

Jesus Appears

April 24, 2022

John 20:19-23

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Today's Scripture takes place on the evening of the day that Jesus was resurrected. This is the same day that they found the tomb to be empty. Imagine you are one of the original disciples. Your life story goes something like this. When you are growing up you hear the traditional biblical stories. You know the stories of Genesis, the Exodus, the Exile, and the promise of the Messiah. As an adult, you are like everyone else; you look forward to the coming of the Messiah. You go about your daily living and your regular work routine and you hear some rumors about a great teacher that teaches like no other teacher, you hear about miracles, and you begin to wonder if this could possibly be him. Then you meet him. This is a key point in your life that changes everything. You have a complete change of your focus in life as you now dedicate your life to the heavenly realm. You follow Jesus and listen, watch, learn, and obey.

The main thing is that Jesus is with you. You get to experience Jesus. You witness the awesome miracles, the profound teaching, and enjoy the relationship. The relationship is possible because the Lord came to you in person. Things change when you hear about a plot to kill him so you stay away from Jerusalem. Then Jesus starts talking about his death and sets out for Jerusalem. You and the other disciples plead with Jesus not to go to Jerusalem. But Jesus insists and sets out for Jerusalem. When Jesus makes the triumphant entry into Jerusalem you think this celebration is great and realize that they want to make him their king. Then you and the other disciples are with him when he is arrested and you are shocked that he is betrayed by one of our own. You are afraid and confused when you witness the brutality and death. Now, on Sunday evening you are depressed and in a state of mourning. You and the other disciples get together and try to figure out what has happened and what to do now.

This brings us to today's Scripture. It is the evening of the same day that the tomb was found to be empty. The house you are in is locked because of fear. Then Jesus mysteriously appears. This is a very significant point. Seeing is believing as Jesus appears though the locked doors. Now there is no doubt, no questioning rumors; this is the real deal, Jesus lives. Jesus comes to you, to be with you, to support you. Jesus is once again present with you.

I have been talking about presence and how the most important thing is to be there. The one thing that means more than anything else is to be there in person. We come to help others, support them, and provide pastoral care, but the main thing is just to be there for other people. When someone is sick, the main thing is to be there to support them in their struggles. When someone has a celebration, like a birthday party, the main

thing is to be there to support them. When a child has a school play the one thing that means the most to them is that you are there in the audience. That is the one thing that means the absolute most, being there, in person, with your presence. When Jesus comes to the disciples, they not only see Jesus, witness the miracles, hear his teaching, and learn the lessons, they experience Jesus. The presence of Jesus means everything.

For all of Christianity the resurrection of Jesus is the main thing. It is the key significant fact that is the foundation of our faith. But it is all about presence. We have a loving God that stretches through the cosmos to come to us. We have Jesus coming to the world to be present with humanity. Jesus lives and so we have the presence of Jesus and the Holy Spirit with us now. Jesus appears to the disciples. However, Jesus doesn't just appear, Jesus presents his presence.