***Back in the Upper Room with Jesus***

**Pentecost #1, John 20:19-23 April 11, 2021**

***Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”  
And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*John 20:21**

**That we may believe**

*Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.*

John 20:8

30 *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

John 20:30-31 (see 19:35)

1) John continues the journey of faith: John 1:7, 12; 2:11; 3:16; 4:39-41; 5:24; 6:47; 11:45; 16:30-31

2) John again turns to creation: at incarnation God speaks, John 1:1-14  
 after redemption God rests: John 19:31,42 (see Luke 23:55-56)  
 for the church, God breathes, John 20:21-23 (see Acts 2)

**When we see the Lord**

19 *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors 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 side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

John 20:19-20

1) Good things happen when the church is together, especially on “this” first day (see Acts 2!)

2) Jesus’ arrival finally turns Friday’s fear into Sunday’s joy

3) Even Jesus’ scars are redeemed (see Revelation 5:6; 1 Peter 4:1-2)

4) After their day of rest, “Peace be with you” gets the church back to work

**Where has the Holy Spirit been?**

21 *Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.*

John 20:21-23

1) In redemption, the Son takes center stage – now the Holy Spirit’s fruit and gifts are center stage

2) This first Great Commission begins with a “new creation” experience (see Genesis 2:7)

3) Being sent, receiving the Holy Spirit and forgiving sins are all corporate movements of the church

**Four lessons from John and the Holy Spirit**

1) Don’t assume everyone will be overjoyed at meeting the resurrected Jesus

*He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.*

John 1:11-12 (see Luke 16:19-31; Matthew 21:33-45 for another look at rejecting Jesus)

2) Knowing the Word is the best way to get ready to meet Jesus

Jesus Christ’s presence is always known by his people by the value and the beauty which they are led to attach to the Scripture at such times.

Spurgeon, “Jesus in Our Midst”

3) The Great Commissions means that office begins with the priesthood of [all] believers

*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith . . . .*

Ephesians 4:11-12

4) Forgiveness is going to be sign of the new work of the Spirit in the church

*Love . . . keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth . . . .*

1 Corinthians 13:4-6

**Resources for further studies in John’s gospel**

The Bible Project team has great stuff on John at <https://open.life.church/items/179216-john-poster-jpg>

Spurgeon has resurrection sermons at [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-power-of-his-resurrection/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/the-power-of-his-resurrection/%23flipbook/%20%20)  and my favorite at [*http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0018.htm*](http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/sermons/0018.htm) See also [*https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/jesus-in-our-midst/#flipbook/*](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/jesus-in-our-midst/%23flipbook/)

J. C. Ryle’s commentary on John at [*http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle\_gospel\_of\_john.htm*](http://www.tracts.ukgo.com/ryle_gospel_of_john.htm)

Deffinbaugh’s sermon at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31*](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31)

I have really appreciated D. A. Carson’s commentary in the Pillar New Testament Commentary series (Eerdmans, 1991) and Earl Palmer’s *The Intimate Gospel* (Word Books, 1978)

The two resources on our union with Christ are Johm Murray’s *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Eerdmans, 1955) and Rankin Wilbourne’s *Union with Christ* (David C. Cook, 2016). I also recommend Marcus Peter’s short study at [*https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-union-with-christ/*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-union-with-christ/)

S. M. Lockridge’s “That’s My King” at [*https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/*](https://thatsmyking.wordpress.com/words/)

Leon Morris has a short essay on the atonement in John’s gospel at [*http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted\_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/CTR-NT/Morris-JohnsAtonement-CTR.pdf*](http://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/Ted_Hildebrandt/NTeSources/NTArticles/CTR-NT/Morris-JohnsAtonement-CTR.pdf)

# John Poster (JPG)

# On Seeing and Believing (John 20:10-31) Deffinbaugh at [*https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31*](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31)

### Introduction

Last night we attended the wedding of a friend. Jeannette went early to help set things up, and I came later. When I arrived, I parked the car and was walking toward the building where the wedding ceremony was to be held. Another car arrived just moments after I did, parking just a couple of spaces away. The sun had gone down, and the parking lot was only partially illuminated. A woman emerged from the other car and began to walk in the same direction I was going. She said something like, “Hi, there!” and I turned to see who it was. In the light, I could see a woman who looked very familiar. The woman saw that I was looking intently at her and said, “It’s me, Sally Rackets.” I knew it was Sally, but I could not believe it. Sally and her husband Steve attended our church until they left to take a job in California. It was beyond my ability to comprehend that the person speaking to me was really Sally, but of course it was.

There is one more twist to this story. As I was on the way to the wedding, I passed a car that looked very similar to one Steve Rackets used to drive. Seeing this car had reminded me of Steve and Sally, and that he is looking for job, so I prayed for him as I made my way to the wedding, not more than fifteen minutes before I saw his wife, Sally. That’s why I was so taken back to see her—I knew who she was—but I just didn’t believe she was in Dallas, because I assumed she and Steve were both in California.

There is a point to this story: seeing is not necessarily believing. I saw Sally, but I could not believe it was really her. This is the way it was with the disciples of our Lord in our text. On several occasions, Jesus appeared to those who had followed Him, but because they assumed He was dead, they could not believe their eyes. Among those who “**saw**,” but did not believe (immediately), were Mary Magdalene and the seven disciples of our Lord at the Sea of Tiberias (also called the Sea of Galilee—see [John 6:1](javascript:%7b%7d)). The disciples all came to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but it was not because they expected this to happen. Their “believing” came hard, all the more proof that Jesus truly did rise from the dead.

Our text deals with the first three of our Lord’s four post-resurrection appearances in the Gospel of John. The first appearance is to Mary Magdalene, and the next three are to the disciples. Jesus will appear to Mary Magdalene (20:10-18), then to the disciples, minus Thomas (20:19-23), then to the disciples, with Thomas (20:26-29), and finally to the seven disciples, including Thomas, who were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (21:1ff.). There are some very important lessons to be learned here, so let us listen and learn, looking to the Spirit of God to interpret, apply, and implement these truths in our lives.

### General Observations

It would serve us well to begin with several observations concerning our text and its relationship to the other Gospels.

*We do not really know a great deal about the time between our Lord’s resurrection and His ascension*. When you stop to think about it, a significant portion of each of the Gospels is taken up with the events of the last week of our Lord in Jerusalem. And yet, the 40 days following our Lord’s resurrection gets very little attention in comparison. The material we do have about this period is not meant to satisfy our curiosity about all that happened during this time, but is recorded to prove one important fact: *Jesus Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father!*

*Of the details we do find regarding our Lord’s ministry after His resurrection, a number of them are recorded only in Acts and 1 Corinthians*. Until now I did not realize how much of my understanding of our Lord’s ministry after His resurrection is based upon New Testament books other than the Gospels. Some of the most important details come from [Acts 1](javascript:%7b%7d) and [1 Corinthians 15](javascript:%7b%7d):

1 I wrote the former account, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after he had given orders by the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. 3 After his suffering he had also presented himself alive to these apostles by many convincing proofs. He was seen by them over a forty-day period and spoke about matters concerning the kingdom of God. 4 While he was with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for “what my Father promised, which you heard about from me. 5 For John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” 6 So when they had gathered together, they began to ask him, “Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He told them, “You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.” 9 After he had said this, while they were watching, he was lifted up and a cloud took him away from their sight. 10 As they were staring into the sky while he was going, suddenly two men in white clothing stood near them 11 and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way you saw him go into heaven” ([Acts 1:1-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

3 For I passed on to you as of first importance what I also received—that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, 4 and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still living, though some have died. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as though to one born at the wrong time, he appeared to me also ([1 Corinthians 15:3-8](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I am not sure why I had concluded that my understanding of the post-resurrection period was dependent solely upon the Gospels. It was probably due, in part, to my assumption that if one Gospel didn’t mention something I knew about this time period, it was because it was recorded in one of the other three Gospels. But this is not necessarily true. If it were not for [Acts 1](javascript:%7b%7d) and [1 Corinthians 15](javascript:%7b%7d), we would not know nearly as much about the Lord’s ministry during the 40 days following His resurrection. From [Acts 1:3](javascript:%7b%7d) we learn that during this time, Jesus taught His disciples about the kingdom of God which was yet to come. While our Lord’s instruction to His disciples to wait for the coming of the Spirit can be found in Luke’s Gospel (24:49), we probably remember this command from [Acts 1:4-5](javascript:%7b%7d). Apart from [1 Corinthians 15:5](javascript:%7b%7d), we would not know that Jesus appeared to over 500 people at one time after His resurrection. It is from Paul ([1 Corinthians 15:5](javascript:%7b%7d)), as well as from Luke (24:34), that we know Jesus made a private appearance to Peter. We would certainly not expect the replacement for Judas to be Saul, to whom our Lord made another (albeit, a later) post-resurrection appearance ([1 Corinthians 15:8](javascript:%7b%7d)). A good part of what little we know of this period in our Lord’s life and ministry comes from outside the Gospels.

*Some of the details about events which occurred in this time period may appear to be contradictory*. For example, in Mark we read that after the women saw and heard the angel at the tomb, “**they went out and ran away from the tomb. They were in a state of trembling and amazement, and *said nothing to anyone*, because they were afraid**” ([Mark 16:8](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine). In Luke’s Gospel we read, “**Then they remembered his words, and when they returned from the tomb *they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest*** ” ([Luke 24:8-9](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine). I believe the solution to this apparent contradiction is found in Matthew’s account: “**So they left the tomb quickly, with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. But *Jesus met them*, saying, ‘Greetings!’ They came to him, held on to his feet and worshiped him. Then *Jesus said to them*, ‘Do not be afraid. *Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee.* They will see me there’**” ([Matthew 28:8-10](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

By putting all these details in sequence, we get a pretty good idea of what happened from the time the women left the tomb till they spoke with all the disciples and others. The women saw and heard the angel, who instructed them to go tell the disciples that Jesus was alive and would meet them in Galilee. The women rush off toward the city, but they are in a virtual state of shock. They tell no one they encounter on their way what they have just seen and heard (this conforms with what Mark tells us). Then, as they are still on their way to the city, Jesus Himself appears to them. This is the first time they have actually seen Him. He tells the women to go and tell the others, and indeed they do. Thus, all statements (those of Mark, of Luke, and of Matthew) harmonize when viewed in terms of the entire event. I believe we must assume this to be the case in every instance where an apparent contradiction appears. The details that differ are not an occasion for wringing our hands, they are the opportunity for a fuller grasp of what happened. Let us keep that in mind as we approach our text.

*We find that some of the Gospel accounts are particularly brief at this point.* This is especially true of Matthew and Mark’s accounts. Matthew writes of one appearance of Jesus to the women (28:9-10) and of one appearance of Jesus to His disciples (28:16-20). Mark’s account is terse as well, depending to some degree upon where you think his account really ends. Mark does briefly mention the appearance of Jesus to the two men on the road to Emmaus (16:12-13; compare [Luke 24:13-35](javascript:%7b%7d)). He also tells of the appearance of our Lord to the eleven disciples ([Mark 16:13-18](javascript:%7b%7d)). Mark does not include an account of Jesus appearing to any of the women, but only of the angel speaking to them (16:1-8). Luke and John have the most lengthy accounts of the post-resurrection ministry of our Lord. Luke does not describe an appearance of Jesus to the women; he chooses instead to emphasize the appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus (24:13-35). He then writes of our Lord’s subsequent appearance to the disciples (24:36-39) and then of His ascension (24:50-53). John focuses on four of the Lord’s post-resurrection appearances: first to Mary Magdalene (20:11-18), then to the disciples minus Thomas (20:19-25), then the disciples with Thomas (20:26-29), and finally to the seven disciples as they are fishing on the Sea of Tiberias (21:1-25).

*Finally, each Gospel has something unique to add to the story*. Matthew informs us that the tomb was secured by a Roman seal and guards, provided at the request of the Jewish religious leaders who recalled Jesus’ promise that He would rise from the dead in three days, and who were afraid His disciples would steal His body. Matthew then follows up with an account of how the guards and the religious leaders fabricated a cover story to explain the missing body of our Lord. Mark’s account is indeed unique, causing much discussion as to where his Gospel should end. Luke provides us with a detailed account of the appearance of our Lord to the two men on the road to Emmaus. John’s account is almost entirely unique. He alone describes the investigation of the tomb by both Peter and John ([Luke 24:12](javascript:%7b%7d) tells us only that Peter went to see the tomb), of the appearance of Jesus to Mary, of three appearances of Jesus to His disciples—more than any other Gospel. His focus on Thomas’ reluctance to believe in our Lord’s resurrection is unique. The appearance of Jesus to the seven disciples at the Sea of Tiberias is also unique, including our Lord’s three-fold question and exhortation to Peter. With this background information in mind, let us take a closer look at the first three post-resurrection appearances of our Lord, as described in [John 20](javascript:%7b%7d).

### Jesus’ First Appearance: Mary Magdalene (20:10-18)

10 So the disciples went back to their homes. 11 But Mary stood outside the tomb and wept. While she was weeping, she bent over and looked into the tomb. 12 She saw two angels in white sitting where Jesus’ body had been lying, one at the head and one at the feet. 13 They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” Mary replied, “They have taken my Lord away, and I do not know where they have put him!” 14 When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?” Because she thought he was the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him.” 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “*Rabboni*” (which means Teacher). 17 Jesus replied, “Do not touch me, for I have not yet ascended to my Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’” 18 Mary Magdalene came and informed the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them what Jesus had said to her.

It was Mary Magdalene who first arrived at the empty tomb in the early hours of the first day of the week. When she saw the stone had been removed, she seems to have jumped to a hasty conclusion—someone had taken the body. We do not know to whom the “**they**” (“***They* have taken the Lord from the tomb …**”—verse 2) refers, and I doubt that Mary did either. I believe it is safe to say that it never occurred to her that any of the disciples took the body. She seems to have assumed it was either the Jews, or the Roman soldiers, or someone like “**the gardener**” (see 20:15). It never occurred to Mary that Jesus had been raised from the dead. She did not hope to see her risen Lord; she simply wished to locate His body and give it a proper burial.

A year or so ago a young woman’s body was stolen from its grave at Restland Cemetery, just a mile or so down the road from our church. It was a terrible thing to do, and the family was most eager to get the body back and see to it that it was buried properly, once for all. Someone had added insult to injury. Not only had this family lost a loved one, they suffered the agony of not knowing what had become of her body. Mary must have felt the same way this young woman’s family felt. She had devoted herself and her livelihood to following Jesus and supporting Him, along with some other women. She had watched helplessly as Jesus was tried, convicted, and crucified. She looked on as His body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. Now, she believed that the body of her Lord had been taken. It was almost too much to bear.

When Peter and John left the tomb, Mary remained behind. At first she stood outside the tomb, weeping. She stooped sufficiently to be able to see inside the tomb, apparently for the first time. Two angels were inside, clothed in white. An angel was sitting at each end of the place where Jesus’ body had been laid. From Mary’s response to these angels, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that Mary did not recognize these angels as angels. But then why should she? It is true that in Matthew’s account the one angel who sat on the stone had an appearance that was like lightening (28:3), and this fellow was so awesome the guards were terrified (28:4). But John does not tell us that these two angels were as awesome in appearance as the first angel was. And this should come as no surprise. Often in the Bible, angels simply look like men, so that their appearance alone would not reveal their true identity (see [Genesis 18](javascript:%7b%7d) and 19; [Acts 1:10-11](javascript:%7b%7d); [Hebrews 13:2](javascript:%7b%7d)). It would seem that the two angels made no effort to identify themselves as angels, nor even to inform Mary that Jesus was not there. Perhaps it was because our Lord was going to do this personally.

The angels asked Mary, “**Woman, why are you weeping?**” The inference is that her tears were not really called for. They were tears of love, and of sorrow, but they were also ill-founded. In Mary’s mind, this was the darkest moment of her life, and yet her tears were based upon false assumptions: that Jesus was dead; that His body had been stolen; that she would not be able to find His body. If Mary had known the real reason why the tomb was empty, she would not have been crying.

Some have suggested that the angels gave a look of recognition when they saw Jesus behind Mary, outside the tomb. We do not know why, but for some reason Mary turned around to gaze at the risen Lord. She saw Him, but she did not recognize Him, in much the same way that I had seen Sally Rackets in the parking lot this past week, but did not recognize her. Mary’s vision may have been obscured by her tears, and Jesus may not have looked exactly the same as He did before His resurrection. He most certainly looked different from the way she saw Him last, from the horrible sight she could not erase from her mind—a badly beaten, bloody figure, who could hardly be recognized for all the abuse His body had taken: “Just as there were many who were appalled at him—his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness” ([Isaiah 52:15](javascript:%7b%7d), NIV).

Jesus asks Mary the same question the angels had asked her moments earlier: “**Woman, why are you weeping?**”, but He adds a further question, “**Who are you looking for?**”. Jesus knew why she was weeping. He knew that the empty tomb caused her great grief. He knew that she was seeking His body. His words indicate to Mary that He knows something about her dilemma. Mary’s grief still blinds her to the truth, but she nevertheless seems to discern that this “**gardener**” holds the key to her quest for the Lord’s body. She pleads with Him to convey any information He may have to her: “**Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will take him**” (verse 15).[193](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31#P5566_2226991)

Jesus answered with but one word—“**Mary**.” For Mary, seeing was not believing, but hearing was. Would you not love to have heard this one word just the way Mary did? That one word was spoken in the voice she knew so well. It was also spoken in the manner she knew so well. What love, what compassion, what healing was conveyed by this one word—“**Mary**.” I cannot help but recall the words of our Lord, spoken earlier:

1 “I tell you the solemn truth, the one who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in some other way, is a thief and a robber. 2 The one who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. 3 The doorkeeper opens the door for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. 4 When he has brought all his own sheep out, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him **because they recognize his voice**. 5 They will never follow a stranger, but will run away from him, because they do not recognize the stranger’s voice” ([John 10:1-5](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Immediately Mary recognized that it was her Lord, and called Him “**Rabboni**” (or teacher). We know from our Lord’s words that Mary has already locked Him in her grasp. It is as though she intended to keep holding on to Him, so that He would never leave her again. And it is because of this that Jesus responds, “**Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’**” ([John 20:17](javascript:%7b%7d), NAB). I must differ with the NET Bible translation here (“**Do not touch me, …**”) for two reasons. First, it is not that Jesus could not be touched. In but a few verses we will read, “**Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe’**” ([John 20:27](javascript:%7b%7d)). Why would Jesus tell Mary not to touch Him, and instruct Thomas to do so? In [Matthew 28:9](javascript:%7b%7d), Jesus allowed the women to take hold of His feet and worship Him. Second, the tense of the imperative is present, and this grammatical construction often conveys the thought of ceasing to do something.[194](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31#P5570_2229586) Jesus is not trying to prevent Mary from touching Him; He is trying to make it clear to her that He is going to leave this world to return to His Father. She should not suppose that by clinging to Him she can prevent His departure.

John does not include the command which Jesus gave to Mary, though it is clear that He instructed her as to what she was to tell the disciples (20:18). She who was the first to go out to the tomb was the first to see the risen Lord, and apparently the first to be privileged to share the good news of His resurrection with others.

Before we go on to the next appearance of our Lord, I would like to make a comment or two. I would like you to note that our Lord’s first appearance is not to one of the eleven disciples, but to Mary Magdalene. She will never be one of the apostles. She will never write a Gospel. She will never become a great preacher or leader. Nevertheless, our Lord chose to manifest Himself to her first. Why do you think this was? I would call your attention to three important factors. First, she had a great love for her Master, as He did for her. Second, she seemed to be the one with the greatest measure of grief. I am reminded of the words of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount: “**Blessed are those who mourn, because they will be comforted**” ([Matthew 5:4](javascript:%7b%7d)). In the context of this sermon, Jesus did not promise blessings to those who were the greatest, or the most powerful, but to those in the greatest need, with the greatest desire for spiritual things. There is a third reason: Mary was there first. Jesus revealed Himself first to the one who was there first. Mary came to the tomb early, because of her great love, and her great grief, and Jesus revealed Himself to her, first.

I would also like to point out an important lesson which this text teaches us: When we come to see things as they really are, we will find that many of our tears were unnecessary. To put it in different words, Many of our tears are ill-founded. Both the angels and our Lord questioned Mary as to why she was weeping. The reason she gave was that her Lord’s body had been taken, and she did not know where to find it. The truth of the matter was that Jesus was not dead; He had been resurrected. And beyond this, His body was not missing at all, and no one had taken it. Jesus did not need to be found by Mary; Jesus found Mary.

We know that in heaven there will be no more tears: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist any more—or mourning, or crying, or pain; the former things have ceased to exist” ([Revelation 21:4](javascript:%7b%7d)). Why will there be no more tears in heaven? The first answer is because there will no longer be those things which cause us to cry—no more suffering, no more sin, no more injustice, no more death. But the second reason is that we shall then see all of our sorrows in an entirely different light. We shall see them in the context of the perfect work God was achieving through the things which caused us to weep.

When you and I get to heaven, we will see things in a very different light, and when we do, we will discover that many of our tears of sorrow were as groundless as Mary’s tears were. I am not saying that Christians should not cry. What I am saying is that a good deal of our sorrow is the result of our inadequate knowledge of what God is doing in and through our adversities. When Christians get to heaven, they will see the entire picture, and thus they will find that everything that has ever happened to them is for their good and His glory. No wonder there will be no tears in heaven! Our comfort and joy may not come as quickly as Mary’s did, but it will be just as great, just as real, and it is just as certain.

### Jesus’ Second Appearance: The Disciples, Minus Thomas (20:19-23)

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the disciples had gathered together and locked the doors of the place for fear of the Jewish authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you!” 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 So Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you! Just as the Father has sent me, I also send you.” 22 And after he said this, he breathed[195](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31#P5579_2234437) on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone’s sins, they are retained.”

John very kindly does not tell us what Mark and Luke record in their accounts—that when the disciples were told that Jesus was alive, they refused to believe it without seeing Him:

9 Early on the first day of the week, after he arose, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had driven out seven demons. 10 She went out and told those who were with him, while they were mourning and weeping. 11 And when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe ([Mark 16:9-11](javascript:%7b%7d); see also verses 12-13).

10 Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles. 11 But these words seemed like pure nonsense to them, and they did not believe them ([Luke 24:10-11](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It was on the first day of the week—the same day that Mary saw Jesus—and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors. They were afraid of the Jews, and rightly so. They were disciples of Jesus, and He had just been crucified for sedition. And now, the story was circulating that they had stolen the body of Jesus ([Matthew 28:11-15](javascript:%7b%7d)). Remember that the tomb was sealed by Rome, and guarded by Roman soldiers. The disciples may have felt in greater danger here than on any previous occasion. They must have been deeply troubled by the reports they had heard that Jesus was alive. What were they to think of all this? What were they to do? They did not know.

And so the disciples met together behind locked doors. We are told that one disciple was missing—Thomas. We are not told why he was absent. There is no particular blame cast on him for his absence. In some miraculous way, Jesus enters the room, even though the door is locked. We do not know what the disciples saw, but John certainly leaves us with the impression that our Lord’s entrance was unusual—one more proof of His resurrection. Our Lord twice repeated the words, “**Peace be with you**” (20:19, 21). This certainly reminds us of what Jesus had said earlier to these men:

25 “I have spoken these things while staying with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you. 27 “**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you**; I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage. 28 You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I am. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe” ([John 14:24-29](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

It would appear that this was our Lord’s first appearance to the disciples after His resurrection. If this is so, it may be the same appearance that Luke describes, providing us with additional details:

30 When he had taken his place at the table with them, he took the bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31 At this point their eyes were opened and they recognized him. Then he vanished out of their sight. 32 They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us while he was speaking with us on the road, while he was explaining the scriptures to us?” 33 So they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They found the eleven and those with them gathered together 34 and saying, “The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon!” 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how they recognized him when he broke the bread. 36 While they were saying these things, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “**Peace be with you**.” 37 But they were startled and terrified, thinking they saw a spirit. 38 Then he said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see; because a spirit does not have flesh and bones like you see that I have.” 40 Then when he had said this, **he showed them his hands and his feet**. 41 And while they still could not believe it for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42 So they gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in front of them ([Luke 24:30-43](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

Jesus would have appeared to Mary and the other women by now, and they have already announced to the disciples that Jesus was alive. But the disciples refused to believe. Then, the two men who talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus arrived to tell the disciples of their encounter with the risen Lord. Once again, the disciples refused to believe:

12 After this he appeared in a different form to two of them while they were walking in the country. 13 They went back and told the rest, **but they did not believe them**. 14 Then he appeared to the eleven themselves, while they were eating, and he rebuked them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen him resurrected ([Mark 16:12-14](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

John spares us from yet another account of the unbelief of the disciples, and of Jesus rebuking them for their unbelief. While their unbelief deserved rebuke, John moves on to tell us how Jesus convinced His disciples of His resurrection. He shows them His nail-scarred hands and His spear-pierced side. There was no mistaking the fact that His wounds, now healed, were incurred at His crucifixion. It was Jesus, and there was no denying it, incredible as that may be.

The disciples had a job to do, and they were being left behind so that they could accomplish it. This task is summed up in the “Great Commission”:

18 Then Jesus came up and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” ([Matthew 28:18-20](javascript:%7b%7d)).

To accomplish this task, the disciples are in need of divine enablement. This was promised by our Lord in the Upper Room Discourse ([John 13–16](javascript:%7b%7d)):

15 “If you love me, you will obey my commandments. 16 Then I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot accept, because it does not see him or know him. But you know him, because he resides with you and will be in you. … 25 I have spoken these things while staying with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will cause you to remember everything I said to you” ([John 14:15-17](javascript:%7b%7d), 25-26).

26 “When the Advocate comes, whom I will send you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father—he will testify about me; 27 and you also will testify, because you have been with me from the beginning” ([John 15:26-27](javascript:%7b%7d)).

7 “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I am going away. For if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment— 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; 11 and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been condemned. 12 I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own authority, but will speak whatever he hears, and will tell you what is to come. 14 He will glorify me, because he will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. 15 Everything that the Father has is mine; that is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what is mine and will tell it to you. 16 In a little while you will see me no longer; again after a little while, you will see me” ([John 16:7-16](javascript:%7b%7d)).

I had never noticed before that in His high priestly prayer in [John 17](javascript:%7b%7d), Jesus does not ask the Father to send the Spirit, which He has promised in chapters 14-16. Indeed, the Holy Spirit is not even mentioned in this prayer! How can this be? I believe that while our Lord prepared His disciples for the coming of the Spirit in the Upper Room Discourse, He did not intend to send the Spirit until after His ascension. In other words, the Holy Spirit would not come until Pentecost. Some suggest that in our text Jesus is temporarily bestowing the Spirit upon His disciples, until Pentecost comes. I don’t agree.

In the first place, John does not report anything out of the ordinary happening as a result of our Lord’s actions. The disciples are not transformed, as they will be at Pentecost. The gospel is not preached. In fact, the next thing to happen in John’s Gospel is that some of the disciples go fishing. I do not believe that the Holy Spirit was immediately bestowed upon the disciples at this moment, as a result of what Jesus says and does. I believe Jesus is symbolically bestowing the Spirit upon His disciples, although it will not actually take place until Pentecost. Jesus will have ascended to the Father then, and so this gesture indicates to the disciples that when the Spirit comes at Pentecost, it will be as a result of what Jesus had promised earlier, and symbolically indicates here.

I wish to be very clear here, both as to what I am saying, and as to what I am not saying. I am saying that our Lord is here symbolically bestowing His Holy Spirit on the church. This symbolic act will literally be fulfilled at Pentecost. Jesus wants it to be clear that it is He who is sending His Spirit to indwell and to empower His church. I am not saying that the Spirit is given at the moment Jesus breathes upon His disciples. I am not saying that this is a temporary bestowal of the Spirit, until the permanent coming of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Specifically, I believe that what Jesus is symbolically bestowing is the coming of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples as those who will act as His apostles. Earlier, Jesus outlined some of the ministries of the Holy Spirit. For example, the Spirit would call Jesus’ teaching to their minds. He would convict the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment. But here, none of these ministries seems to be in view. Here, the Holy Spirit is given to the apostles so that they can either proclaim the forgiveness of sins, or the retention of sins. I do not think this text justifies some priestly hierarchy, who hears confessions and grants absolution from one’s sins. Instead, I believe Jesus is giving the apostles the authority to declare men and women to be cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. I believe we see an example of this in the Book of Acts:

1 Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles too had accepted the word of God. 2 So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers took issue with him, 3 saying, “You went to uncircumcised men and shared a meal with them.” 4 But Peter began and explained it to them point by point, saying, 5 “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, an object something like a large sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came to me. 6 As I stared I looked into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild animals, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7 I also heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; slaughter and eat!’ 8 But I said, ‘Certainly not, Lord, for nothing defiled or ritually unclean has ever entered my mouth!’ 9 But the voice replied a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, you must not consider ritually unclean.’ 10 This happened three times, and then everything was pulled up to heaven again. 11 At that very moment, three men sent to me from Caesarea approached the house where we were staying. 12 **The Spirit told me** to accompany them without hesitation. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man’s house. 13 He informed us how he had seen an angel standing in his house and saying, ‘Send to Joppa and summon Simon, who is called Peter, 14 who will speak a message to you by which you and your entire household will be saved.’ 15 Then as I began to speak, **the Holy Spirit came on them** just as he did on us at the beginning. 16 And I remembered the word of the Lord, as he used to say, ‘John baptized with water, but **you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit**.’ 17 Therefore if God gave them the same gift as he also gave us after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to hinder God?” 18 When they heard this, they ceased their objections and praised God, saying, “**So then, God has granted the repentance that leads to life even to the Gentiles**” ([Acts 11:1-18](javascript:%7b%7d), emphasis mine).

It takes a monumental work of God to convince the Jews that God has purposed from eternity past to save Gentiles (see [Acts 22:21-23](javascript:%7b%7d)). Our Lord had promised to send the Spirit, which He did at Pentecost. After Pentecost, the Holy Spirit directed Peter to go to the house of a Gentile and to proclaim the gospel to those gathered in his house. The Spirit then came upon all those who had come to faith, thus indicating that the gospel (the forgiveness of sins) was not just for Jews alone, but for all who believe, Jew or Gentile. It is difficult for Gentile believers today to grasp how hard it was for Jews to accept the salvation of the Gentiles. Even the apostles found this difficult. As the Spirit came upon the apostles, this truth was embraced, proclaimed, and defended by them. By means of the Spirit’s guidance and illumination, the truth that the gospel was for Jews and Gentiles was declared by the apostles, and particularly by Paul:

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh—who are called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” that is performed in the body by hands—12 that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who used to be far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he is our peace, the one who turned both groups into one and who destroyed the middle wall of partition, the hostility, in his flesh, 15 when he nullified the law of commandments in decrees. The purpose of this was to create in himself the two into one new man, thus making peace, 16 and to reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by which the hostility has been killed. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; 18 so that through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer foreigners and non-citizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God’s household, 20 because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit ([Ephesians 2:11-22](javascript:%7b%7d)).

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that by revelation the divine secret was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. 4 When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into this secret of Christ. 5 Now this secret was not disclosed to mankind in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, 6 namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God’s grace that was given to me by the exercise of his power. 8 To me—less than the least of all the saints—this grace was given, to proclaim to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ 9 and to enlighten everyone about the divine secret’s plan—a secret that has been hidden for ages in the God who has created all things ([Ephesians 3:1-9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

### Jesus’ Third Appearance: The Disciples, Including Thomas (20:24-31)

24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. 25 The other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he replied, “Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!” 26 Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe.” 28 Thomas replied to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed.”

The disciples seem to have been convinced of our Lord’s resurrection, except for Thomas who was not there. He did not see the resurrected Lord, nor did he behold the Savior’s wounded hands and side. And so it was that when Thomas was told that Jesus had appeared to them, he refused to believe. He insisted that in order for him to believe, he would have to see Jesus with his own eyes. He would have to personally inspect the Lord’s nail-pierced hands and His pierced side. Only then would he believe. Before we become too harsh with Thomas, let me remind you that the other disciples did not believe until they saw, either. Thomas is really demanding to see the same things that convinced the others. He is not asking for anything more than what the others saw.

Eight days passed. Apparently Jesus did not appear to any of His disciples during this period of time. The disciples were all together once again, including Thomas. The doors were locked, but in spite of this Jesus arrived and stood in their midst.[196](https://bible.org/seriespage/46-seeing-and-believing-john-2010-31#P5610_2253181) Jesus repeats the greeting He gave at His earlier appearance, “**Peace be with you**” (verse 26; see also verses 19, 21). Immediately, Jesus turns His attention to Thomas. He summons Thomas to come and to put his finger where the nails had pierced His hands, and to feel His side where the spear had pierced it. He challenged Thomas to forsake his unbelief and to believe.

We do not know whether Thomas actually pressed his fingers into our Lord’s nail-pierced hands or not. Since John does not tell us that Thomas actually felt the wounds of our Lord, it may well be that after seeing Jesus alive he no longer required this proof. It may have taken this sight to convince Thomas, but once convinced, Thomas got it right. He does not merely profess a belief that Jesus has risen from the dead. Thomas professes to believe in what the resurrection proved—that Jesus was God, and that He was Lord (verse 28). Thomas now has it right.

Bible translations handle our Lord’s response differently. Some render the first words of verse 29 as a question, “**Have you believed because you have seen Me?**” (as does the NET Bible). Others render it as a statement: “**Because you have seen me, you have believed**” (NIV, KJV, NKJV). The difference is not important. The contrast Jesus seeks to emphasize is between those who must see in order to believe, and those who will believe without seeing. Peter seems to take up this same thought in his first epistle:

8 You have not seen him, but you love him. You do not see him now but you believe in him, and so you rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, 9 because you are attaining the goal of your faith—the salvation of your souls ([1 Peter 1:8-9](javascript:%7b%7d)).

It is not too hard to see what John is leading up to. John is writing this Gospel for those who have never seen the risen Lord. He has selected just a few of the many miraculous signs Jesus performed to demonstrate that Jesus is who He claimed to be, who John proclaims Him to be.

### The Bottom Line: Believing Jesus Is the Christ, the Son of God (20:30-31)

30 Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples that are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

If there is one thing I despise, it is deceptive advertising. I hate those phone calls that come from unidentified (“out of the area”) sources, which begin with the assurance that the caller is not “selling” anything. John could not be more open and direct about the purpose of this book. I believe John has two conclusions. The first is found in chapter 20. It is aimed at those who have not yet come to faith in Jesus Christ. The second is aimed at those who have believed, and it is found in chapter 21.

In our text, John informs his unbelieving readers about the “bottom line” of all that he has written. John has one goal for the unbeliever: He wants to demonstrate as clearly and as forcefully as he can that Jesus not only claimed to be the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of God, but that by many miraculous signs He proved it! The last and greatest of these signs was His resurrection from the dead:

38 Then some of the experts in the law along with some Pharisees said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.” 39 But he answered them, “An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet [Jonah. 40](javascript:%7b%7d) For just as Jonah was *in the belly of the huge fish for three days and three nights*, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights. 41 The people of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; yet something greater than Jonah is here! 42 The Queen of the South will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; yet something greater than Solomon is here! ([Matthew 12:38-42](javascript:%7b%7d)).

While the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was prophesied in the Old Testament, and by our Lord Himself, John makes it very clear that the disciples were not predisposed to believe it. Only after the most forceful and compelling evidence would the disciples believe Jesus really was alive. And having become convinced of this great truth, the disciples never ceased to proclaim it. The resurrection of Jesus is the final and compelling proof that He is the Son of God and the Savior of the world:

1 From Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God 2 that he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, 3 concerning his Son who was a descendant of David with respect to the flesh, 4 who was appointed the Son-of-God-in-power according to the Holy Spirit by the resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord ([Romans 1:1-4](javascript:%7b%7d)).

Believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, is the only way God has provided for the forgiveness of your sins and for the gift of eternal life. By believing in Him, you will be saved:

9 Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes and thus has a right standing and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation. 11 For the scripture says, “***Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame***.” 12 For there is no distinction between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is Lord of all, who richly blesses all who call on him. 13 For ***everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved*** ([Romans 10:9-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

11 He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children 13 —children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God ([John 1:11-13](javascript:%7b%7d)).

In many ways, the Gospel of John is not a simple book. But its message to the unsaved is incredibly simple, and John sums it up in these last verses of chapter 20. If you have never come to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Son of God, then John has written this book to you, and for you, to give you all the evidence you need to believe in Him. Have you believed? This is the most important decision you will ever make. It determines your eternal destiny.

193 Some have criticized Mary for being so nave as to assume she will be able to carry away the body of our Lord. They are missing the point. She is not thinking in terms of logistics here. She is simply saying that if this “**gardener**” will tell her where to find the body, she will see to it that it is returned to its proper place. Of course she will get help to accomplish this. For now, she just wants to know where His body has been placed.

194 A. T. Robertson comments, “Present middle imperative in prohibition with genitive case, meaning “cease clinging to me” rather than “Do not touch me.” Jesus allowed the women to take hold of his feet … and worship … as we read in [Mt 28:9](javascript:%7b%7d). The prohibition here reminds Mary that the previous personal fellowship by sight, sound, and touch no longer exists and that the final state of glory was not yet begun. Jesus checks Mary’s impulsive eagerness.” Archibald Thomas Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1931), 6 vols. Vol. V, p. 312.

195 I am reminded that the breath of God is the source of life ([Genesis 2:7](javascript:%7b%7d); [Job 33:4](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 33:6](javascript:%7b%7d); [Ezekiel 37:9](javascript:%7b%7d)), even as it is also the means of divine judgment ([2 Samuel 22:16](javascript:%7b%7d); [Job 4:9](javascript:%7b%7d); [Psalm 18:15](javascript:%7b%7d)). The breath of God is sometimes a symbol for His Spirit ([Job 33:4](javascript:%7b%7d)). In a symbolic way, our Lord is breathing life into His church.

196 Both the NET Bible and the NIV smooth out the translation here. The NIV reads: “A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you!’” ([John 14:26](javascript:%7b%7d)). Both the old and the new King James Versions and the NAS leave the translation a bit rough, in order to convey the unusual word order: “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’” (NAS). “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!’” (NKJ). The original text seems to be emphasizing the fact that Jesus entered the room, in spite of the fact that the doors were shut and locked.

## Jesus in Our Midst

[Charles Haddon Spurgeon](https://www.spurgeon.org/multi_author/charles-haddon-spurgeon/) September 12, 1875   
Scripture: [John 20:19](https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/scripture-index/john/)   
From: [Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Volume 21](https://www.spurgeon.org/collection/metropolitan-tabernacle-pulpit-volume-21/)

##### “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, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.” — John xx. 19.

WE do not wonder that when certain devout Greeks came up to keep the feast at Jerusalem they said unto Philip, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Who would not want to see him? Who that has been redeemed by his precious blood does not long to behold him? As a child pines for its mother, so have we been sick with strong desire to behold our Lord. Yet to see the King in his beauty with these eyes of ours is denied to us for the present, and the reasons for delay are so gracious that we are well content to tarry. It is better for us that the bodily presence of our Lord should be withdrawn, for otherwise the Comforter would not come unto us, and the Comforter, even the blessed Spirit, brings us richer gifts than even the personal presence of Christ could have conferred. Still reasons cannot utterly remove longings, and we should still be glad to behold our Lord. Is it not natural that a soldier should wish to hear his Captain’s voice? At least there is something excusable about it if every now and then we dare to wish that we could have a glimpse, even if it were ever so short, of our own Well-beloved, altogether lovely Lord. If we could but catch a glimpse of that face whose brightness outshines the sun, how it would stimulate us! But, brethren, it must not be; until he himself shall come, or till he shall take us up to be with him where he is, we must be content with faith, and postpone our desires for sight.

     So far as the needs of the gospel kingdom are concerned the need for eye-witnesses is over. Apostles who had seen the Lord are required no more. Forty days of our Saviour’s tarrying here below sufficed to let a sufficient number of persons fully assure themselves that he had actually risen from the dead; and Jesus took great care that there should be left behind a body of evidence concerning the actual resurrection of his body, which would render that fact indisputably certain to all candid minds. Probably there is no statement of human history which is better sustained by evidence than this fact, that Jesus of Nazareth who hung upon the cross, and died, did afterwards rise again from the dead. The time of eye-witnesses is now over; more evidence would be superfluous, and we are now in the mid-ocean of faith. The Lord knows that sight interferes with faith, and therefore he does not give us a mixture of the two. We do not walk by sight and faith, but “we walk by faith not by sight.” To let us occasionally see would, in fact, remove us out of the realm of faith, and bring us down from the high position of believers to the low platform of sight-seers. Adieu, therefore, for a while, O sight.

     Yet, dear brethren, there are spiritual visits from Jesus, which are more than sufficient substitutes for his bodily presence, and these we may still desire and expect. Christ may be really present where he is not materially present. There is a discerning of the presence of Christ which we must all have, especially when we come to the communion table, for we are told that he who there discerneth not the Lord’s body eateth and drinketh unworthily. There is a discerning of the Lord’s presence in the midst of his people which is essential to the power of our assemblies, and I pray that we may have this even now, and if we do we shall not be a whit behind those who saw Jesus with their eyes, and heard him with their ears. I do not think there is any privilege which the actual bodily presence of Christ could bestow which we may not obtain at this moment, by the actual spiritual presence of Christ, if we do but exercise faith in him as being in the midst of us. He has said, “Lo, I am with you alway,” and this is the pledge of every conceivable good. Concerning this presence I shall speak, using the story as told by the evangelists as a sort of type of that spiritual communion which I hope we may now realise.

     I. Our first point this morning shall be, THERE IS A PECULIAR MANNER IN OUR LORD’S COMING TO HIS DISCIPLES.

     You will see first that he comes gladly to them. I am sure he came gladly, for he came so soon and so often. First he appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to Simon, then to the two at Emmaus, and then to the eleven at Jerusalem. Here are at least four times in a day in which the Risen One seeks his brethren. These visits of his were in different places, somewhat remote from each other. It was a busy day with him, this first day after he had risen from the dead. How true it was after his resurrection, even as it was in ages long ago, that his delights were with the sons of men. He evidently loved to be where his people were. He might have gone away and spent the forty days in the desert, triumphing on the scene of his former conflict, or he might have surveyed the earth in lonely travel, but instead thereof he spent his sacred leisure with his people, and on the first day after he had risen from the grave we have record of no less than four interviews which he had with his disciples. Remember that on each occasion he came right willingly, and showed himself freely. Magdalene it is true went to the tomb seeking him, but he might readily have remained unknown had he so desired. I know not where Simon was when his Lord met him, but he also did not find him as the result of search. As for the two disciples at Emmaus, they were going away from Jerusalem, and evidently were not seeking him, yet he joined himself to their company; and the eleven had met to condole with each other, but not to meet with him: that was a matter beyond their expectation. The doors were shut; no sentinel stood ready to look for the appearing of the Lord Jesus, but he came to them on a sudden, an uninvited guest. I gather from this, beloved, that our blessed Lord delights to manifest himself to his people even now, for we know that he is the same as ever. After a spiritual manner he is glad to come and sup with us that we may sup with him. He is not reluctant to visit the places where his people assemble. It is the joy of his heart to look those in the face for whom he shed his blood, and to hear their prayers and praises and accept their offerings. You have not to-day, therefore, in the prayer which I trust you are breathing to him, to urge an unwilling guest to come where he cares not to be, you have not to lay hold of him and constrain him, saying, “Abide with us,” but he will be glad to reveal himself to you as he doth not unto the world. Jesus comes cheerfully where he is cheerfully received; he even comes to those who invite him not, and therefore he will surely turn aside and tarry with you who are longing for fellowship with him.

     He came on that occasion also to those who were quite unworthy of so great a privilege; for who were those eleven? God forbid we should say a hard word against those honoured men, but in reference to their Master they had not behaved as they should have done. It is written, “Then all the disciples forsook him and fled.” Amongst that eleven there was not one who had stood up in his Lord’s defence, not even the man who had leaned his head upon his bosom. Nay, one who was not the least among them had with oaths and cursing denied him. They had not forgotten him or renounced his cause, or else they would not have met as they were doing, but they had all disbelieved the promise of his return, or else they had not met in fear and trembling as they did that night. Methinks some leaders would have refused to own such followers, or at best would have sent them cold commands, and denied them their company till they were in a better spirit. Our Master came to his cowardly, faithless disciples, and stood in the midst of them, uttering the cheering salutation, “Peace be unto you!” My soul, why should he not come to thee, though thou be the most unworthy of all whom he has bought with his blood? Though thou assuredly hast been unfaithful, cowardly, and unbelieving, yet even upon thee may his light arise and into thine ears may he speak the peaceful benediction, even as he did unto the eleven. This ought to be a point of great comfort to you this morning, and great incitement to hope that you will obtain the Lord's spiritual presence, unworthy though you be.

     Note again, the manner of his coming. He came to the full assembly of the apostles and their companions, after he had been seen by the few. That is to say, first one had seen him, then another one, and then two; and then the full quorum of the eleven and they that were with them were favoured with his company. I am glad, my brethren, to know that this morning early, soon after break of day, a few of the household of faith met under this roof, and found their Master among them displaying his love. I know also that, a second time, before we assembled in this upper room for worship, there was in the basement below another company gathered together, who sought and found our Lord: and, moreover, one at least is here who saw Jesus early this morning in his own chamber while privately worshipping. These are good tokens, my brethren, for, now that we have all come together, many more than eleven, and now that all our hearts are eager after him, we shall surely meet with him. Since the brothers and the sisters say, “We have seen him this morning, we saw him in our chambers, we saw him as we walked to the house of prayer, we met him in the early morning prayer-meeting,” this is good news to us, and confirms our hope that he will come to us also. Yes, beloved, he will come to the feast; even now I see him, and his presence makes my heart burn within me.

     Our Lord came to his disciples when they were met together quietly. secluded from the world, shut in as much as they could be from its cares and distractions. The eleven and the more trustworthy brethren had appointed this midnight rendezvous for no purpose but that of quietly considering their condition, cheering each other’s hearts, and waiting upon God. They had nothing to buy or sell, or debate upon, they had laid aside business cares and domestic troubles, and then their Master came. It is a good thing for the saints to be shut in, and the world shut out. I hope we are in that position now. You must not expect Jesus to show himself to you if your heart is at home with the children, or away at the workshop, or travelling to and fro through the earth, seeking after vanity; but with the doors all shut about us, even in this great Tabernacle we shall see our Beloved. If we can but shut the world out we may expect to feel his presence, and to have him breathe upon us as he did upon those of old. Not in the noisy street, but in the quiet chamber, Jesus comes; not at the mart, but in the meeting; not in the street, but in the sanctuary, will his gathered people have their clearest sights of him.

     Having all met together, the next noticeable point as to the Lord’s coming was that they were all thinking about him and talking about him. The uppermost subject was Jesus whom they had followed as their Master, whom they had seen die, and of whom it was said that he had risen from the dead. I suppose they prayed together, but I am sure their prayers all had reference to him. I do not think they sang, but if they did, methinks they must have selected a psalm which had an evident allusion to him. Some of them may have spoken. I have no doubt Simon Peter did, but it must have been to tell how the Lord had revealed himself to him and was risen indeed; and Magdalene in that quiet assembly may have again told of the vision of angels which she saw, and how she met the Master and mistook him for a gardener. And now there come in two brethren, hot with their rapid journey from Emmaus, who are just in time before the assembly breaks up to repeat the same gladsome tidings. Everything that night was about Jesus, directly and distinctly about him. There were no discussions as to doctrines, and no questions about ordinances, but they spake wholly of Jesus who died, Jesus who was said to have risen, and they said one to another, is it indeed so? Thus while all their hearts and tongues were taken up with him Jesus manifested himself to them. Now I hope our Lord will come this morning, for I do know some who think less and less every day of everything but Jesus, who now account a sermon to be precious or to be vile in proportion as it is full of him, and reckon a day well spent or ill just in proportion as they have spent it with him. He is the Alpha and Omega, head, front, chief, Lord, all, yea, all in all to us. And if there be many such present to-day, you may depend upon it Jesus will not keep away, but we shall feel the delights of his fellowship.

     Still, some one will say, perhaps he will not come here, for there are many barriers, and we ourselves are not, perhaps, in the very best condition to receive him. Stop, brethren, and ask yourselves— were there no difficulties then? The doors were shut, and the disciples were in fear. I do not know how Jesus came into the room. Some think he passed through the closed door by miracle, albeit that his body was substantial flesh and bone: others suggest that he opened the door by miracle and then it closed again. I care not how, but there he was, though the doors were shut: and I know this, that whatever doors there may be between my Lord and my soul, though they were doors made of seven times plated steel, he could pass through them or could open them to get at my heart when it longs after him. Brethren, if there be mountains between you and Christ, behold he cometh leaping like a roe or a young hart over the separating hills. Nothing can keep him back from you except yourself, and if you will that he should come, he wills to come and is on his way even now. No considerations of domestic suffering or of personal pain, nor remembrance of the trials of the week, or even the present temptations of Satan shall avail to keep back your Lord and Master. Or ever you are aware he can make your soul like the chariots of Ammi-nadib. But perhaps you are afraid he will not visit you because you have a fear upon you which you cannot shake off. So had the disciples, or they would not have closed the doors so carefully. They feared the Jewish mob, which might try to slay them as they had done their Lord; and though you may be fearing the troubles of the week before you, the Lord will not despise you for it. Perhaps some very heavy cloud hangs over your spirit now. Well, your Lord can pierce through clouds. Does not the sun look forth from the heavens though the morning be lowering and dreary? Shines he not even though the fogs and mists gather about our city? And Jesus comes though sins encompass us, and doubts and fears and cares hang thick about cur path. He comes as the dew which waiteth not for man neither tarrieth for the sons of men. I see no reason why now, at this very instant, we may not hear the voice of our Beloved. Blessed Lord, we beseech thee to come, for come thou canst as well we know. At favoured times I have felt as though his very shadow were over me, as though the touch of his right hand were upon me, and I heard him say unto me, “Fear not, I am he that liveth and was dead.” And why not again? Why not now? There are many auguries which make us hope that we shall this morning behold him. Let us look up, and with one hearty cry say, “Come, Saviour, and reveal thyself to us now as thou dost not unto the world.”

     II. Secondly, OUR SAVIOUR HAD A PECULIAR MANNER WHEN HE WAS COME, and so, if he be here this morning, we may expect him to be here in something like the following fashion.

     He stood in the midst of them. He stood, suddenly stood; where they had seen no one the moment before he stood plainly revealed. He did not flash across the room like a meteor, but he remained in one position as though he meant to tarry for a while. He stood in the midst, he took the place which a teacher should occupy, the position which naturally belongs to the Master, and Lord. I rejoice to think of my Lord Jesus as taking the midst of the circle when he visits his brethren. I love the name of Calvin, but I always regard him as sitting on one side of the room; and I love the name of Wesley, but I regard him as occupying another side place in the assembly. There are many preachers in the church, but not one of them is in the midst of the family circle of the redeemed. The Lord alone is there, the centre of all hearts. Others are present, and they shine with differing lights, but he is the sun, the centre and ruler of the system of his church. This morning, in addressing you, I stand in body in your midst, but no doubt my preaching does not consort with the experiences and feelings of all present, I must stand on one side; but if my Lord will reveal himself to you I am sure we will all give him the chief place, he will be the centre of all our loves and delights. I would not yield precedence to you, brethren, in my desire to honour my Lord, as the chief beloved of my soul, and I feel sure that whatever your condition you all agree to magnify him, and are all glad to look in the same direction, namely, to him alone. Though your views may sometimes differ, yet your views about Jesus are the same, and your hearts’ best affections all unite in him. Well, then, if he is here this morning we shall all feel that we find a common meeting-place in him, that our confidence is in him, our consecration is to him, we belong to him, and he belongs to us, and we are happiest among the happy because he gathers us all around his loving heart.

     When he stands in the midst the next thing we find is that he speaks, and his word is, “Peace be unto you.” The presence of Christ this morning will be signalised by the bestowal of a deep sense of peace. You will not be able to tell one another why you feel such profound quiet, but it will vividly come before you that Jesus loved you from before the foundations of the world, that your names are engraven upon his hands that he has bought you with his precious blood, that you are near and dear to him, and that where he is there you shall be also, and your souls will feel as if they were more than content. Your experience will be that of the psalmist when he said, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” It is a glad hour when we want nothing more, but are filled with all the fulness of God; when we can heartily say, “Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire beside thee.” Cares are gone, delight is come, longings are satisfied, and desires fall asleep on his bosom, when Jesus is present. No sound of war is in the camp, nor voice of them that mourn, the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

     After observing that our Lord spake we next find that he showed— showed himself to his disciples. Jesus did not come into their midst to show them a new thought, a philosophic discovery, or even a deep doctrine, or a profound mystery, or indeed anything but himself. He was a sacred egoist that day, for what he spake of was himself, and what he revealed was himself. What a sight was that for the disciples! They saw the very Christ. They had seen him for three years before, but not as one who had been dead and passed through the sepulchre; but now he stood before them, as the first-begotten from the dead. The most conspicuous thing he showed in himself was his wounds — his hands, his feet, his side. Oh, if my Lord be present here this morning, the chief object; of faith’s vision will be himself; and the most conspicuous point in himself will be the ensigns of his passion. The mind cannot contemplate a more blessed object than the wounds of Jesus— founts of redemption, doors of eternal life, sources of hope, seals of heaven. Look, ye saints, even now to your crucified Saviour! As far as he enables you, come close to him, and put your finger into the nail-prints, and say, “My Lord and my God.” Those sacred scars of his are the sure tokens of sin forgiven, punishment borne by the Substitute, and the soul for ever emancipated from her slavery. This is what Jesus does when he comes to us in spirit; he makes himself more dear than ever by fuller and more condescending discoveries of his love, so that we know and believe the love which he hath towards us.

     In so doing our Lord opens up the Scriptures. He did so to the eleven. Jesus Christ’s presence is always known by his people by the value and the beauty which they are led to attach to the Scripture at such times. The Bible is one book in the dark and another book in the light. Do you not sometimes take up the Scripture, and as you read it feel that it is like reading any other book, only that it involves a responsibility which another book does not bring upon you. At such seasons you get no sweetness out of it, but rather bitterness. But when Jesus takes the book, he looses the seven seals thereof and with his finger lights up every line, and bids you look, if you will, through the hole in his hand and read the promises in that fashion. Ah, how they glow and glisten! Then the Book talks with you, and you detect the voice to be that of the Beloved himself. There is life in the Word because Christ is there who is the way, the truth, and the life, and is himself the eternal Logos, the true word of God. Yes, Jesus Christ’s presence never teaches a man to despise Scripture and look to inner light, or personal revelation, for much of supposed special revelation is the child of superstition and conceit, whereas in the Scriptures we have a more sure word of testimony. The more light a man has directly from the Spirit the more he prizes the light of the Spirit in the Word, and the more truly he gets into communion with the unseen Christ the more does he delight in the truth as revealed to him in the pages of inspiration. May we know Christ’s presence by that sign and token this morning!

     Dear friends, the Lord’s presence among his followers that day had this peculiarity about it again, that then they forgot all their fears. As he had given them peace with God, so now he puts aside the fear of the Jews and every other fear which had distressed them. They had been affrighted at first, they thought he was a spirit; but now as they gathered about him and saw him eat with them they gathered around him as sheep around a shepherd, and they felt at home. I am sure as they went to their houses they had no fears of Jews as they passed through the midnight streets, and when they reached their doors they felt joyous and light of heart. Whatever their pecuniary circumstances may have been, they had no longer any care, for they had seen the Lord. Jesus Christ’s presence will be known to you this day by the forgetting of your cares. There is a text in Solomon where he says, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” The love of Jesus is that blessed strong drink; presence is the wine whereof if a man will drink he shall forget his misery and shall remember his sorrow no more. If Jesus Christ do but give to the man of downcast spirit the spiced wine of his pomegranate by making him to feel that he is near him, and that he loves him, if he does but make him conscious that the Redeemer’s self is no fiction, but a very present friend and helper, then whatever the trial may be, he shall bear it readily, the cross shall cease to be a load, and the road beneath his pilgrim foot shall become smooth.

     Brethren, we cannot enjoy as yet the presence of Christ corporeally, but I have already shown you that all the blessings which his bodily presence could bestow we can realise if our Lord after the same fashion shall be present with us spiritually to-day.

     III. Now thirdly, THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST WITH HIS DISCIPLES EXCITED VARIOUS EMOTIONS. These emotions may be excited by his spiritual presence quite as readily.

     At first they were terrified, for they thought him a spirit. It is a sad sign of man’s depraved nature and of his gross carnality that the presence of a spirit is the source of alarm to him. If we were more spiritual than we are we should not fear to meet beings of our own order, but should delight to think of the presence of disembodied spirits, and should be glad enough to commune with them. Because the disciples were unspiritual they were alarmed, and when the alarm a little ceased Jesus said to them, “Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?” I suppose they began to think of their ill conduct to their Master, and conscience made them tremble. We are told by Mark that he also upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart; in gentle tones he chided them for having been so unbelieving, and they must have felt this also to be a source of troubled thoughts. Meanwhile they doubted whether it could be the risen Saviour, and when they were convinced by indisputable signs, they greatly rejoiced, and almost at the same time the very vividness of their joy blinded them into another doubt. Like a pendulum, they swung from joy to unbelief. After doubt went they rejoiced, and then wonder came, and then doubt again, so that they scarce knew where they were, they were in such a state of excitement. John, if you notice, gives a very calm account of it all, for he looked at it rather from Christ’s point of view than from the disciples’, and having had his head so lately in Christ’s bosom, he was, perhaps, more believing than the rest. Luke’s picture of it shows us the contending emotions at work in the breasts of the assembled brethren, for Luke was a physician, and accustomed to watch symptoms and phases of feeling; he looked at it from the human side, and hence he gives us a fuller description of the tossing to and fro, the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, questions, and comforts of the hour.

     Well, we will leave the eleven and come to ourselves. Suppose for a moment that our Lord were actually to appear among us this morning will not say I wish he would, because we know him no more after the flesh, and there is no blessing which his corporeal presence could bestow but what we have already in his spiritual presence; but if he were to come, my brethren, what would be our state of mind towards him? I hope we should not be terrified. I think the most of us who believe in him would be more likely to be overjoyed than at all affrighted, but I am sure we should all be filled with the profoundest awe. The sight of HIM, our Master and Lord! Should we not, like John in Patmos, fall at his feet as dead? Would not the bliss of that vision be too great for these frail bodies? At any rate, we would devoutly bow the knee before him, and reverently adore. And oh what adoration would we give to the Lamb that once was slain! To that dear and ever blessed Son of God who has washed us from our sins in his own blood. Brethren, we would turn this Tabernacle into a temple, and this hallowed hour into a fragment of heaven’s eternity. If our Lord would but come here and show himself among us what overflowing love should he have from us! How would our hearts melt while he spake! Brethren, he is here! Let us give that loving adoration to him even now. Let us bow before him, and with prostrate reverence of heart worship the Divine Son. Why should it not be so? Brethren, may the Holy Spirit lead you into the depths of devotion now.

     I have no doubt we should feel a marvellous degree of serene joy to think that at length we were with our Lord. When we went home and told our friends who were not here we would say to them, “We have had some sweet Sundays, but we have never before had such a Lord’s day as this, for he who is Alpha and Omega walked among us and spake with us. We forgot the preacher, — he went back to his seat and held his head in delight: we thought no more about him, for his Lord absorbed our attention. The joy we had in seeing Jesus was worth dying for.” Well, dear friends, we shall not have our Lord’s crucified body here so as to feel peace from the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears, but he is here really, and all the facts which cluster around his presence which would be legitimate reasons for peaceful joy we have already, for he has died and redeemed us, and he has gone into his glory, and he is pleading for us, and he is coming again to take us home to himself, and these are the fundamental reasons for peace. We have all the real cause of joy that we should have if the man of Nazareth did stand in our midst; therefore let us be calmly glad, and wholly at rest this morning. God help us to be so!

     Surely, also, many would be melted down with deep contrition in our Redeemer’s presence. Some of us would have to say, “Lord and Master, art thou come to ask an account of our stewardship? We are ashamed to look thee in the face, we have done so little for thee.” There is one who might say, “I have been a member of a church for years, but I have neither helped in the school, preached in the villages, visited the sick, nor rendered any service whatever. I have eaten the fat and drank the sweet in the house of the Lord, and that is all that I have done.” Brethren, here, before the spiritually present Lord you may make the same confessions and be humbled on account of them. I wish you would. Though Jesus is not here with that dear face to chide you tenderly, yet he is here by his blessed Spirit gently to remind you of your forgotten obligations. By his wounds, and by his bloody sweat, I do entreat you be loiterers no longer, but go work in his vineyard, and cease not till life’s sun goes down.

     “Ah,” saith one, “but if our Lord were here, I would tell him my great trouble, and ask for his sympathy and help. I would come to his feet and beseech him to save my husband and to convert my ungodly son.” Do it, sister, do it now, for he will hear you as assuredly as if we heard his footfall in these aisles. His Spirit, who has put the desire into your soul, is the pledge of his presence. Breathe the prayer and expect the blessing, and your expectation shall not fail.

     I hear another believer cry out, “Ah, if my Lord were here before me, I would pour out my glad soul in praise, and tell him how I love him. I would kiss his feet, and wash them with my tears.” Do it now, my friend, for though you have not the flesh and blood Christ present, yet Jesus in spirit is here, and though his body be up in glory, yet your tears and thankfulness will reach him, and be as acceptable to him as if he were here in body. Even now his heart will accept the emotions of your soul, let them flow out before him as perfume from the flowers.

     “Ah,” saith one, “if I did but see the Lord I should leave this morning’s assembly, feeling that I could now lead a higher life than ever I had led before. I could not look at him without saying, ‘Thou altogether lovely one, I pledge myself to thee, for thee to live, for thee to die, and all I have and all I am shall be thine for ever.’” Beloved, do it unrestrainedly and unfeignedly even now; do it now, I say, for he will just as well accept you looking out from the glory land above as though he looked down upon you from this platform.

     I wonder what the scene would be with some hypocrites who are present here if Christ were to come Ah, how they would wish they had never made a profession of religion. Oh Judas, Judas, how would you bear to see the risen glory of him whom you betrayed? Are you here this morning, Judas? And you, vacillating Pilate, who knew the right but did the wrong, how will you meet the man in whom you found no fault but yet condemned to die? There may be many here who have despised him, who have reviled his people and ridiculed his gospel, albeit that Jesus shed his blood for the sons of men. Well, although Jesus be not here in body, yet will he soon come in person to judge the quick and dead; and if you dare not meet him now, how will you meet him then? Thus saith the Lord, prepare ye for his advent, for behold he cometh to judge mankind, and woe unto those who shall be found wanting in the day of his appearing.

     IV. The last thing of all is this, Jesus Christ, when he came among his disciples, LEFT CERTAIN PERMANENT GIFTS, which also can be realised by his spiritual presence. One of the most precious gifts he left among them was the realization of his person. Those who saw him that day never thought of him henceforth as a mere historical personage, or a dream, or a phantom. You have read a great many histories, but you have never realised the persons of history as you have realised your own father and mother and son, but the disciples must have realised Christ, for they saw him, and some of them touched him and put their finger into the print of the nails. Now, it is very desirable that we should all of us realise the actualness of Jesus Christ as God and man, and we can do it this morning if he will come and overshadow us with his presence. There be some of us to whom Christ has been a world more real than ourselves, for we have sometimes scarce known whether we were in the body or out of the body, when he has been near, but we have always known whether he was in the body or out of the body. We have felt as if wife and father and mother were shadows that would pass away, but we have realised the eternal existence of Christ, and known that he could not pass away; and so spiritually we have grasped him more firmly than we have our own kith and kin. The most real thing under heaven to my soul is the Lord Jesus Christ. Brethren, can you all say that? If you can, then Christ has been present with you this morning. I do not say that I can use this language always. Alas, alas, when my Lord has gone it is not so with me! But when I know he is near, there is no force that doth so completely constrain me, no impulse that doth so utterly hold me spell-bound as the impulse that arises from his presence, and the constraint that flows out of his love shed abroad in my soul. Every child of God knows it is so, and thus it is clear that without seeing Christ with the eyes you can obtain the boon of realising him.

     Next he gave to them all a commission; he said, “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” He has never laid his hand on your shoulder, my brother, and said, “Go and tell the gospel to poor sinners”; he has never touched you, my sister, and said, “Woman, I have sent thee to bring thy companions to me, go and tell them of my love!” No, but he has virtually done it by the commission which he gave to all his disciples, and he does it powerfully and specially by his Spirit to many of us whenever we realise his presence. We cannot sit down at the feet of Christ without feeling that we must work for him. I defy any man to live near Christ and to be lazy. Our Lord walks a smart pace, and if you will keep company with him you must go his rate; but if you loiter and linger and waste time Christ will be on ahead, and leave you to yourself. I pray him commission some of you this morning. I tried last Sunday morning to call out young heroes for Christ; I do not know whether the Lord did call them out by me or not, but I would that Jesus would do it. If to-day he should appear, the Crucified One, with face more marred than that of any man, with pierced hands, with side opened by the deep gash, — if he should speak personally to each of you, and say, “My son, my daughter, go and serve me from this day till I come,” with what energy would you go forth to his service, even if it were to the ends of the earth.

     The last gift he gave them was, he breathed on them. His breath was the Spirit of God. This was the first drop of the shower of the Spirit which afterwards fell so plenteously at Pentecost. He breathed on them, and though they did not get the fulness of the Spirit thereby yet they obtained a measure of it, and they became qualified to fulfil their commission. Oh that he would breathe the Spirit upon us now! Nay, we need not ask for it, beloved, for our Lord has given the Spirit once for all to all his people. He has baptised his church into the Holy Ghost, and into fire, and the Spirit remaineth with us evermore, only ye must believe the might which that Spirit bestows upon you. Oh brother, oh sister, I beseech thee do not estimate thyself according to thine ability, according to thine experience, thy learning, and the like, but according to that divine energy which rests upon thee, if thou be called of God to service. What are the powers within? they are feebleness itself, but the power from above is the power of God. Gird on this mystic belt, this divine omnipotence, and if thou knowest how to wear it by faith thou shalt break through a troop and leap over a wall. “All things are possible to him that believeth.” May Jesus Christ, then, by his Spirit be so here among us that each one of us may be conscious of obtaining a fresh anointing this very morning, in the strength of which we shall go forth to new service for the glory of God. May God bless you for Jesus’ sake.