

April 28, 2019

“The Realization of Our Deepest Longings”
John 20:19-23

FCF: Our disconnect with Easter

PROPOSITION: (magnet) The resurrection of Jesus is the realization of our deepest longings.
(anchor) We need to look into the tomb.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

This past Monday, while most Americans were putting away their Easter decorations, the White House was hosting its annual Easter Egg Roll. This is a long-standing tradition, officially established in 1878, now attracting as many as 35,000 parents and children. It’s held each year on Easter Monday, the first day of what many faithfully celebrate as the beginning of Eastertide.

In the Western tradition, Eastertide is the period of 50 days spanning from Easter Sunday to Pentecost. Each Sunday of the season is treated as a Sunday of Easter. Today is then Second Sunday of Easter. Next Sunday is Third Sunday of Easter and so on. It’s a good tradition.

Eastertide recognizes and reminds us of the lasting impact of Easter. And we need that.

SCRIPTURE READING: [John 20:19-23](#)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

“We are the most over-informed under-reflective society in human history.” That was the conclusion of a recent Harvard based study. Not that many years ago, we got our news by a morning paper and the evening news. Now we get it every five minutes on our phones. Such little time is taken to consider and to contemplate. Many researchers are alarmed about our short attention spans and how easily distracted we have become. The significance of a day, week, month, year, or life is often lost on us. Like water on a paved slope, very little seems to sink in.

It’s rare that we stop to inspect, pause to press into even the weightiest things. But there are some things worth considering, worth looking into. And it is a terrible mistake to pass up the opportunity. Why is this important to say on this Second Sunday of Easter? Because of what we find with the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is the realization of our deepest longings. And so we need to look into the tomb. We need to examine and carefully consider it.

And, as we do so, what do we find? What are these deep longings that are realized there? These three things - the peace of God, the presence of God, and, finally, our purpose from God.

I. THE PEACE OF GOD

First, the peace of God ([READ John 20:19-20](#)). There are some amazing things here.

A) From God

Peace from God. The world is a frightening place, full of much danger and harm.

1. The doors were locked

Consider the disciples. The doors were locked. Why? They were afraid they might be identified as followers of the One the Jewish authorities had pushed to be crucified just two days before.

2. And Jesus came in

And into that space, Jesus came - either by passing through the door or unlocking it from outside. It's a miracle either way. And it demonstrates that nothing can restrain Him or keep Him back. He is the Shepherd. He will guide, provide, and protect His own. This is peace from God.

B) With God

1. What they were feeling

But we also see a peace with God. Consider what the disciples were feeling. Disappointment, discouragement - all their hopes had been in Jesus. Grief and guilt - they had abandoned Him.

2. What Jesus said

And then Jesus comes. What did He say? He did not rebuke or remind them of their desertion. He extends a greeting, "Peace," twice for emphasis. He offers acceptance, assurance, friendship, forgiveness. All of which makes clear He brings not just peace from God but peace with God.

Consider, look into the empty tomb. There we discover this astonishing peace of God.

Application:

The famed psychiatrist, Karl Menninger, said that if he could convince the patients in psychiatric hospitals their sins were forgiven, 75 percent of them could walk out the next day.

Think about that. You are plagued with guilt. You can labor to fix it and compensate, trying to outweigh all you've done. Or you can try to forget it, drowning it out through numbing distraction. None of that works. We need to be washed clean. And that comes through Christ.

The resurrection is the realization of our deepest longings. We must look into the tomb.

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

There we see the peace of God. And the presence of God as well (**READ John 20:21-22**).

A) The Question of the Breathing

His body can be touched. Not only that, His breath can be felt. But what does this mean?

1. Not an initial bestowal

There are differences among the commentators here. Some say this is an initial bestowal of the Holy Spirit, a foretaste of the fuller pouring out of His presence before what came at Pentecost.

2. But an acted parable

But, likely, this is not an initial bestowal but an acted parable. It's symbolic, a picturing of who was to come. As at creation, as God had breathed life into Adam, another breath was coming.

B) The Reality of the Spirit

All of which speaks to the necessity, the reality, of the presence of God in the Holy Spirit.

1. The promise

Jesus had promised this in John 14-16. He was leaving but we would not be left behind. We would not be abandoned. As we read at the end of Matthew's Gospel (**READ Matthew 28:20b**).

2. The Paraclete

But, if He was leaving, how could this be? (READ John 14:16) Through the presence of another Paraclete - another Helper, Advocate, Counselor. Jesus had been this thus far. And another was coming to continue that. He was sending the Holy Spirit, the indwelling presence of God.

Consider, look into the empty tomb. There we discover this astonishing presence of God.

Application:

“I am with you” is the promise of God to His people. (READ Psalm 121:5-6; Isaiah 49:14-16) It is a message repeated throughout the Bible. We need to hear this and lay hold of it.

That said, we need to know that there are times when He may not feel near. Think of Mary at the tomb. Jesus was standing right there. But she did not recognize Him. His presence with us can be mysterious. But it is still real. We are never powerless, helpless, or hopeless.

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III. OUR PURPOSE FROM GOD

Which brings us to this third point, our purpose from God (READ John 20:21-23). Not only are we not left to fend for ourselves, we are not left to figure things out on our own.

A) The Commission

We have been given a commission, what many have described as a “great commission.”

1. The parallel

Note the obvious parallel Jesus points out. The Sent One of the Father sends out His disciples. Then and now. His mission was not over. It was to continue through them. And through us.

2. The implications

This is His charge to us. Think of the implications. This is deeply humbling and emboldening. And think of what we can expect. It will be costly. We will need His Spirit. And one another.

B) The Proclamation

This is His commission. That commission involves a proclamation (READ John 20:23).

1. Not pronouncing forgiveness

This is so strongly stated that it can be confusing. Cosmic treason has been committed by man against God. God is the offended party. We do not because we cannot pronounce forgiveness.

2. But pointing towards it

But we can point towards it. We can tell people of our need of forgiveness, the reality behind what our consciences tell us. We can tell of our need of forgiveness. And its means, the finished work of Jesus who has lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved to die.

Consider, look into the empty tomb. There we discover this awesome purpose from God.

Application:

Is that not what so many are looking for today - a cause to join, some meaning and reason to live? Is this not why we see such fervent devotion to such misguided pursuits? It is not always simply madness. It is often the deep hunger of the human heart met in the wrong way.

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CONCLUSION:

The Corps of Discovery, led by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, is said by many to be the most momentous expedition in American history and one of the greatest adventure stories of all time. Their task, as stated in the words of President Thomas Jefferson ([READ quote](#)):

"...the object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river, and such principal streams of it, as, by its course and communication with the waters of the Pacific Ocean, whether the Columbia, Oregon, Colorado or any other river, may offer the most direct and practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce..."

The preparation was extensive. Lewis studied astronomy, botany, navigation, medicine, biology, and other disciplines. He collected two tons of goods – guns, ammunition, medical supplies and scientific instruments. He had to, given their understanding of all this endeavor would demand.

They left Pittsburgh in May 1804 and returned to St. Louis in September 1806. Their journey covered nearly 8,000 miles - moving through harsh, hostile, and mostly unknown terrain. It was an extraordinary effort. But they wanted to find out what was there, to press into this new land purchased from the French. There was so much there. They couldn't just turn away.

Can we not say the same about the resurrection of Jesus? Think with me. Had we been there, we too would have found ourselves saying, "He is not here. He is risen, risen indeed!"

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