ask this in his name and for his sake amen