

CCLEB SERMON

NOTES

SUNDAY APRIL 14, 2024
JOHN 20:19-23

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SENT WITH THE PEACE & AUTHORITY OF JESUS



John, once again, begins this new scripture section with a day and time stamp. This detail is to convince you and I, the readers, that this was a real event, on a real day, at a real location, with real people. The Greek here reads, "Late that day, the first day of the week". So if John is following the Jewish cycle of days that begin at sundown, this scripture sections occurs between 3 and 6p on the day of Jesus' resurrection, which is the "third day" since Jesus was crucified and buried. This would be later the same day that Mary Magdalene, John and Peter visited the empty tomb early in the morning, the same day that Jesus appears to Mary at the tomb, and the same day that Mary found the disciples and told the disciples that Jesus was risen! ..Also keep in mind that this day occurred during a Jewish holy week. Two weeks ago I incorrectly stated that the Jews celebrated "Passover" for seven days. Rather they celebrated the "Feast of Unleavened bread" for seven days, "Passover" was the first day of that Feast. And that indicates that Jerusalem is still very busy and congested with Jewish pilgrims.

And **v19** says the "disciples were meeting behind locked doors". I can imagine they had much to talk about. "Gatherings or meetings" were a very important a part of Jewish daily culture - think "Synagogue" - which is the social hub of the Jewish community. "Synagogue" is from the same root word that we translate "meeting" in **v19**. So the disciples "meeting together" is not unusual, but what John is clear to point out that is unusual is that the disciples were meeting "behind locked doors". Note "doors" is plural. And the reason they are meeting behind locked doors is because they were "afraid" of the Jewish leaders. To have an idea of the "level of fear", the word that is translated as "afraid" in the NLT is the Greek word "phobos" where we get our English word "phobia". Fears and phobias are known to cause people to become unable to move, stuck, or unwilling to move - too scared to move. "Unable" to move or "unwilling to step forward because of "fear" is a quality that needs resolved in Jesus' disciples in order for them to be part of God's kingdom advancing, let alone for them not being trapped in misery by their own our fears.

Let me suggest to you a reason why the disciples may have been "afraid" of the Jewish Leaders, and it has to do with the 1st century "Master - Disciple relationship". Four days prior to this , the disciples watched as their Master was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane by a cohort of Roman troops and temple guards led by Judas - the traitor. The disciples then "fled" - were "scattered. That's a fear response. Some of the disciples hung out close by as Jesus was interrogated and beaten at both the homes of Annas and Caiaphas.

Some of the disciples would have seen the public trial before Pilate, they would have seen Jesus standing before the crowd after he was flogged, mocked with a crown of thorns, beaten again.. then sent to be crucified. Some of them watched as Jesus carried his cross, and then some of them were there when Jesus was crucified and slowly died. I can only imagine how agonizing and terrifying that all would have been for the disciples.

Now knowing much of what the disciples witnessed leading up to Jesus's death, listen to these words that Jesus told his disciples just hours before He was arrested in the garden.

John 15:18-20 I can imagine Jesus emphasizing the last line ... "since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you...". Thus as disciples they should expect to receive what the master received, "persecution". Jesus then went on to define what the persecution was going to be. **John 16:2** So Jesus had told them that they, as disciples, should expect the same treatment from the Jewish leaders that he, their master, received. So why were they hiding behind "locked doors"? Jesus was seized, beaten, mocked, flogged, humiliated, and crucified, and they as disciples of their Master could expect that too... Jesus said so himself.

Hence the disciples were "meeting", and "afraid", behind locked doors. What does a first century "locked door" in Jerusalem look like? I have no idea, and apparently google doesn't either. But they did exist! I couldn't find a picture of a first century door from Jerusalem, but I found a "key".



We know there were locks and keys way back as early as 1300 BC because of the story of "Ehud" who delivered Israel from the Moabite King in **Judges 3:23, 25a**. So locks and keys were in use in the region 1300 years before Jesus. Again, detail to persuade the reader that this account is real and happened in a historically accurate setting.

But **John 20:19** reveals an issue in the thinking and hearts of the young disciples that I can relate to, and maybe you can too - it has to do with the object of their trust.

The disciples were "afraid", and rightly so, and had put their trust in something "external", doors and locks, to protect them. How many doors and locks does it take to make you feel safe? If the Romans or Jewish authorities wanted the disciples arrested, just how effective really, is a wooden door and a lock going to be against a troop of soldiers? We all do this, we arrange and manipulate things outside of ourselves, to make us feel safe on the inside of us. It's not just things like "doors and locks" that we feel safer behind, it can also be things like "money", "power", "validation", "affection", "control", and even "distance". An example of the unhelpful "thinking" that accompanies some of those things that we hide behind are: "If I can keep you at an arm's length, or flee to another county, then I won't get hurt by you again." "If I only had enough money, then I would feel safe". "If I surrender my control, I'm going to get hurt again".

The disciples gathered in fear, “afraid” behind locked doors, trusting in an “external object” to make them feel safer, and this really sets up the first of two things that Jesus was about to make available to his disciples.

Jesus first deals with their fears. Follow me here. We know that the disciples knew that their Master and Messiah had risen from the dead earlier that day. At least four of them by this point had seen the risen Jesus and had reported it to the others. This resurrection was the greatest display of power in human history. And yet **v19** tells us they were gathered together in fear, “behind locked doors” after then knew that Jesus was resurrected. The fact that their Master was “resurrected” from the dead, did not have an effect on their fear of what the Jewish authorities could do to them. The Jewish religious authorities, in essence, had given Jesus their best shot, a Roman flogging followed by death by Roman crucifixion. Jesus was confirmed dead by several Roman soldiers and the two Jewish Sanhedrin members who buried Jesus. He was dead! Then Jesus, their master, rose from the dead on the third day.

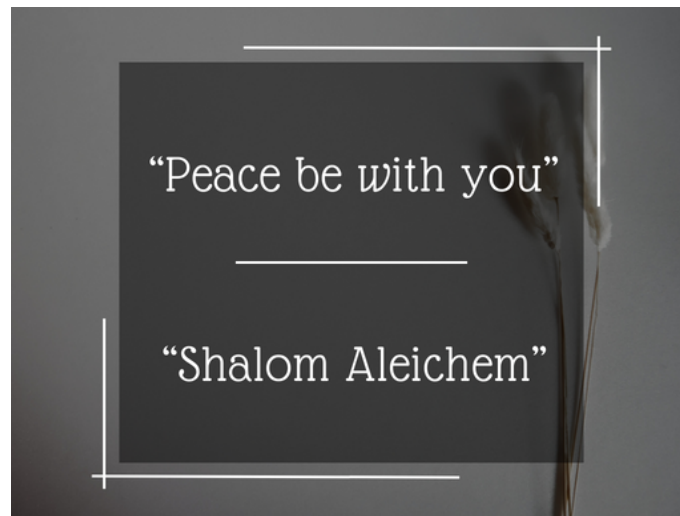
This was a dramatic demonstration for the disciples and the world of what **Ps 118:6b** means “What can mere mortals do to me”? Yes the Jewish authorities flogged and killed Jesus, but Jesus resurrected in a glorified eternal body. “What can mere mortals do to me”? That happened the morning of the day the disciples were gathered together and afraid, hiding behind locked doors. I get an image of “panicked sheep” in my head, all nervously huddled together in a sheepfold, sensing there is danger around them somewhere, but no idea what to do, no shepherd’s presence or voice to protect and comfort them.

But then the Shepherd does appear. **v19b** “Suddenly Jesus was standing there among them!” As a child I understood this passage to indicate that Jesus miraculously walked thru the walls into the room.



The text doesn’t say that, nor is it consistent with the narrative, after all Jesus didn’t “pass thru” the tomb stone, the stone was rolled away. I think the text here emphasizes that “locked doors” are no problem for Jesus, he could just do a “Houdini” or “Jedi” on it and walk in, or speak and it opened... Jesus suddenly appearing behind locked doors repeats itself eight days later. **v26a** “...standing among them.”

But note back in **v19**, Jesus the Shepherd doesn’t just step into the room, he steps into their “fears”. Look what he says, “Peace Be with you”. Jesus probably said that to the disciples in Hebrew or Aramaic which would sound more like “Shalom Aleichem”. That was the standard, customary greeting in their culture. Jesus would have meant “peace be with you” in the fullest sense of the phrase.



Step away from Jesus words for a second and look at his approach. And for those of you like me that are pretty good at beating yourselves up , note here Jesus doesn't come in rebuking them for their fear, he comes in offering his peace.

So contrast "fear" and "peace". They don't belong together, do they? Can fear and peace even occupy the same space? That's a bit harder, we are complex people, amen? The disciples in this passage are behind locked doors, they in essence are "fear". Fear is what is "defining" the disciples at that moment", not their relationship with Jesus. Behind these locked doors, their actions tell us that they are being "defined" by their fear. Have you ever been defined by your fears? I sometimes struggle with fears myself, letting fears define me.

In 2011 I was invited to go and translate for a medical missions team in Brazil, the country I grew up in. I was initially excited, then about 2 months before the trip I was overcome with anxiety and fear. I didn't know then what all the triggers were but it rocked me, and humbled me really fast. I lost weight, lost sleep, lost my focus, lost what I cared about, I essentially, like the disciples became defined by my fear, I only wanted to hide.

In the OT the bible says "fear not" or "do not be afraid" many, many times. For example **Joshua 1:9** In old Hebrew the structure of the language is such that verbs do not exist separate from nouns, they are "hinged" if you will. So when the bible says "do no fear" - I suggest to you that it is saying something like this. "Everyone has things in life that are threats and cause fears. When that happens, you have a choice, "respect" the fear yes, but don't become "fear". Don't be defined by fear. And what keeps one from being defined by their fears, what keeps them from becoming "fear" is the end of **Joshua 1:9**.. "God is with you".. The presence of God keeps one from being defined by their fears. Don't let "fear" encroach or become a squatter on any space inside you that is meant for God's Spirit.

Now hold on to that definition, and let's go back to this beautiful moment in our passage **v19** where Jesus, who is PEACE, literally the "Prince of Peace", "suddenly appears", steps into the disciples fears, is present with them in their fears, and offers them His "peace". Certainly some of them would have remembered what Jesus said to them about "peace" just days before in **John 14:27**

And also in **16:33a** Jesus said this.. "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me."

So Jesus is "Peace", the disciples are "fear", and how is Jesus going to help them? The words "In me" in **14:27** and **16:33** are the key to Jesus' presence bringing peace. The words "in me" are a link to **John 15:5**



Note - it is the disciples in Jesus, and Jesus in them. The words “remain in” are the same word traditionally translated as “abide” or “dwell”. So if one going to have the peace of Jesus it happens thru remaining in Jesus and Jesus remaining in you - the presence of Jesus.

That understanding is foundational and may be helpful, but doesn't yet resolve the disciples' “fear” in that moment, in Jerusalem. So let's see what happens next, because what happens clarifies for you and I how this “peace” based on the presence of Jesus is also available to you and I. **V20** So Jesus at the same time that he is verbally offering the “afraid disciples” his “peace”, also shows them his crucifixion wounds. Simultaneously. He speaks “Peace to them” and shows them his wounds at the same time. What's the connection? Even without understanding this, we can see that the peace that Jesus offers and wounds are linked.

Jesus showing the wounds does two things. So first, the wounds substantiate that Jesus was in fact crucified, buried ...and resurrected. This man in front of fearful disciples, who they saw crucified, was truly their master, Jesus, resurrected. Yes in bodily form - the wounds show that. The second thing the wounds do is connect all that Jesus is going to offer the disciples to his resurrection. Meaning if there was no resurrection - Jesus wouldn't or couldn't have anything to offer the disciples or anyone.

The text in **v20** tells us the as they realized that it was Jesus standing in front of them “they were filled with joy”. Of course they were filled with joy! Jesus that was dead is now alive!

But does their “joy” resolve the fear of the religious authorities? No. Their “joy” is related to Jesus being alive. Jesus says again to them in **v21a** “...Peace be with you..”.

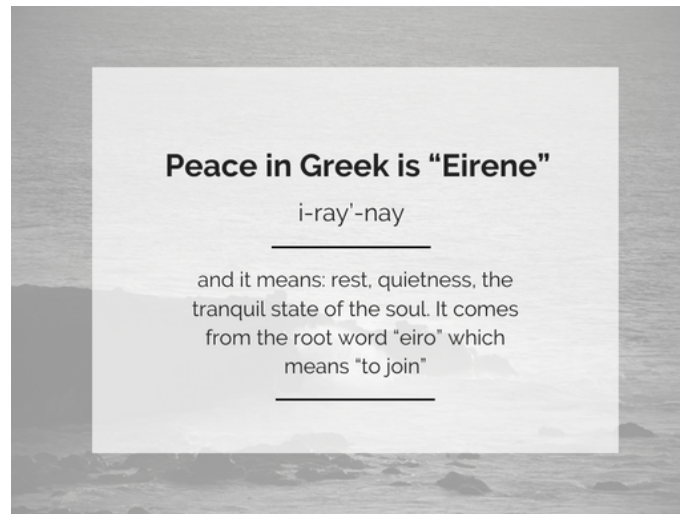
The “fear” that the disciples had as they “gathered behind locked doors” was circumstantial - in the moment. Were the Jewish authorities a significant and real threat? Yes! But circumstantially. “Circumstantial” meaning if the disciples had left Jerusalem and gone to another Roman province they probably would have been outside the reach of the Jewish authorities, and thus their fears would diminish. But aren't there always going to be circumstantial things that cause fears? Not just persecution, but health and diseases, accidents, financial threats, relational threats, etc. See when one pursues resolving fears “externally” - like by hiding behind locked doors, you can chase external resolutions to your fears and never resolve the fear. No amount of money, or power, or health will ever be enough. Ask Michael Jackson. And sooner or later everyone faces the grave like Jesus did. **Ps 49:8-9**

So what the disciples of Jesus really needed in that moment is not to be protected from the religious authorities, but rather to have a power within them that is greater than all the fears caused by threats in this fallen evil “world” whose ruler is Satan. That power is the peace of Jesus.

So Jesus who is “Peace”, offers the disciples a resolution to their fears, that is far greater than their circumstantial immediate fears of the Jewish authorities. The Peace that Jesus offers them transcends all fears, even fear of death itself.

Now before we continue in the text, lets define “Peace” as Jesus used it, because this is foundational for understanding how the “peace” Jesus offers works. Peace in Greek is “Eirene” (i-ray’-nay) and it means: rest, quietness, the tranquil state of the soul.

Do this with me, breath in thru your nose, hold for moment, out with your mouth. Rest.

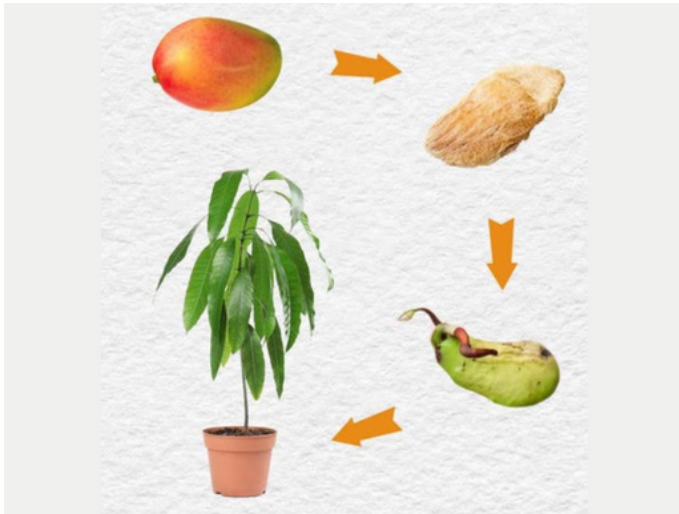


Now that definition of the soul at rest, doesn’t inform us how Jesus’ “peace” happens, but looking at the root word of “peace” which is “eiro”, the root word means “to join”. As in two things coming together and becoming one.

So the peace that Jesus is offering to the afraid disciples only happens in the context of resurrected Jesus and the disciples being “joined”, meaning a supernatural spiritual union between Jesus and disciples. This is consistent with Jesus saying in **16:33a** “I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me.” And that union that is the amazing peace- is Jesus “abiding or dwelling” in the disciples and the disciples “abiding or dwelling” in Jesus.

Now all that I have shared about “peace” so far is conceptual but keep tracking because Jesus makes this “peace”, that is greater than any fear, a reality for his disciples. But Jesus doesn’t just give them this amazing peace, he also gives them something else equally important.

V21b “As the Father...” Now to me, this statement by Jesus feels “disjointed” or “ill placed” as if it doesn’t fit in this narrative. The disciples are afraid and gathered behind locked doors and Jesus is talking about “sending them” on a mission. It makes me pause and my little brain goes “Huh?”. So why would Jesus say that and say it now? Look between Jesus and me, I’m the one with the “limited brain”, not Jesus.. so if Jesus said it, even if the timing of when he said it, or the location of where he said it, doesn’t make sense, we can be assured that what he says has meaning and purpose, and thus it’s up to the reader, you and I, to figure out why. As you think about that, I suggest this to you for your consideration. The Peace that Jesus is making available to the disciples in this context is the power and foundation for the disciples to face whatever hard things they are going to face as Jesus sends them to carry on the mission that God the Father entrusted to Jesus. If the disciples in carrying out Jesus mission are going to face persecution, Jesus gives them his peace, If they are going to face hardship, Jesus gives them his peace. If they are going to face danger or disease, Jesus gives them his peace. Pretty sweet right? The disciples just want to be safe from the religious authorities, Jesus offers them so much more. That is so Jesus isn’t it? Giving us so much more.. It reminds me of **Ps 23:5b NASB** “... you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”



The life cycle involves bearing fruit, fruit that has seeds, seeds that themselves bear new life, and new life that produces more fruit. Jesus breathed “new life – fruit bearing, seed bearing life, “his Spirit” onto the disciples, immediately after verbally sending them into the world to bear fruit. Look at **Gen. 3:11** “from which they came”. Where did the new life for the disciples come from? Jesus. And what day did this happen on? **Gen. 3:13** What day was **John 20:19**? The 3rd day. The new life in Jesus, the supernatural peace of Jesus to face hard things, and the power and authority Jesus offers to bring message of forgiveness to the world, are available because of the resurrection.

For the disciples, them receiving the Holy Spirit was the beginning of their new spiritual life, it was the beginning of Jesus power over fear in them, it was their commissioning to be sent by the authority of Jesus, and it was the beginning of their public ministry now empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Do the disciples know what that all means and what to do with what Jesus made available to them? No, a week later look where they are.. **John 20:26** Yup, gathering behind locked doors. And not long after that they still don’t know what to do so their fearless leader “Peter” takes them “fishing”. **John 21:3**. Anyone feeling better about themselves after those two verses? Our life in Christ is a journey as we learn to apply all that is available to us thru Jesus living in us!

When I was overwhelmed with fear and anxiety, what helped me the most was the presence of Jesus. I learned a lot about myself in that time, learned a lot about fear and anxiety, I had good counseling, including from Pastor Thom, but what I benefited the most from that experience is that it started me learning and experiencing the presence of God. Like the disciples Jesus stepped into my fears. God gave me a verse in those dark days. **Mark 6:50**..and it was Jesus speaking directly to me in my fears, offering me his presence. To this day I read it regularly, and as I read it I take a deep breath thru my nose, hold it for a moment, and then let it out slowly as I say, “It’s alright, I’m Ok, Jesus is with me and I am with him”. And from a place of available peace I can live a life of showing the gospel to the world, showing God’s forgiveness to the world – which is what **v23** is about.

The power over fear of hard things is the Peace that Jesus makes available to us so we can carry on. The power and authority for carrying on Jesus works on this earth come from his Spirit he gives us, that lives in us. Both are concretely tied to the resurrection of Jesus , and both are only available when we “abide or dwell” with Jesus. Jesus said in **John 15:5b** “For apart from me you can do nothing”. Apart from Jesus we have no power greater than our fears, apart from Jesus we have no authority or power to live, let alone to carry out Jesus mission of offering his forgiveness.

SUPPLEMENTAL

NOTES:

- **John 20:19** Was it afternoon or evening? If John is following a Greek cycle of days, this occurs after 6p resurrection day. I'm no expert, but I feel this is less likely than John using the Hebrew cycle of days stated above on Pg 1 given the words John uses. And this is despite the fact that an "evening" interpretation seems to match up better with the parallel account in Luke 24:28.
- Having said that, **synchronicity of gospel accounts** is not necessary as each gospel has a similar but unique message to communicate, and each gospel uses varying and often different literary styles to do so. And from that perspective, differences in details of gospel accounts are expected and normal, and not at all a reason to dismiss the bible as inaccurate and contradicting. Attempts to synchronize the gospels, although fun, can lead to interpretive gymnastics being necessary, and misinterpretation of intended messages. Accept the gospels for what they are - a God inspired unique perspective of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- **John 20:19 On fear.** Of course being safe is important, God expects us to do our part and trust him to do his Ps 127:1b ... "unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman keep watch in vain." It doesn't say don't watch over the city, it implies that we are to ask and trust God to also watch over the city.
- **John 20:22 "breathed"**. The Septuagint translates Gen 2:7 using the same verb "emphysao" as the Greek in John 20:22. The Septuagint is the Greek OT translated by 70 Hebrew/Greek scholars - 6 from each Hebrew tribe - in the 3rd Century BC.