

Latin Link

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Preacher: Charles Douglas

[0 : 00] Thank you for having us this morning. It was really meant to be Mike Fernandez, but some of you might have heard that his wee boy, just a few months old, was taken seriously into hospital. He couldn't manage to come. He asked me, I'm actually part of the Action Group of Latin Link. I'm also a trustee of Latin Link. We're visiting the family anyway, up in Thompson, in Great Verna. It would seem to be providential. I'd like to continue the reading in John chapter 20 where we left off at verse 19. The narrative as Phil was saying about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and how he lives. That's a message in itself, something that came to me many years ago that Jesus is alive. So verse 19, on the evening that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, peace be with you. When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then his disciples were glad when he saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, peace be with you, as the Father has sent me even so I'm sending you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven. If you withhold forgiveness for anyone, it is withheld. Now Thomas, one of the 12, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, you have seen the Lord.

And he said to them, unless I see his hands and the mark of his nails and the place by finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, his disciples were in sight again and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, peace be with you. Then he said to Thomas, put your finger here and see my hands and put your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe. Thomas answered him, my Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, have you believed because you have seen me, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book, but they are written 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.

I am fortunate for a short time to the meditation and the presentation, what a disabowing prayer. Lord, we thank you for your word to us. We thank you for yet another reminder of the living Christ and his promise to be with us as we heard earlier in that other reading in Matthew. Oh, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. We thank you in his presence as with us here in this church this morning and for the talk we heard once, the children about all nations worshipping you, the start of ways of Australia and Brazil, all these different nations worshipping you. We thank you Lord that your gospel is spread worldwide. We pray Lord that you be with us now as we open up your word and as we take in some of the news from Latin link. Hear our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

I would like to emphasise first of all in John chapter 20 verse 21 where Jesus comes to his disciples for the first time and then he, as we read appears a week later, but verse 21 he first says peace be with you as the Father who sent me even so I am sending you.

[4 : 20] Now the disciples as you know needed this peace because they were upset, they had fled Christ, they were shut up in a door, hidden away, frightened probably about what was going to happen to them.

They certainly needed this peace and that was his greeting. Although it was a common greeting at that time, I think it was more than that on this occasion, there was more to it than just a common greeting of shalom as they would say in that part of the world, peace.

And so when Jesus said this peace it helped the disciples, he wanted to give them peace. And that's one of the first things I wanted to remind ourselves. We become peaceful once we come to know Christ because he fills our life, he satisfies our deep desires.

So he gave the disciples this peace. Has he given you this peace? The peace beyond understanding the peace that gives us access to the Father. So the risen Christ gave them peace. But still today because he's alive he's still the one that gives us peace in our own lives through his word and as we come to know him a great peace. Even through times we pass through troubles there's a peace knowing that Christ is with us. But not only in this passage in John 20 is he these well-known words as the Father has sent me so I'm sending you.

[5 : 57] The first time he says it interestingly enough is in his prayer in John 17, that high priestly prayer which is so well known to us. He repeats it. Well he first of all says it there in John 17 verse 18 again he says in that prayer as you sent me into the world so I sent them into the world. So Jesus in that prayer saying I don't want to use disciples as Christians to remain in your ivory towers. In fact verse 15 my prayer is not that you take them out of the world but you protect them from the evil one. So as people who have come to know this peace he's saying to us I'm sending you just as Jesus has sent me. It's interesting one of the things in a passage in John 17 he says the way that this was going to be achieved this sending out was through his word. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth. So the way to communicate peace to people is to bring them to the gospel because that's the word that will sanctify them. Before saying that he sent them he plays that they would become holy. That's very important. We can't come and tell others about how Christ can change them if we don't know how Christ has changed us first. We need to become holy. We are called saints because he has made us holy not because we've done good things but he has made us holy through as we read his death and resurrection. He has made us holy. Having been made holy he then says to them I think I am sending you into the world in that prayer. So we know that that prayer of John 17 Jesus is focusing on the glory isn't he. If you remember that well known prayer he is focusing the glory he had with the Father right from the beginning and he left that glory to be with us. That's why he was called Jesus and he said she will have a son and you will name him Jesus for he will save his people from their sins. So he left the glory and that's what he was called Jesus because he came into the world he was sent into the world to save his people from their sins. That was prophesied way back in

Isaiah as you know. Isaiah 7 verse 14 we hold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel as we know that means God with us. As Philip died earlier that's how the great commission ends and though I am with you always. Jesus is still promising his presence with us. He is Emmanuel he is God with us at all times giving us this peace even though at times we have to pass through the valley of death even. So this was Jesus's mission he was sent into the world and his name is a clue because he will save people from their sins. Jesus himself what was he sent to do yet he came as I said in his name he came to save his people from their sins. But you see in Matthew 4 verse 17 one of the things Jesus did when he was in this world. As he went around preaching his preaching was repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He was proclaiming that word proclaiming is a announcing for public declaration so that everyone could hear a heralding it's like nowadays here at Open Heirs. So that's a birdie. So what we'd hear about is risen

Jesus and come to repent of their sins. And that was Jesus's first of all he was sent to do. Making this public proclamation that people were to repent of their sins. And Jesus is saying in John 20 verse 21 that we are sent to do the same. That's one of the things that he sends us to do. To ask people to repent from their sins and come to a knowledge of Christ. The risen Christ so that they can come to know him as their saviour and have that knowledge that he promises to give his people. In John 1 verse John we read that this is real love. Not that we love God but he loved us and sent his son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. So that was Jesus being sent. And if you read on into Acts as apostles.

2 verse 38 they obeyed. Peter as one of his sermons there as he was preaching this is what he said to them. Repent and be baptized as one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.

For the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. So the disciples obeyed that mission to go out and do what Christ had been sent to do. To announce the repentance of their sins to people. Public profess it. Nowadays when we baptize children they come into the covenant but at a certain stage they publicly profess their faith when they come to communion. And that's similar to asking people not only to repent but to probably proclaim that they know this peace for themselves. So they come forward to communion that's what you're declaring. I know the peace of Christ and you're proclaiming Christ.

[12:00] That you've been forgiven for your sins and that you've received the gift of the Holy Spirit. So interesting. I need to pass on to the second point there. But that wasn't all I believe that Jesus was sent to do. I think there was a dual mission in Jesus. And the second thing was that he was sent to do good. For example Luke 7 verse 20. John's two disciples found Jesus and said to him John the Baptist sent us to ask are you the Messiah? Are you the one who is to come? Or shall we look for another? And that hour he healed many people of diseases and evil spirits. And the many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them go and tell John what he has seen and heard. So as you look at Jesus' mission it wasn't a mission just asking people to repent of their sins. But there he was saying well tell John what my practical work was involved. I had compassion in people. For example the feeding of the sick was a compassion towards these people. These verses are quotes from two different parts of Isaiah. And they were pointing towards a Messiah. The significance of the Messiah was that he would come to make people whole. That word whole is an interesting word. He wasn't just bringing them into a spiritual relationship but he was also interested in bringing them from their sickness. And often in the scriptures you'll find that word whole.

Meaning that Christ was tackling not only bringing their illnesses but also dealing with their spiritual side. That's what that word, one more whole means. But also interesting if you study Jesus' mission. There's many instances that you could be reading the New Testament where Jesus went about healing many. And it doesn't say anything about in these passages about bringing them to faith. Perhaps there was but there's nothing there in the text. And that sometimes was a mission for Christ in itself. Just helping people, having compassion in people. So what I would like you to think about is as Jesus says in that 21 here that he says to the disciples, as the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you, it's the dual function of mission that's important. And that's what that link's involved in. It's an integral mission. Believing that sharing the gospel means addressing both practical and spiritual needs. So it's a kind of shorter message this morning because I want to give some time to show the Latin link what they do in connection with this mission.

Phil gives some illustrations at the beginning. Well I felt at home in Lewis recently because I don't know how long ago it was a couple of years ago. Our son and his wife and the family, they took us to see alpacas. Now I don't know if the children are listening, alpacas come from a different country. They come from a country you don't have a flag for, I'm most disappointed. They come from a country. Now I don't know if you can really hear about it especially. It's a yama I think, not an alpaca, because I used to work in Peru many years ago. I think there's somebody here, also a couple here who works out in Peru as well. And that's how I got interested in Latin link. I had come home from Peru many, many years ago. And so can we pass on to the presentation now? That's okay. You probably can read these things for yourselves. So I'm not going to say much at this point. So if you don't mind, I can't read that. But it's just telling you about Latin link and the work it does. I hope you can see some of that print. It's just saying how many different countries they're working in. The work are mainly a lot of Latin link countries, Peru, for example, Bolivia, Argentina, Colombia and so on. Various countries and also Central America, some of the countries up there, Guatemala and Costa Rica. We won't go through them all.

And that's just telling you there about the vastness of the work that they do. Thanks. And they have this vision, I'm walking right here as well. I hope you can read these slides.

[17:36] They're a bit demanding from here. So our vision is to see a viable leaving Christian communities in every part of Latin America impacting their neighbours, their societies and their wider world. That's our vision. And the mission, Latin link works in partnership with churches. So people that go out, those fellows explaining, we encourage young people to go out on mission field. And you'll hear in a minute about the different programs, but the work in partnership, when young folk go out there, and not so young, when they go out there to work, they work alongside churches and the different communities, helping in different areas, street children, training church leaders and so on. So that's something that's the vision and mission. So there's three different programs that Latin link offer.

And at the end, you'll see a couple of things on the table. This is our most recent Latin file. And these were the step programs this is coming in 2022, Guatemala and Argentina.

So if you want to pick up one of them if you're interested, or just if you want to pray, there's also a prayer calendar for all the missionaries who work in Latin link. And so the step program there is for three weeks to three months, you go out. I don't know if any of you know Colin Dow, who's a minister of Glasgow City, I think it used to be called St Vincent Street. Well, his daughter recently

went to Argentina, and you'll see us side of her going. And it's encouraged, it's great to have a cross-cultural experience in the Lord's work. It really opens your eyes to how different people worship, how different people come to the Lord. It's really encouraging not only to pray about these different countries in Latin America, but to consider prayerfully perhaps the challenge of going on one of these step programs where you have an opportunity to live and work alongside Latin Americans. A lot of the step teams stay together, the Ruvian families, they might stay together. It's a great opportunity, especially if you're thinking of studying Spanish, to go over and help in some projects that they give. As I said in the short meditation, there's an integral approach of their mission, Latin link, has this integral approach, sharing the gospel and also addressing practical and also the spiritual needs. So that's the step program. People go over for three weeks, up to three months. And then the next slide is the stride program. This is for folk who really enjoy being there, or sometimes they just decide at it, I don't want to go for three weeks or three months, I want to go for longer. So stride, as you can guess from its name, is a bit longer. They can spend time longer getting involved from six to 24 months to go over.

As we heard from the children, not only Spanish, but Portuguese in Brazil, and they can go over to these various countries and get involved in various work, as you'll hear shortly. I do have a list of all the countries, but I won't go through all that list. I've already named a few of the countries. So it encourages, from all the experience, it encourages you to interact with a different culture, which I still treasure, and it's certainly opened up my eyes to worship and to communicating. And we still miss it, even all these years that have passed, it's still very much part of our lives. And if you're really keen on the next slide, you can stay. Now some of you might have heard the name of Manuel and Patti at the annual, and you'll see that they're slides shortly, I think. They went over for a stay. And of course that's a longer period for a few years. You can go and people who feel called to that kind of work for longer term. We were there for eight years. Some people were longer than eight years, especially the first missionaries that went over to

Peru and other places. But nowadays it seems to be a lot more short term, and the stay encourages people to stay and do the mission work for longer. So maybe we just move on to the next slide.

Thank you. And here's a wee video presentation who somebody did for us.

[23 : 43] I'm going to start with a little community, a church community with women and children even though they're in Spanish, some of you have actually enjoyed the big connections from other people. One of the biggest events that we've ever had was just about looking at the church, and the people who were really passionate about it. I'll give you one on the day it's been long ago. I'll give you a little bit about that.

So I'd like to introduce you guys to my best friend. He doesn't like me today.

I think it's a good experience to have him and as well as to see how it all started with him.

I hope you noticed that last slide there, applying today. And just some information there. I'm not sure if I can read that from here. Maybe just the next slide please. I mentioned earlier Manuel and the party of the annual. Many of you know that they were supported by the Free Church for many years in Colombia. The most recent ministry of Manuel was training and pastors. There was a lot of, I don't like to say trouble, especially with COVID and terrorism and other things. There was a lot of anxiety because of these different problems. Manuel goes around helping these different ministers and those leaders in these difficult situations and gives them help and parties involved as well in different work. And due to the changing of missions, they are now supported not directly from the Free Church but from people who want to help them. So their finance changed a couple of years ago. If I remember rightly, Manuel is a Free Church minister serving Colombia but is dependent on people supporting him.

So if I can give a special request to remember them both prayerfully and practically. The best way to do this is to commit to a direct debit. Quite a few folks send donations, one of donations, which is great and encouraging. But it's more helpful for people to know that they have cut on going commitment. So do pray about that to see how you can help Manuel and Patty in their continuing work. They haven't been over to Scotland obviously for COVID reasons and for other reasons. But hopefully we'll see them in the not too distant future. So I'll leave that with you about Patty and Manuel on their stay. Although I'm scared if any years have been there, I'm looking at my life. But quite a long time now. So Manuel is actually from Peru and Patty is from Colombia. So I think a good bit of special mention to that person who are working with Latinlink, or Latinlink supported prayerfully. We're also supported by their sending church. Everyone who goes on a stay mission

has to have a sending church. And their church is the Clou in Edinburgh. That's their main church that support them.

[29 : 08] Patty is a therapist and works with Link, Christian Family Counseling Centre. So I'll give that a wee special mention for you to remember them in the prayers and the stressful part that they're involved in. So that gets... If you just move on from that one and we'll play this video. This was a guy called Andrew Wilson.

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