

“Convincing Evidence”

John 20:19-29

Theme: Jesus’ interaction with the disciples provides the evidence of His resurrection that continues convincing His followers today.

Without fail, each of us struggles with confidence before God. The constant veering into sin, the besetting indulgences that we abhor yet love, the temptations into which we choose to pamper, the internal conflict with hypocrisy, the qualms of whether we are truly reconciled to God when we carry the kinds of flaws so inconsistent with Him, all demand something objective, tangible, substantial and verifiable to bring us peace. How do we know that we are truly reconciled with God.

Aside from the subjective assurances we glean from the transformation that is progressing, that is, the assurances we receive from the fact that we are not what we once were before placing our faith in Christ, we have the reality of the cause of such transformations. We cannot transform ourselves, but need to be transformed by something far greater, more powerful, more influential than what innately exists. We understand that the cause of our transformation is the spiritual life gain by regeneration – the very eternal, newness of life to which Jesus was raised. He is the One who, having conquered sin and death, provides life to all who come to Him – not just the notions of life, but the realities of the new birth unto newness of life resulting in our being “new creations.”

This truth is so essential to the Christian faith that Jesus Himself declared that He is the resurrection and the life – whoever lives and believes in Me will never die! Upon raising from the dead, Jesus’ priority was to verify His resurrection to His disciples. Jesus’ interaction with the disciples provides the evidence of His resurrection that continues convincing His followers today.

I. PHYSICAL APPEARANCES – vv. 19-20

A. The Distress without Victory – v. 19

1. The hostility shown to Jesus was an indication of the religious’ desire to exterminate the new teachings of Jesus and His followers.
2. As a result, they recalled Jesus’ warnings that if the ungodly hate Him, they would also hate those who follow Him – cp. **John 15:18**.
3. As a result of all the confusion and concern, we find that *“when it was evening, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, ...”*
4. Clearly the disciples were cowering behind closed doors for two primary fears:
 - a. *The possessed a fear of sinners – “... for fear of the Jews” –*

demonstrates that they were afraid of what the Jewish spiritual leaders wanted to do to them since they had been so committed to murdering Jesus.

- b. *The fear of death – this is the real basis of their fear – fear that the Jews would come and kill them even as they did Jesus.*
5. The resurrection is the only combatant to the fear of death – only when it is believed and embraced can the fear of death be dispelled.

B. The Declaration of Victory - v. 19b

1. However, when Jesus defeated death itself, he provided the way by which death's sting is overcome – cp. **1 Corinthians 15:54-57**.
2. Having triumphed over death and sin, the peace with God sin prevents was now available – *“Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’.”*
3. Jesus miraculously appears in their presence – apparently passing through the room's walls and doors in His glorified body to manifest Himself in the middle of the room.
4. The greeting He provides heralds the essence of His accomplishment of atonement – the alienation and hostility that God possessed toward the sins of men had been cared for and now God is satisfied ... able to be approached.
5. Thus, having put their sins away he could now assure them and remove their fears – thus, the *“peace”* He refers to is the peace with God – **Romans 5:1**.

C. The Demonstration of His Victory - v. 20

1. Jesus immediately offers the disciples the proof of who it is that stood among them – *“And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side.”*
2. His display of the wounds was done for several reasons:
 - a. *To confirm His identity*
 - b. *To celebrate the trophies of His victory*
 - c. *To certify the basis for the peace that has been established with God*
3. It is interesting that these marks remain with Christ as an apt tribute to His accomplishment – cp. **Revelation 5:6; Zechariah 12:10**.
4. The consequence of comprehending the work of Christ and His presence with us is elation and joy – *“The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.”*

5. Truly peace is made available to us by the work of Christ, but joy is made complete through the presence of Christ with us.
6. As believers comprehend the work of Christ and turn to Him by faith believing, they know joy inexpressible – cp. [1 Peter 1:8](#).

II. PROVISION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT – **vv. 21-22**

A. **The Commission to Preach Peace - v. 21**

1. We remind ourselves that there were dynamics occurring in the hearts and minds of the disciples that we don't fully comprehend.
2. We do understand that there was a tremendous desire to remain covert in their hearts prior to the appearance of Jesus to them.
3. Now, he reminds them that to keep the news of His accomplished redemption (of which He just provided them proof) and the accompanying victory over death through the resurrection a secret would be inappropriate.
4. The peace with God that He had announced to them would also be attended with the peace of God as they pursued their commission to spread the news – *“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you’.”*
5. We understand that this commission is not in any way limited in scope to those present in the room because of the terms used –
 - a. *“... as the Father has sent Me [ἀποστέλλω]”* – carries the idea of specific authorization or deputation.
6. *“... I also send you [πέμπω]”* – a general term to sending, without specific authorization; to dispatch someone usually to carry a message.

B. **The Commitment to Provide Power - v. 22**

1. In addition, Jesus had promised throughout His teaching that the work, power, and results of their ministries would come through the Holy Spirit. – cp. [John 14:16-17; 16:13](#).
2. Jesus now provides them a reiteration of that promise as well as a symbolic commitment that the Holy Spirit would be shortly provided – *“And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’.”*
3. There are those who attempt to assert that Jesus bestowed the Holy Spirit to indwell the disciples at this point.
4. However, this is most unacceptable for the following reasons:
 - a. *The Holy Spirit could only be given when Jesus sends Him after going to the Father – [John 16:7](#).*

- b. *The Holy Spirit was promised to them after this event occurred – [Acts 1:4-5, 8](#).*
- c. *The boldness that would characterize them after the Holy Spirit is indeed provided would remain lacking after this event until the Spirit was given.*
5. Thus, we understand Jesus' behavior and words here to signify a definitive reiteration of the promises that the Holy Spirit would be provided in the future.
6. The breathing would be an indication that the source of the Holy Spirit would be Jesus Himself – that He would represent Him in every respect, animating the spiritual lives of the disciples even as the breath of God animated the physical life in the garden – cp. [Genesis 2:7](#).
7. In addition, it emphasizes that the work that they were to undertake was totally dependent upon the power of the Spirit of God and not something that would originate with them individually – cp. [2 Peter 1:20-21](#).

III. POWER OF THE GOSPEL – v. 23

A. The Theme of the Gospel

1. There has been much confusion associated with these verses – some have attempted to interpret them to mean that men are given the ability to forgive sin – *“If you forgive the sins of any their sins have been forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they have been retained.”*
2. However, it is certain that the sole prerogative of forgiving sin belongs to God and to Him alone – cp. [Mark 2:7, 10](#).
3. The work of forgiving sins belongs solely to God and sins not forgiven by God are sins that remain unforgiven.
4. The emphasis here is that reconciliation with God is not something that originates among men and finds acceptance with God.
5. Notice the tenses that exist here: forgiveness of sin is something that originates with God and is recognized among men – cp. [Colossians 2:13-14](#).

B. The Testimony of the Gospel

1. Thus, what God has accomplished men are able to recognize and attest to.
2. Thus, when believers can see the work of the Spirit of God in the heart of a sinner to bring them to repentance, there is the ability to testify of what God has done.
3. Any believer can affirm to a person who repents before the Lord that God

is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness – cp. **1 John 1:9.**

4. We do not declare it to make it so – we declare it because God has already made it so in glory – cp. **Matthew 18:15-18.**

IV. PERSUASION OF THE SKEPTICAL – vv. 24-28

A. The Default Skepticism – vv. 24-25

1. The resurrection truly is the watershed issue of Christianity – without it, there’s no sense to Christianity and our preaching is vain.
2. With the resurrection, the Gospel is powerful to the conversion of the soul.
3. A person who possesses a natural mind – that is, the mind independent of the converting, regenerating grace of God – will dismiss the resurrection as a fanciful tale ... a myth of those desperate for hope and meaning.
4. Whereas the other 10 disciples had met the resurrected Christ and had even been granted the foretaste of the Holy Spirit’s ministry to them, ***“Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.”***
5. We do not know why he was absent, perhaps on an errand; or, he was hiding somewhere apart from the rest thinking he was better off isolated from the “gang” being sought by the Romans.
6. All we know is that he was absent, missing the tremendous exposure to the announcement of peace and consequently debunked their reports as incredible.
7. The rest of the disciples – when they did locate him – continued to “witness” to him – ***“So the other disciples were saying to him, ‘We have seen the Lord!’”***
8. However, Thomas continued to refuse the comfort available to him through the Gospel – discounting what he was being told by the disciples – ***“But he said to them, ‘Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.’”***
9. Here we find that Thomas refused to listen to their witness and set up a criterion by which he would grant credibility to their reports – ***“I have to see it myself.”***
10. They repeatedly shared with him the truth of the resurrection and he refused to believe it until the conditions **that he set up** were fulfilled.
11. Notice that this did not stop the brethren from “witnessing” to him – they

continued to share with him what they had seen.

12. Likewise, there are many today who refuse to believe that Jesus can save them until they put various “tests” in place – giving God an opportunity to authenticate and verify Himself to them.
13. Here Thomas had to have a personal experience before He would believe – relying on **empiricism**.

B. The Dispelled Skepticism - vv. 26-28

1. In a magnificent display of love and grace, Jesus provides Thomas the opportunity to see for himself.
2. Instead of rebuking and rejecting the unbelief of Thomas, Jesus Christ grants the requests – displaying His divine grace.
3. We are told that on the very next Sunday, Jesus came to show Himself to Thomas – *“After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them, Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you’.”*
4. This is the very same announcement that Jesus had made to the disciples earlier – showing the importance of its utterance at a time when belief is needing to be stimulated.
5. Here we see Jesus providing Thomas with the “Word” – the declaration of the accomplishment of Christ and the availability of peace as a result.
6. Remaining consistently devoted to the proclamation of truth as the foremost thing in bringing unbelievers to faith, Jesus initiates His contact with Thomas by providing a statement of truth.
7. Only after having proclaimed the truth of the effects of the resurrection does Jesus turn to the various proofs that Thomas had heard existed from the others and demand for himself.
8. It is then that Jesus called on Thomas to *“Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into my side;”*
9. Essentially, He declares to Thomas: “Despite your lack of faith and the dominant arrogance of demanding proof, I love you anyway and desire to give to you what you need.”
10. So, Jesus provides Thomas the Word first, then with various demonstrations of the truth, He also provided something else:
11. Jesus directly appeals to Thomas to believe – by issuing the effectual call – *“and do not be unbelieving, but believing.”*
12. It is evident that Jesus was merely rebuking Thomas and not truly ordering him to touch him because Thomas never does comply.
13. Rather Thomas answers Jesus with one of the greatest confessions that

exists in Scripture – an acknowledgment that Jesus is who He claimed to be.

14. He immediately responds to the Word of God and the visual proof that His Word is credible – He confesses *“my Lord and my God!”*
15. He claims Jesus as His own Lord and God – acknowledging the personal nature of the relationship of God with sinners.
16. Testifying with one’s mouth that Christ Jesus is truly Savior and Lord is healthy spiritually – cp. [Romans 10:9-10](#).

V. PROMISE OF ACHIEVEMENT – v. 29

A. The Acknowledgment of Faith

1. The reality of Thomas’ conversion from unbelieving to believing is acknowledged – *“Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed?’”*
2. These early believers had the benefit of many evidences and proofs to stimulate their faith and produce first-hand testimony.
3. However, even with these early evidences, Jesus first provided them with the Word of God before providing them the empirical proofs
 - a. *He announced peace to them before He showed them His wounds.*
 - b. *The observation of the empty tomb was not fully comprehended because they did not yet understand the Scriptures – cp. John 20:9.*
 - c. *He veiled the eyes of the two on the Road to Emmaus until after He had explained from the OT Scriptures why He had to suffer and die for sins.*
 - d. *John summarizes these things by stating the Scriptures are written as the superior proofs so that faith in Jesus would result – cp. v. 31.*
 - e. *Peter also recognizes the superiority of the Scriptures even over his eye-witness experiences of the glory of Jesus at the Transfiguration.*

B. The Anticipation of Faith

1. Such biblical truth will produce fruit – *“Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.”*
2. This is a summary blessing upon all through the ages who would come to faith in Christ Jesus by testimony of the Word alone – cp. [1 Peter 1:8-9](#).
3. Faith comes not from seeing Jesus, but by hearing the Word of God about Jesus – cp. [Romans 10:17](#).

So What?

1. How influential is my confidence in the resurrection on my sharing my faith with others?
2. In what ways ought the resurrection enable me to find assurance in the forgiveness of my sin?
3. Why should the resurrection of Jesus Christ be a daily focus of my faith.

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