



“Believe in the Risen Lord”

John 20:19-31

April 19, 2020

The title of this morning’s message is *Believe in the Risen Lord*, and it is my prayer that each one of us will truly believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ but not only that, I pray that we would also have confident faith that King Jesus has resurrection power to apply to our lives as well, for life and for eternity. We serve an awesome Savior, Jesus Christ. We are going to read about Him in John Chapter 20 this morning.

As we prepare our hearts for what is here, I wonder how many of you have noticed a tendency in the human condition to forever define a person by some mistake that they have made. It could be that they had a major lapse in judgment or it could be that they just walked headlong into some kind of defiant sin and they blew, and they blew it big time. One way or the other, there is a tendency for us to remember that about them and to remind them about it and to sometimes remind the world about it. Sometimes people are memorialized for their moments of weakness.

I wonder if that is the case of a man by the name of Thomas that we read about in the pages of the New Testament.

I am pretty sure that I spend more time than most people at Forrest Lawn, Cypress. That is the cemetery on Carson Blvd. I have loved ones that are laid to rest there. In addition as a pastor, I’m there regularly at times of bereavement with families.

However, if you go to Forrest Lawn Cypress, you will notice they have some amazing art work and sculptures all throughout the property. There is a giant mosaic that is larger than life. It is a scene depicting the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, where after His resurrection appearances He was lifted up into Heaven, there to the right hand of His Father.

That Mosaic is an amazing display. It must be fifty-feet high and thirty-feet wide. It really takes you in to the scene and on it they have this plaque, like a legend, telling you who is who in the depiction. I remember looking at that huge mosaic and reading the legend. Something that stood out to me is that next to the disciple of Jesus named Thomas was an added description.

Does anybody care to guess what the description of Thomas was? Yes, it says *Thomas the Doubter*. It is funny because it does not say, Peter the Denier. It does not say, John the Hothead or James the Arrogant, he was one of those who thought that he was greater than the other disciples.

However, there was Doubting Thomas. That is kind of how we remember him. To this day there is that figure of speech. If you have somebody whose kind of skeptical about things; they are not so sure and they want to investigate things a little bit more, people will say, *Aren't you a Doubting Thomas?*

Now to a certain extent as we look at how Thomas is portrayed in the pages of the Biblical story, there is reason for that view. The story of Thomas is told in three places in the New Testament. Of course, Thomas is in the background all throughout the story of Christ. He was one of the twelve disciples.

However, there are three places where he is active and he spoke. He is in John Chapter 11, with the story of Lazarus. He is in John Chapter 14, in the teaching that Jesus gave to His disciples in the Upper Room. Then Thomas is here in John Chapter 20 at one of the resurrection appearances.

Just by looking at those different portraits given of Thomas, we can kind of get a sense of how he was wired. He was kind of wired in a pessimistic way. I agree with some of the descriptions that I read in the book *Twelve Ordinary Men* by John MacArthur as he described Thomas. He said:

“Thomas, he was a kind of a guy who lived, it would seem, in the dark corners of life. He seemed to anticipate the worst in everything. He might have been kind of moody and melancholy.”

MacArthur even went on to say that Thomas might have been the Eeyore among the twelve disciples. Eeyore being the sad character in Winnie the Pooh who thinks the worst is always going to happen. Of course, in the pages of the Gospel that we are going to be reading this morning, Thomas did have a rather infamous moment of unbelief.

All that being the case, it is my humble opinion that we ought to remember Thomas differently because what tends to get lost in the mix is that out of doubting Thomas came one of the greatest and clearest confessions of the Lordship and the deity of Jesus Christ found in the pages of Scripture.

Not only was he the one who was, in fact, most outrageous in his doubt about the resurrection, he was also the one who was most robust in his confession of King Jesus Christ. In the practice of Christian charity, rather than being critical, I don't think we should remember him as doubting Thomas. I think we should remember him as worshiping Thomas because of the picture that is presented for us here.

Once again, we have the story of transformation laid out before us in the Gospel of John. Here we have this great work of renewal that happened before our eyes and we see what happened in the life of Thomas, and I pray that our hearts will be revived and lifted and renewed with robust faith, as we read what happened there.

I want you to know that by the time we get to the end of this story, we are going to be drawn into the narrative. Jesus will speak of us, and John the author will speak to us. We are brought into the story and challenged to have faith, to believe with confidence in the Risen Lord. I pray that these things come with His power and His grace to where we are at life right now.

As we fix our attention on John Chapter 20, let's recall the context. It was just days earlier that Jesus had been executed by the Romans at the direction of the Jews. He was put to death with the most excruciating form of capital punishment of them all. He was crucified.

Prior to being crucified, His body was lacerated. He took a severe beating when He was flogged and scourged. Then His hands and His feet were pierced with large nails as He was fastened to that rugged Roman cross.

We read how darkness covered the land as Jesus hung on the cross as He died for sinners like us. Then after that, His body was anointed and wrapped and placed in the tomb. That tomb was sealed.

Now we pick up the storyline up. It is three days later. It is Sunday. For all the disciples knew the Jewish Sanhedrin were going to be determined and resolute to snuff out completely the movement that was initiated by Jesus. They had violent intentions for the Christ. They carried them out.

Now the disciples were thinking that they were next. So we find ten of them in this story gathered behind locked doors. By then they had heard reports. They heard stories of the vacated grave, the empty grave. They were even hearing of appearances of Christ alive and well. They were wondering if it could be true.

A small group of the women went to honor the tomb of Jesus and His body. They came back telling the others that they had seen the Lord. Trailing after them, John and James came back. They saw the empty tomb. At this point, John was beginning to get it. Mary Magdalene came telling them that she had seen the Lord.

Then there were two disciples that were on the road to Emmaus. Jesus appeared to them. They came back saying that they had seen the Lord. So we can imagine that strange mixture of wonder and fear that was filling that Upper Room at that time.

We pick up the story in John Chapter 20 and Verses 19 through 23:

**<sup>19</sup>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." <sup>20</sup>When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup>And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive**

**the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”**

Brothers and sisters, what a scene we have set before us here in this text. Did you notice that the disciples were in that room under a self-imposed shelter at home order? They were in that room, saying, *It is crazy out there and we are safer at home.* They were staying in that room!

There they were with the doors locked, and then there was a miraculous manifesting, a real and literal appearance of King Jesus, the resurrected Lord. There He was right in their presence. There He was, the body that had been so broken, that had been ripped to shreds by the cat o' nine tails.

That body was then healed. It was reinvigorated. A resurrection body. Strong. But there were five scars that remained. Two in His hands. Two in His feet. One in His side. The scars reminding us of the great sacrifice for sin that He made.

Jesus appeared and His word to these disciples, not once but twice, were peace be with you. Peace be with you. Some people think that He said that the first time to calm their fear and their fright, because suddenly there He was alive. It says in Luke's Gospel that they thought this was a ghost. They were freaked out. They were scared.

Then Jesus said, *No, it is Me and I am here. I am tangibly alive. Give me some fish. Give me some food and I will prove it to you.* Yes, brothers and sisters, all Jesus had to do was put the fish in a little bit of flatbread and that would have been a fish taco. So we eat fish tacos here to the glory of the Risen King!

Once it sunk in that it was Christ alive, this text says the disciples were exuberant in their joy. First Jesus said peace to you to perhaps calm their fear. Then He said peace to you to settle their exuberance and enthusiasm as they were going off with joy in the Lord.

Here in this scene we read an interesting paragraph. Jesus did and said some pretty intriguing things. We are going to circle back to some of those things later in the message as we apply it. For now what we need to notice is that Thomas was not there among the disciples. Only ten disciples were there.

I began thinking about why Thomas was not there. Where was he? I thought that maybe he was out getting supplies. Maybe he was the one who ventured out to make sure that they had food to eat. However, we know that while Thomas was away they were eating. They had the supplies they needed.

So where was Thomas? Why was he out? We are not told exactly why he was out. But I wonder if you have ever noticed that there are some people among us who process grief in isolation. They just want to be alone. That kind of seems in keeping with how Thomas was wired. Maybe he just went off, needing to deal with all that had happened by himself.

I don't know. The text does not say. Either way, what we have now is Thomas, who seemed to be something of a cynical man, now having to deal with the other disciples who were exuberant and bubbling over with enthusiasm. How do you think Thomas would deal with that?

Verse 24:

**<sup>24</sup>Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord."**

No. Thomas, we have seen the Lord. What's interesting is when you dig down into the Greek grammar that this was given to us in, it indicates that they kept telling him that we have seen the Lord.

There are two forms of the past tense in Greek. One is called the *aorist*, one is called the *imperfect*. The aorist speaks back to something that happened once in the past. The imperfect speaks of something that happened repeatedly in the past.

Do you want to guess which tense is used here, the one time or the over and over again? They kept telling him, Thomas, we have seen the Lord. It would imply that Thomas said to give him a break. No, Thomas, we have seen Him. We have seen Him. It was Jesus.

So the disciples were trying to get it across to Thomas and you can imagine their elation. Evidently Thomas was getting fed up with the whole thing, so he just laid it out because, if I understand this correctly, he wanted them to shut up.

Look at what happened next. Verse 25:

**<sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."**

Thomas was being emphatic and he was being graphic. I might even say he was being kind of grotesque. Again, digging into the Greek where Thomas said:

**<sup>25</sup>...“Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side...**

That is a strong word. It is not a word that kind of speaks of a very light tracing that you might do with somebodies wound. This is the Greek verb *ballo*. I'm taken back to Greek class 101, when I was a seminary student at Talbot and going through my flash cards.

The Greek is a nuance to language, so there are multiple words that could be used to translate it into English. I remember the first two for *ballo* were the words *to throw* or *to thrust*. I remember that because that is how I remembered *ballo*. What do we do with a ball? We throw it.

So it is a pretty forceful term that is being used here. Thomas was saying, *Look, guys, unless I probe His wounds with my finger in His hands and I stick my hand into His side, I will not ever, ever, ever believe this.* And Thomas did not want to hear anymore.

I was thinking about this in terms of us being followers of Christ who want to make Him known; us being Christians who want to witness about Him and introduce Him to others and help others to really come into a relationship with Him. This is just a reminder for us that our enthusiasm and our emotional displays and our elation do not necessarily convince anybody.

In fact, those things can get kind of irritating to some people. In order for a person to have their heart converted to faith in Christ, it requires a work of God. It requires a movement of the Holy Spirit converting the heart. That can take place through a person who is all pumped up. It could taking place through somebody who is solemn. It is the truth of God with the power of the Holy Spirit that will bring somebody to a place of living faith.

Now Thomas was a struggling disciples. That is what I would understand him as. Thinking about a parallel plane here, when we think about evangelism, we must remember that the Scripture teaches that all of us who are fallen, we are at enmity with God. Scripture teaches that us sinners we are enemies of God.

The more that we get to know His ways and His Laws, it can stir up rebellion within us. It takes submission to a work of the Holy Spirit to lift our hearts up to understand that we are sinners and that we need His grace. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit will convince people of this as we share in grace and in love.

If you are hearing this you need to pray, *Lord, will You make known Your truth to me, deep in my heart about who You are, about who I am before You and about what Jesus has come to do?* It is something that has to go deep into the heart for somebody to be born again in faith.

I was reminded of that as I was reading of Thomas and how he responded to these very fired disciples. We continue. This hung in the air for a full week. Thomas had been observing the disciple's joy, but I don't know that he had been participating in it.

You can imagine how it was. Thomas had been kind of detached from it all. It might have felt like an eternity but eight days later, Jesus appeared again. Verses 26 through 29:

**<sup>26</sup>Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but**

**believe.”<sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”<sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

Once again in my opinion, it is an amazing picture here. I have read the Gospel of John many, many times and I have studied and taught on it, my take is that what we read right here is the climactic moment in this account of the life of Christ with Thomas proclaiming Christ in the way that he did it.

If you have read and studied the Gospel of John, you will recall that it opens with a rich theological prologue or introduction. In the entryway into the Gospel of John there are elevated statements about Jesus.

I wonder if you remember what it says in John Chapter 1, starting in Verse 1

**<sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**

He, the Christ, the Word. He was with God. He was God.

**<sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.**

Christ the Word was with God. Was God. This is plurality within the Godhead. Three in one. Father, Son, and Spirit. Everything was created through the Christ. He is the Creator. Then John Chapter One goes on to say in Verse 14:

**<sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh**

The eternal God added human nature to Himself in the person of Christ. He walked this earth. That’s how the Gospel of John opens. Then here in this text, the disciple that was struggling the most, the skeptical disciple, came to understand who Jesus was and He declared, *My Lord and my God*.

Of all of the statements of praise rendered unto Jesus and received by Him, this is the most elevated, clearest, and most advanced of them all. Thomas came to understand that Christ was God in human form.

Here in this text we have this man Thomas transformed before our very eyes. He had this encounter with the Risen Lord and he was changed to a man of robust faith. It is a beautiful picture to behold.

However, brothers and sisters, at the beginning of this message did I not say that we would be brought into the story? Now we get to that point. Jesus spoke of us living in Southern California in the Twenty-First Century as well as other people through the ages.

Jesus spoke of us. Then John spoke to us. Did you catch that in Verse 29?

**<sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”**

That was Jesus speaking. Now John, the author, spoke:

**<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in the book; <sup>31</sup>but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Now Jesus was looking forward into the decades and the centuries and the ages to come prior to His Great Second Coming, understanding that what Thomas received here was something privileged.

We don't get these resurrection appearances of the Christ. What Thomas got was something privileged, but then Jesus spoke forth a blessing

**<sup>29</sup>...Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**

Then John went on to say in Verse 31:

**<sup>31</sup>but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

The implication of that statement is that what is written here is sufficient for your faith in Christ to be raised up.

What we see testified to in Scripture and observed in life after life after life after redeemed life after transformed life after lives made new is that there is power from God in the pages of this Book to revive a human heart and soul; to help them understand that there is a Living God and that God punctured the veil, walked this earth in Christ, and died on the cross for our sins.

Yes, our sin is that serious. Christ was raised on the third day and there is life in Him and Him alone. Jesus said, *Blessed, fortunate are those who hear this and believe it.* Trust in Christ. Believe in Him. He is God's one and only provision for your sin, and what an awesome and sufficient provision is He! There is life in Him. He is the One who conquered death.

You come into a relationship with Him by confessing your sin and saying, *Lord, I am one in need of a savior. I want to be alive in Christ. I want to be secure in Christ. I want to live in Him.*

When your heart is humbled and you turn to Him in faith, you are joined to the life of God. You are born again.

If anybody is hearing this and are discerning this kind of faith rising up in your heart for the first time, trust in Him! Just say a prayer of confession of sin, saying, *God, I know you are there, and I know that Jesus is the Savior. I want to be a follower of Christ.*

When you submit your heart and humble yourself like that, you are saved. Trust in Jesus. The Christian life is not a private, cloistered, closeted life. It is something that we live out publicly with the body of Christ. Your next step of faith is going to be to tell somebody about what the Lord is doing for you. My email address is [jeffs@Bethelgrace.org](mailto:jeffs@Bethelgrace.org). I would love to talk to you. For those of us who are in Christ, these stories are intended to edify us and to lift us up.

Now I want to bring home some applications for those of us who will be walking with Christ into the future. Those who are in Him, we are going to be trusting in Him. Jesus issued forth blessing upon those who believe.

This morning I was in the kitchen having some breakfast, when out of habit I pulled out my phone and turned on YouTube App. And behold, the first thing that I saw was a livestream of Discovery Alliance Church in Missoula Montana, where my dear friend, Paul Taylor, is serving as senior pastor.

I began listening to Paul preach, and he was bringing it! He was preaching with boldness. He was preaching on the Beatitudes of Matthew Chapter 5.

**<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

**<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

**<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

Paul was preaching with conviction. He began talking about that word *blessed*. He mentioned way back in about the 1500s when the bubonic plague was spreading and a practice began that when any time someone sneezed, everybody else would say bless you to kind of help them.

Be that as it may, living under the blessing of God is an awesome thing. Here is the truth: You can be healthy or sick living under the blessing of God. You can be twenty-five-years-old and physically robust, in the best shape of your life or you can be somebody diagnosed with Covid-19, and be under the blessing of God, living in His power in a way that is distinct and unique in this fallen world that is coming to an end.

You can be a person of means or you can be watching your retirement account being drained and still be under the blessing of God. That is not something Joel Osteen is going to tell you, but it is the truth. Read the Beatitudes. Whatever the circumstances of life might be, thick or thin, high or low, peak or valley, the Christian who has Christ and who is being carried by the Spirit of Christ, is living in the blessing of God. This is a powerful thing.

Jesus helps us to spread the radiance of His truth and His grace and His glory in this world. Here in this text, Jesus said, Even though they don't see the manifestation of the Risen Christ bodily, blessed are those who hear and believe. To be blessed is to be fortunate, to be one living with the favor of God upon their life.

Here in what we read there are several gifts of His grace for those who believe. I want for us to think about these things. I will mention three gifts for the believer, three blessings that Jesus gives. First:

### **1. Jesus Gives His Peace (20:19, 21, & 26)**

This is important to Christ. He spoke of this over and over again in the Farewell Discourse in John 14 through 16, where He told His disciples peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. And Jesus said, *In this world you will have trouble. Take heart, I have overcome the world.* Jesus gives us peace.

Here in what we just read Jesus used the same greeting three times. Peace be with you. Peace be with you. Peace be with you. This was so much more than just a greeting of saying hi or hello or how is it going.

It is true on that level because that is how they spoke greetings to one another—Shalom. Peace. But here we have the Prince of Peace who had endured the cross. Then He was back from the grave, and He spoke forth peace on His people.

I want to tell you the meaning of this runs deep. There are so many different levels and nuances to it. We talked about a couple of them earlier, but here is the One who has conquered sin, Satan, and the grave speaking forth peace. If you look at the pages of Scripture, you will see that there are three directions or dimensions of peace. There is upward peace. There is inward peace. There is outward peace.

Upward peace is peace with God. We who were sinners, who were lawbreakers, who constantly, repeatedly, willingly transgressed the Moral Law of God, who were deserving of His wrath and judgment, Jesus came into the world and died on the cross to intercept that wrath; to take it on Himself that we might be forgiven, that we might be made new, that our hearts might be made contrite and our lives transformed. It is by Christ that we are given peace with God.

When we are at peace with God, we start to experience the peace of God. As our minds are stayed on Him, and as His truth is filling our lives, we have His peace rising up within us. Philippians 4 calls it a peace that would even surpass understanding. It makes no sense. You mean you are experiencing peace at a time like this? You should be flipping out, quivering and shaking, yet you are at peace?

It is a peace that transcends understanding in Philippians Chapter 4 for those who are filled with the Spirit of Jesus. When we have that upward peace leading to that inward peace, we become agents outwardly of that peace. Jesus wants us to be living in this kind of peace. Jesus repeatedly emphasized this.

How are you doing? Brothers and sisters in Christ, He came to bring you peace. Are you pursuing the things that make for peace? In Romans Chapter 8 it says that the mind that is stayed on the Spirit of God is life and peace.

Isaiah the prophet, praying to God, said in Isaiah 26:3:

**<sup>3</sup>You keep him in perfect peace  
whose mind is stayed on you,**

In the midst of all that is going on and all the perspective that are being shared, yes we need to be aware and wise and engaging but above all, we need to be filled with the truth of God's Word, that we not become agitated. We speak truth and we speak truth with calm as people filled with the Prince of Peace.

If I watch CNN, MSN, Fox, or even OAN, I feel it bubbling up inside of me. Not only do I become agitated, but I want to become an agitator. Yes, there is a place for that. We are those who speak forth truth even to those who are in authority. Think about John the Baptist and Herod and Herodias. But are we at peace?

I have been trying to keep up with the news, but I have also been reading a book called *Trusting God Even When it Hurts*. It is a book by Jerry Bridges on the doctrine of the sovereignty of God, Him working His plan providentially in the earth at all times; how there is nothing beyond the scope of His power and control.

When I read that book and I see how the Scripture is dripping and saturated with the language of God being the rock that is higher than us and who is enthroned above it all, even while things on this earth make get me stirred up, I say wait a minute, I have a Rock and people are not prevailing against the Lord.

He is in charge. He is enthroned. Just like Isaiah said, he is in perfect peace when his mind is stayed on God. Jesus gives us His peace. What else is here?

## **2. Jesus Gives His Mission (20:21)**

He gives us a great sense of fulfillment in doing things that are of eternal consequence in this world. Verse 21:

**<sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."**

The theme of being sent runs all the way through the Gospel. Jesus constantly spoke of being sent by the Father into the world on a redemptive mission. I think the word *sent* is mentioned close to forty times in the Gospel of John.

What we read in the pages of this wonderful Book is that Jesus came from Heaven to earth. He lived in our world. He breathed our air. He ate our food. He went to our schools. He walked our trails. He walked our fields. He drank from our wells. He attended our dinner parties. He went to our weddings. He befriended all kinds of people. All the while spreading the knowledge of His Kingdom and the Gospel thereof.

Now Jesus says likewise. As the Father has sent Me, so am I sending you. Jesus sends us, brothers and sisters in Christ, into the world to mingle with people, to attend dinners, to attend weddings, to be at funerals, to go to school, to be employed in jobs, to all spheres of life. Every single one of us, we go in as ambassadors of Jesus Christ to be agents of peace and love, who also bring a very convicting message of life and death, based on what we do with Jesus who came to die for our sins.

Jesus authorizes us. He gives us authority. He said that if you declare there is sins forgiven, they are forgiven. If you say they are not forgiven, they are still in their sin. We know that it is God and God alone who forgives sins, but as those who are filled with Gospel of Christ, pure in our understanding of it, we could make observations.

If people receive Christ with a genuine humbling, we can tell them they are forgiven. Whereas if there are people that are stiff-necked and saying that it is a bunch of malarkey, and rejecting it, we can say they are not forgiven. There is a place called Hell. There is a place called Heaven. Jesus is the difference between the two. He experienced Hell on the cross that we might go to Heaven. He is the dividing line. Jesus gives us His mission.

The word of the day is that you are safer at home, but I want to say that you are safer in Jesus. I'm not trying to be cynical about the safer at home order. I want to see this virus contained, but you are safest in Jesus. Whatever comes of the circumstances of this world, He is the One who shelters us from the wrath of God to come, and He is the One who lifts us up into an Everlasting Kingdom of joy. We are safest in Jesus!

Finally:

### **3. Jesus Gives His Spirit (20:22)**

John Chapter 20 and Verse 22:

**<sup>22</sup>And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.**

Jesus breathed on them, it says, and He said receive the Holy Spirit. What was happening there? This is the very moment that the disciples were indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If so, what do we make of Acts Chapter 2, the Day of Pentecost—fifty days after the Passover, fifty days after the resurrection?

Acts Chapter 2 says that the Holy Spirit was then poured out upon the church. It was then that He came to reside within the church and empower them for ministry. However, it says that about forty-two days earlier Jesus breathed on the disciples and said to receive the Spirit.

What is going on with this scene? You can get into some good commentaries and read lots of good perspectives and theories among Bible scholars who honor Scripture. I spent about two hours just reading all these different perspectives, and being edified and delighted as I read what could have been happening there.

Some say that Jesus was giving them the gift of the Spirit right then. It is not to be mistaken with Pentecost. It was not the day of Pentecost, but something comparable to it. Perhaps Jesus gave His disciples the presence and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Later the indwelling was given to the rest of the church.

Gary Burge, who wrote the NIV application commentary on John, said to just take it for what it says. He breathed on them and said receive the Holy Spirit. That is one perspective. The disciples had the Holy Spirit. A small portion of the body of Christ did at that moment.

Others say, no, this was a symbolic gesture of the indwelling of the Spirit. D.A. Carson, a strong Bible scholar and teacher in the pillar New Testament series on the Gospel of John, argues this view: Jesus was employing symbolism, kind of like when He healed the blind man.

In John Chapter 9, Jesus made a mixture of salvia and dirt. He created mud and He applied to the blind man's eyes and told him to go wash in the Pool of Siloam. It was not the mud that touched his eyes that caused him to get his sight back, but it was in moment trailing after that he received his sight. Perhaps, this is a symbolic gesture of what was yet to come on the day of Pentecost. That is what D.A. Carson says.

Some say that this was a partial provision of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was coming then but not in the full force of His power. John Calvin said, "They are now sprinkled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, but not yet saturated with the full endowment of His power, which came later." That is the perspective of the great doctrinal reformer.

Then there is variation of that partial perspective. I can't remember who wrote about this, but they said that this may be the moment of regeneration, the Spirit coming into these men, and later was the time of empowerment.

Those are some perspectives. I think it is edifying to read through and see all the pros and cons of each view and interpretation. But whatever view is taken, we need to recognize the glory of this moment with the Messiah, the God-man, breathing the life of His Spirit somehow upon the disciples.

We read back in Genesis Chapter 2 and Verse 7 how God created the first man from the dust and the clay of the earth. He formed his human body, then He breathed into Him the breath of life. Then the man became a living creature.

Here, now, we have God incarnate on the earth breathing His Spirit somehow into His disciples, into His elect, into His people, and this is the beginning of a new creation, where Christ is going to bring the awakening of the dead.

As Jesus gives the gift of His Holy Spirit and people believe, they are born again. Dead hearts are revived to life. Languished souls are animated with life. Withered spirits are given reinvigoration into life. Darkened minds are given light. Life is given in the Name of King Jesus, who is Lord and God.

For those who believe in Jesus, based on the testimony of His Word, the Holy Spirit comes to reside within them, to revive them spiritually, to cause them to be born again, to be regenerated with a life that is going to extend into all eternity. Jesus gives us life.

These are three gifts that Jesus blesses His people with. I pray that these things enter into the ear-gate, going to the heart-gate, and somehow find their way back out again through the mouth and hand-gates as we serve Jesus Christ.

Believe in the Risen Lord. Not only in the doctrine of the resurrection that He was raised on the third day, but that Jesus has resurrection power for your life whatever you are going through. He is going to see you through. If you are a follower of Jesus, He will see you through. He will hold you up. He will use your life.

Let's just yield ourselves to Him in faith. He is the King of king and the Lord of lords. Will you join me in a word of prayer.