

He Loved Me...

He Loves Me Lots

The Gospel of John

Text

John 20:19-31

Topic

Jesus encourages His disciples to receive the peace He promised them.

Title

"All We are Saying is Peace is a Choice"

"One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind"

As far as famous first words go, Neil Armstrong's moon landing tops any list.

I prefer astronaut Jim Irwin's lesser known words: "Jesus walking on the earth was more important than man walking on the moon."

More than 2000 years ago, the voice from Heaven was heard when the Christ Child cried and cooed in a Bethlehem manger. The first words the angel of the Lord proclaimed to the shepherds, watching over their flocks by night, were, "Fear not! For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

Our text in the Gospel of John features the famous first words Jesus spoke to the assembled disciples after His resurrection:

"Peace be with you."

Afraid... in hiding... behind locked doors... having each in their own way failed the Lord. You might expect Jesus to issue a stern rebuke. But that only reveals how much we need to grow in grace.

J.C. Ryle puts this in perspective, saying, *"'Peace' and not blame; 'peace' and not fault-finding; 'peace' and not rebuke, was the first word which this little company heard from their Master's lips, after He left the tomb."*

Maybe today you need to hear Jesus say, "Peace be with you."

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Believer - God's Peace Is With You**, and **#2 Unbeliever - God's Peace Can Be With You**.

#1 - Believer - God's Peace Is With You (v19-29)

Peace in the Middle East... A peace offering... Blessed are the peacemakers... Speak now or forever hold your peace... Peace in our time... The Peacemaker Colt single-action revolver.

Peace can mean a lot of things. What did Jesus mean?

This wasn't the first time Jesus talked to His guys about peace:

- Joh 14:27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."
- Joh 16:33 "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Jesus emphasized two things:

1. The world is filled with tribulation that causes your heart to be troubled.
2. He gives you supernatural peace to overcome fear and replace it with cheer.

Peace, then, is God's empowering to rest in, and be content with, our troublesome circumstances. It is a promised permanent possession of the believer. We are, in the truest sense, to Rest In Peace.

Are you resting in peace in this turbulent world?

First, you need peace *with* God. Men are born enemies of God. Jesus came to reconcile mankind to God by taking our place on the Cross. God makes peace with us at the Cross.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "God cannot give us peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

You are free to reject the idea that you need peace with God, and live your life feeling as if everything is going well. In the end you will face what the Bible calls the Great White Throne Judgment. Apart from believing in Jesus, you will understand that there is no reconciling with God. You will stand there in your trespasses and sins, God's enemy, and be cast alive into the Lake of Fire for an eternity of conscious torment.

Peace doesn't come through meditation, or breathing techniques. It isn't earned or merited. It is already yours. Like so much else in the Christian life, your part is to believe. Charles H. Brent said, "The happy sequence culminating in fellowship with God is penitence, pardon, and peace. The first we offer, the second we accept, and the third we inherit."

It both *is*, and *isn't*, that simple:

- Yes, you can always be at peace. It is your inheritance.
- No, you're not always at peace, because you constantly face new obstacles and agitations.

Joh 20:19 Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

When the apostle John references "the Jews," he means the authorities, *not* the Jewish people.

They were understandably afraid. The Jews had manipulated the Roman ruler to put Jesus to death. The combined earthly might of religion and government united to crush the followers of Jesus. At any moment, there might be a knock on the door, demanding entrance, leading to arrest and who knows what else.

Satan is the ruler of a sinister system in opposition to God. The Bible calls it "the world." What is Satan's rule like? A big part of His platform is murder:

1. California has gone from being the Golden State to being the Abortion State. Governor Gavin Newsom recently launched a disgusting billboard campaign

using a Bible verse to support abortion in pro-life states. It reads, "Need an abortion? California is ready to help. 'Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these.' "

2. Canada is going to allow assisted suicide for healthy people with mental illness beginning in 2023. This includes depression and personality disorders. Canada euthanized ten thousand people in 2021. One source commented, "*Canada is obsessed with human sacrifice like all pagan religions before it, and they REALLY want to off people.*"
3. Abortion was the leading cause of death worldwide for the third year in a row, according to Worldometer, a database that provides real-time global statistics on population, health, energy and a variety of other topics.

Why is there no sanctity of human life? Because the devil is "a murderer from the beginning." (John 8:44)

Of course his world-ruling system promotes murder on a malevolent scale.

While we must battle on every front - local and national; legal and political - the ultimate warfare is supernatural. It is for the hearts of men. The Gospel remains the power of God unto salvation. Saved people realize the sanctity of life, and they repudiate murder.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual *hosts* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*" (Ephesians 6:12).

The disciples were huddled together, cowering in secret and in fear, doors fixed shut. *It is possible for a church to become like that - closed off to outsiders, content to be 'safe.'* A.B. Simpson said, "The Christian that is bound by his own horizon, the church that lives simply for itself, is bound to die a spiritual death and sink into stagnancy and corruption. We never can thank God enough for giving us not only a whole Gospel to believe, but a whole world to give it to."

"Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' "

The Lord rose from the dead in a physical body, but one that is greatly enhanced. He could either walk through doors or transport from place-to-place.

Believers will likewise be raised in enhanced bodies, outfitted for eternity.

The disciples were ignoring both Jesus' promise of peace and the power of His resurrection.

When I am not at peace in my circumstances, I am ignoring the biblical fact that peace is already mine through His power.

Joh 20:20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

I can imagine the Lord saying, "Guys, check it out," showing His hands (or wrists). Then He may have said, "Now check THIS out," opening His garments to reveal the place where He'd been speared.

The apostle Paul told the churches of Galatia, "I bear in my body the marks of Jesus" (6:17). He was primarily talking about the many scars from his abundant tribulations. It makes me think of the scene in *Jaws* where they are showing off their various scars. Chief Brodie at one point sheepishly looks at his appendicitis scar. That would be me in a Christian comparison of sufferings.

You may not have visible trauma, but you do bear invisible, spiritual marks. You are called a bondservant. A bondservant would have their earlobe pierced through. All of us bear at least that mark.

They were "glad." Some translations have "overjoyed." What strikes us is the speed of their transformation. They saw the Lord and *immediately* their joy was overflowing.

Joh 20:21 So Jesus said to them again, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."

With that one word, "peace," Jesus expected them to make a complete turn-around. No time for coddling, or feeling sorry for yourself, or sabbaticals.

There was work to be done. They would be sent out to serve the Lord, in the same manner Jesus had been sent. "Make it go away with work."

Joh 20:22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

This wasn't a pre-filling with ministry power. The disciples would not receive the power of the Holy Spirit until the Day of Pentecost. Besides, there is little, if any,

change in them after the Lord breathed on them *until* Pentecost. In the next chapter, we find them fishing for tilapia, catfish, and sardine - not men.

F.F. Bruce points out something helpful:

The verb used here (emphysaō) is that used in the Septuagint of Genesis 2:7 where, after fashioning the first man from dust, God "breathed into his face the breath of life, and the man became a living soul."

The disciples would have understood this unique word from Genesis.

God's breath in Eden included spiritual life which Adam forfeited. Breathing on the disciples was symbolic of their being a new creation with spiritual life in Jesus. The apostle Paul wrote, "So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit" (First Corinthians 15:45).

A.W. Pink said, "*There, man's original creation was completed by this act of God; who, then, can fail to see that here in John 20, on the day of the Savior's resurrection, the new creation had begun, begun by the Head of the new creation.*"

Joh 20:23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

When a person presents the Gospel, he or she has the authority to declare that a person's sins *can* and *will* be forgiven at the Cross. Reject Jesus, however, and God's ambassadors declare, with equal authority, that sins are retained.

The first time we see this exercised is on the Day of Pentecost, in the Book of Acts. Peter presented the Gospel. As the hearers believed and repented, their sins were forgiven, and they were saved. No other mediation was necessary, certainly not private confession to a priest.

Joh 20:24 Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.

Thomas was a twin, and as a result, the disciples uncreatively nicknamed him, Twin. We've pointed out before that these guys were in many ways like any other group of guys. I think what they said to Thomas was to needle him just a little, especially since his personality was given to a certain cynicism.

Joh 20:25 The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

They must have described Jesus showing them His wounds. Thomas' skepticism, his famous doubt, was genuine. Jesus will call it unbelief. But his insistence on touching the wounds was a way of saying, "If I had been there, I would have touched Him - unlike you sissies."

Too much speculation? Probably. But so is the usual commentary on Thomas. He's portrayed as "missing church," and thus missing out on Jesus. The exhortation is made to come to church or suffer dire consequences. But no one can say where Thomas was that previous Sunday evening.

Joh 20:26 And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

This was a common greeting, sure. But think of all the other ways Jesus could have greeted them; all the other first words, e.g., "Grace to you," or "Joy to you," or something entirely different. The Lord knew them best, and that they needed, above all, to retain His peace.

Jesus knows whether you need peace, hope, or joy; healing or sufficient grace to endure suffering; really, anything, because nobody knows you like Him.

Joh 20:27 Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Our Lord is condescending, in the most superlative sense of that word. He condescended to come to Earth, to be born a man, so that His body, substituted for you, could be marked by the crucifixion. By those marks, that death, Jesus draws all men to Himself, the Savior of all who believe.

Joh 20:28 And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Another stunning, immediate change. The *doubter* pronounced a *doxology*. I'd like to think Thomas received a new nickname - The Once-Doubting Doxologist.

“Jesus is Lord” came to mean that He was God. But here it says He is Lord *and* God. He is our Master to be served on Earth. And because He is also God, we have His empowering, enabling us to do what He commands.

Joh 20:29 Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

That’s us! We do not have a visual, bodily manifestation of Jesus. We have the written Word which presents Jesus to us as the Person in whom we have everything we need to live a godly life.

Three popular Christian clichés capture our common understanding of peace:

1. No Jesus, No peace... Know Jesus, Know peace.
2. You have peace *with* God, and therefore enjoy the peace *of* God.
3. There is no peace on Earth without the Prince of Peace.

#2 - Unbeliever - God’s Peace Can Be With You (v30-31)

I came across this quote attributed to Thomas Noble: “We have our faith in [a] Father ‘whose mercy is over all his works,’ a God for whom it is unthinkable to create creatures in order to damn them.” He has made peace by the Cross, offering all who will believe, eternal life.

Joh 20:30 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book;

Director’s Extended Cuts of feature films are popular. The Snyder Cut of *Justice League* was four hours long. Much to my disliking, they cut my favorite scene.

A lot of good Bible stuff ended up on the editing floor.

John recorded seven miracles, called by him, “signs.” The seven signs are:

1. Changing water into wine at Cana (2:1-11), called, “the first of the signs.”
2. Healing the royal official’s son in Capernaum (4:46-54).
3. Healing the paralytic at Bethesda (5:1-15).
4. Feeding the 5000 (6:5-14).
5. Jesus walking on water (6:16-24).
6. Healing the man blind from birth (9:1-7).

7. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (11:1-45).

The Book of the Revelation was penned by John. In it you find many groups of seven, e.g., seven churches, seven candlesticks, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls. My favorite:

Seven times Jesus says He will “come quickly.”

It seems that sevens were John’s writing style. It’s how he edited. It ought to encourage us to be more concise. I’m not saying we need to dumb-down our message to 280 characters. It is easier to ramble on, to be verbose.

Joh 20:31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

The man, Jesus, is the unique Son of God Who is equal with God, the promised Messiah of Israel, and the Savior of the world.

Do you believe that? “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

The Gospel has the power to awaken new faith *and* to revive faith already awakened. Both unbelievers and believers need to be exhorted to “believe.”

Major Ian Thomas said, “Eternal life is not a peculiar feeling inside. It is not your ultimate destination, to which you will go when you are dead. If you are born again, *eternal life is that quality of life that you possess right now.*”

Eternal life includes the peace of God that we possess *right now* in Satan’s turbulent world.

Peace be with you...Rest In Peace...Maranatha!