

A Heart to Empower (John 20:19-23)

Big Idea: The risen Jesus has a heart to give us peace, a mission, and his Spirit.

For the past couple of months, we've been looking at the heart of Jesus for us. It's been amazing. We've seen that the heart of Jesus is to serve us, to love us, to prepare our future, to send his Spirit as a Helper, and to pray for us. And then, this past Friday, we saw that he gave his life for us as a King to serve us and to accomplish everything that God sent him to do. "It is finished." He did it all. All that needed to be done to save us was done for Jesus at the cross.

I've been so encouraged as we've looked at Jesus' heart for his people. There's nothing more that he could have done for us. The extent of his love for us is amazing.

We're done – almost. Today we're going to see one more part of Jesus' heart for us. On the Sunday after he died, Mary Magdalene – a woman with a past – found Jesus' tomb empty. She reported this to some of the disciples. They investigated, and they found the grave empty. But they couldn't make sense of it. But then Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene. And we pick up the story as Jesus appears the first time to the disciples while they were afraid and behind locked doors.

And it's at this moment that we discover what Jesus wants to do for us. On Easter morning, Jesus gave us three things we need.

Jesus gives us peace.

Notice Jesus' first words to them: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). This is so important that he repeats it again in verse 21 and 26. Before Jesus does anything else, he begins by giving his peace.

Normally, this saying wouldn't mean much. It's just a typical Jewish greeting that's still in use today.

In context, it becomes so much more. We've already seen that the disciples felt afraid. They'd were confused and afraid of the people who killed Jesus. It seems that Jesus was doing far more than simply greeting them. Before he had died, he had promised his followers peace:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14:27)

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)

Now that he is risen, the first words out of his mouth to his followers, repeated three times, is "Peace to you." The word peace is shalom, the all-embracing term "used to denote the unqualified well-being that would characterize the people of God" once the kingdom had dawned (Carson). It's the epitome of all the blessings that the kingdom of God brings. It's the counterpart to Jesus's words on the cross, "It is finished." There's nothing left to do. You have peace. We have peace in so many dimensions:

- peace between us and Jesus – "He is standing there among them offering them himself as a friend and helper, not a judge" (Piper)
- Peace between us and God
- Peace between us and others who are in Christ
- Peace in our own souls – the fact that we no longer have to live with guilty consciences
- The hope of peace in the whole world – that one day his peace will rule the whole world

(adapted from John Piper)

It's such an important idea that every greeting by the apostle Paul in his letters includes the word "peace." The heart of Jesus is a heart to give us his peace.

I want you to think about this for a minute. You know that feeling you get when you aren't right relationally with someone? I had the smallest amount of relational tension

this week with someone, and it drove me crazy. I wanted peace with that person again. It ate at me.

Imagine that tension, that disconnect, existing between you and God. That is our natural state because we are born wanting to run our lives our way rather than God's way. Our natural condition is one of thinking we know better than God. At its most basic level, that's what you call sin. And it destroyed our relationship with God.

But Jesus shows up, having completed the work God gave him to do, and he declares peace. In an anxious world, with all going on, Jesus shows up and grants us peace – a well-being that isn't dependent on the circumstances around us. He gives us peace with God, and this peace spreads throughout our entire lives no matter how bad things are going.

How do you get this peace? You receive it. It's a gift from Jesus. It's offered to us free. We just need to receive it.

I love what John Stott says:

We learn then that the Church's very first need, before it can begin to engage in evangelism, is an experience and an assurance of Christ's peace – peace of conscience through his death that banishes sin, peace of mind through his resurrection that banishes doubt ... Once we are glad that we have seen the Lord, and once we have clearly recognized him as our crucified and risen Savior, then nothing and no one will be able to silence us.

No matter what you are going through right now, the risen Jesus brings peace to our troubled hearts. My prayer for you is what Paul prayed in 2 Thessalonians 3:16: "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in every way." In the middle of difficult circumstances, Jesus has a heart to bring us peace.

But that's not all that the risen Jesus gives us. Here's the second thing Jesus gives us.

Jesus gives us a mission.

Read verse 21: "Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

What Jesus says here is remarkable. Jesus came to this world with a mission. He came because the Father sent him to come. It's a mission that began in the very heart of God. God was the very first missionary. God is on a mission to set this world right, to redeem this broken and sinful world to what he intended it to be. Jesus came as part of that mission so that everyone who believes in him can have eternal life (John 3:16), become a child of God (John 1:12), and be set free from slavery to sin (John 8:34-36) and more.

But now Jesus turns to his disciples and says, "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Just as the Father sent Jesus, now Jesus sends us to live on mission in the world – to enter the world as Jesus did, to carry on the same mission as Jesus with all of our lives.

In case you're wondering what this looks like, look at what Jesus says in verse 23: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Here's what this means. We – the church – get to represent Jesus in this world, offering his salvation to anyone who wants it. We get to announce the gospel, and it really matters. John Piper paraphrases Jesus here to help us understand what he means:

When you tell people about what I have done, speaking my word, about my work, in the power of my Spirit, I am the one speaking through you, so that if anyone believes your word, I forgive their sins. And if any does not believe your words, I don't forgive them. And since you are my voice and my truth, I speak of you forgiving them, and you withholding forgiveness.

We all need a sense of purpose in our lives. In fact, social scientists are discovering that we need meaning, purpose, or a sense of mission more than mere happiness. A purpose gets us up in the morning.

And here Jesus turns to his disciples – and therefore to us – and says that he has a purpose for our lives. And the purpose is so great that it's in line with the same purpose Jesus that he had. The risen Jesus turns to you and says that your life has a purpose that can make a difference for eternity. Your life matters.

We're going to start looking at this next week in a series called Too Good Not to Share. But for now, let me say: As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus has sent us to be on mission to these people. We're all missionaries. Your life has a purpose. He has put

people in your life so that you could be a missionary to them. God has given all of us what we need to do this.

The heart of Jesus is to give you peace, and it's also to send you on mission. It's to use your life to make an eternal difference in the lives of others. Through his resurrection, he gives us two of the things we need the most: peace no matter what's going on, and a purpose for our lives.

But there's one more thing that the risen Jesus gives us.

Jesus gives us the Spirit.

A minute ago, I told you that God has a purpose for your life. If you're like me, you feel inadequate. Imagine running a relay race, and Usain Bolt finishes his lap and hands you the baton. It's your turn to run. You're going to say, "You've got the wrong person. I think you'd better run the next lap yourself."

That's like what Jesus does. He has finished the work that God sent him to do, and now the risen Lord passes the baton to us. I don't know about you, but I'm tempted to say, "I'm out." I don't have what it takes, and neither do you. Jesus knows this, and that's why he gives us the Spirit.

Verse 22 says, "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"

If you ever feel incompetent, like you don't have what it takes, I have good news. You're in good company, and you have a Helper. The Holy Spirit now lives within you, empowering you to do everything he commands you to do. Every person who trusts Jesus receives the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that changes everything.

Remember Jesus's promise to send the Spirit as a Helper? It happens. It's an acted prophecy, looking forward to the day, just a few weeks later, when the Holy Spirit would come and empower the church at Pentecost.

The same Holy Spirit who was present at creation, who filled Jesus during his earthly ministry, and who raised him from the dead is now present in you, helping you, walking alongside you, and empowering you with everything you need. The Spirit lives within every believer, changing them from the inside-out. Without the Holy Spirit, it's impossible for us to live the Christian life.

The message of John 20 is that Jesus has risen. And he gives us what we need most.

The risen Jesus has a heart to give us peace, a mission, and his Spirit.

So today: receive his peace. If you haven't already done so, trust in the one whose heart has been shown to you so beautifully in these chapters of John – the one who died as a servant-King to accomplish everything that needed to be done. And then receive his peace, live on mission, and live in the Spirit's power for God's glory, for your joy, and for the good of the world.

Thank you, Father, that Jesus has risen. Thank you that the risen Jesus has a heart to give us peace, give us a mission, and to empower us with his Spirit. We worship him today. Amen.