

Peace Be With You

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[0 : 0 0] But as we seek the Lord's help can we turn back in our Bibles to the passage that we read together in the Gospel according to John, John chapter 20 and we're going to look again, we're going to read again from verse 19, just a few verses from verse 19.

On the evening of that 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 had said this he showed them his hands and his sight and the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. Peace be with you. Peace be with you.

Wonder if you long for peace in your own life today. It is something I think that eludes many, many people. No matter what else they gain in life they just wish that they could have some peace. The stressed mother of a young family might resort to locking herself in a room maybe even in the toilet just to get a few moments of peace. The businessman or woman just longs to escape to the back of beyond to get away from phone calls and emails and texts and messages and people and yet sometimes when we when we get into that place where we expect it to find peace it's often not quite what we hoped for and that is because very often the unrest is within us. The unrest is in our hearts. Human beings long for peace and yet are almost inevitably at war. There's armed conflict all over the globe. There are murders, killings, assaults all over our nation and there may even be trouble in your own home or unrest in your own family. So where can you go today to find peace? Well here in this passage that we read we have the one who grants peace to his followers and he does so when at a time when they are in great turmoil they've locked themselves in this house for fear of their lives.

Their great leader Jesus has been crucified and they probably expect that they're coming for them next. We're told in verse 19 that the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews. It's doors plural. We don't know how many doors they had locked but that clearly shows us that these followers were terrified. Now what they feared, what they were coming for them next, what they feared wasn't going to happen and yet how often are we paralysed by fears about things that are never going to happen and when these disciples were most afraid Jesus showed up. He literally showed up. He appeared in their midst even though the doors were locked. Locked doors weren't a problem for him and he immediately addresses their situation. He knows exactly what's going on with them and he addresses their fears and their lack of peace and he says to them, first words he says peace be with you and then moments later just in case they missed it he repeats the same words again. You know sometimes God will ensure that you hear something twice just so you're left in no doubt that that's his word for you and here twice in quick succession as if to reinforce what he's saying he speaks these words peace be with you. I wonder if that's maybe something you need to hear today. Is there a lack of peace in your life? Is there unrest? Is there unease?

Is there some fear? Are there unsettling experiences? Was there something that that kept you awake last night because you just can't switch off? You know sometimes our lives resemble the ocean. It's restless and even when the ocean when the sea is calm on the surface it can be a restlessness going on underneath as well. A constant stirring. Well today I want to consider not just the possibility of peace but the reality of peace because that's what Jesus not only offers but that's what Jesus gives. Jesus is not just another doctor who will make a suggestion why don't you try this and see how it goes.

[5 : 27] When he speaks the word he transforms our situation. When he says to them peace be with you everything changes everything we read there verse 21 verse 20 actually the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. The word the actual word means they were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. His presence with them dispelled their fears and filled them with peace. So I want to look at this peace today and consider it for a while with you. Five headings. First of all the prince of peace. Secondly we'll look at the price of peace. Thirdly the proof of peace. Fourthly the path to peace and fifthly the pursuit of peace. These will be our headings. The prince, the price, the proof and the path and the pursuit of peace. So let's look at the first of these the prince of peace. If you go back to the beginning of time ever since Adam and Eve first sinned. Human beings have struggled with a lack of peace in their lives. The Garden of Eden was a place of perfect peace but when Satan came in and Adam and Eve succumbed to his temptations that all went out the window. They lost that peace. That peace was replaced by a myriad of negative emotions. There was fear. They were afraid of God. There was shame. They were ashamed of their nakedness. They were guilty.

That rubbed them off peace. They were trying to hide from God in the Garden. Guilt. And I suspect there was a lot of guilt in this room with these disciples that evening because they had deserted Jesus when he needed the most. They did a run-up when Jesus was under threat and there would be guilt then. And maybe there's a sense of guilt in your own life today. Maybe your sin is bothering you.

Maybe up until now it never really you never really thought about it. You just got on with living your life. Maybe you hurt some people along the way. Now that's coming back to bother you and maybe not so much the fact that you hurt people but that you've realized that your sin is ultimately against God. Our sin offends God. And when we realize that, that guilt can be crippling. And you know a long long time ago the Bible gave the remedy for that guilt. I say a 3000 years ago he said this. He said the people walking in darkness have seen a great light. For unto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given. He will be called wonderful counselor mighty God everlasting father prince of peace. That will be his name I say. I said prince of peace. And do you remember how the angels announced his arrival into this world the birth of Jesus? They said glory to

God in the highest and on earth. Peace. Peace to men on whom his favor rests. Now it's worth noting that statement. Peace to those on whom his favor rests.

His birth didn't mean peace for everyone. There will never be universal peace. When Jesus makes it possible for individuals to have peace with him. To have peace in their hearts. He makes it possible for us to have peace even when we're surrounded by conflict and trouble and trial and fearful situations. You may have heard the story of a teacher who asked her pupils to draw a picture of peace. And they all drew. Most of them drew the things you might expect them to draw. One drew a picture of a sunset. The other another drew a picture of a beach. Somebody else drew a picture of some secluded mountains. This little boy drew a picture of a boat in the middle of a stormy sea. And this teacher was intrigued. And so she asked him about it. She said how is this a picture of peace? And he pointed to a little dot in the boat and he said that's me and I'm a sleep. He was asleep surrounded by a storm. You know the peace that Jesus can give us. Can enable us to be at peace even when we're surrounded by the greatest of storms. Because this peace comes not from the absence of trouble. It comes from the presence of God. Okay. Not the absence of trouble. But from the presence of

[10 : 55] God. Jesus had promised peace to these disciples before he was crucified. In John chapter 14 in the upper room he said to them may peace I leave with you. May peace I give unto you. And now here he is honoring what he promised. Here he is giving them doing what he said he would do. Giving them peace. You know his pieces it's just different to what the world offers. The world offers just peace all the time. When you're tired you're worn out. You go to the travel agents and show you pictures after pictures of peaceful scenarios, peaceful situations, beautiful places. And you think yeah that's what I need. When you go there maybe some of you have been. You're back. And even when you were there there was no real peace. Now you're back home and nothing's changed. That's just a distant memory. Because what we need is not peace around us. We need peace within us. We need peace within us. I remember speaking to someone a few years ago who had decided, this person had decided that they were just going to walk away from everything. Leave family, leave a spouse, leave work, leave everything and go off, get a wee place in the back of you on their own just to have peace. And this person had made the plans of the arrangements in place. Everything ready to go. But someone challenged that person and said when you're all alone do you think you'll have peace? And the person had to admit that they probably wouldn't. Because the cause of their dis-peace was within themselves. It wasn't being caused by others around them. It was the problem was in here. The problem was in the heart.

Sometimes the things we try and run away from, we'd actually turn a run away from ourselves. Running away will never solve it. And trying to ignore it will not make it go away. We need to address it. We need to deal with it. The only one qualified to help you today is the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. The one whose birth was announced with the promise of peace to all on whom his favour rests. Who does his favour rest on? Rest on everyone who trusts him. Rest on everyone who follows him. Rest on every believer. You know the great theologian Augustine or Augustine if you prefer from third century, fourth century time. He was a great rebel in his youth. He pretty much experimented with every possible pleasure imaginable. And it did nothing for him. And he concluded later in life after he came to the Lord. He said my soul is restless until it finds its rest in you. I wonder if God is speaking to our restless soul here this morning.

Is your conscience restless today? If so you need this Prince of Peace. You need him to come into your heart. You need him to come into your soul. You need him to come into your life. Because when he comes in as he came in here he changes everything. He changes everything. So that's the first thing today the Prince of Peace.

Secondly though the price of peace more briefly. The price of peace. You know there's often a price to be paid for peace in this world. Sacrifices have to be made to achieve it. We see that in various war zones around the globe. And sometimes the price paid seems too high. Well the price for peace between us and God was supremely high. Supremely high. It meant that Jesus had to die. You see his death and his death alone would deal with the cause of our lack of peace. And the cause of our lack of peace is that we are alienated from God. There's a gulf between us and God. There's a blockage. We can never be friends with God because we're sinners and he's holy and these two just cannot come together. So how could that be fixed? How could that relationship be reconciled?

Well the Bible tells us that in Colossians chapter 1. It says God was pleased through him, through Jesus, to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through his blood shed on the cross. Making peace through his blood shed on the cross. That is the price of peace. The blood of Jesus Christ. And it was a high price. And yet it was a price that God was willing to pay. And Jesus was willing to go through for you. You know this too had been prophesied a long time before. A thousand years before Jesus came and Jesus died. Isaiah had told this is how it's gonna be. And in Isaiah 53 the prophet is so certain of what he's saying will happen that he writes it in past tense. It's a thousand years down the line but he writes it as if it's already happened. He says this.

[16 : 46] He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we're healed.

The punishment that brought us peace was on Jesus. Friends peace with God is not possible on the cheap. It cost Jesus his life. The home writer, Horatius Bonar, he said this. He said I hear the words of love. I gaze upon the blood. I see the mighty sacrifice and I have peace with God. I privileged you are today if you have peace with God but never ever underestimate or undervalue what it cost to save you. The apostle Paul said you are not your own. You are bought with a price. So that's the second thing today. The price of peace. We looked at the prince of peace, the price of peace. Thirdly the proof of peace. How do we know?

How do we know that the price paid was sufficient? Was enough for God's wrath against sin to be dealt with and for us to have peace with him? Well for these disciples here the proof was standing right there in front of them. The proof was that Jesus had risen from the dead. His resurrection was the evidence that God had accepted the payment for sin. The fact he was standing there was evidence that this alienation had been dealt with. God's anger had been removed. It had been exhausted. It had all been poured out on Jesus. The proof of peace was that Jesus was not where they expected him to be. It's in a tomb. But he was where they didn't expect him to be. He was standing there in front of them, showing them his love and his care for them. Some say was it really him? Was this really the risen Jesus? I mean in Luke's account we're told that they thought that they had seen a ghost. Now that's not surprising because let's remember the doors were locked. He just appeared in front of them through locked doors. It's not surprising that they thought that this may be an apparition. But this is what Jesus said to them in Luke 24. He said, why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your mind? Look at my hands and my feet. It is

I myself. Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have. Touch me and see. He sees the same thing here in verse 20. So after he had said peace be with you, verse 20, when he had said this he showed them his hands and his sight. There's a wonderful truth here that is worth noting and that is that Jesus never demands blind faith. He just asks us to believe the evidence.

Believe the evidence. He wasn't ignoring their concerns. He was saying this is me. You can touch me. Look at my wounds. Look at the nail prints. Look at the mark of the spear. And I said touch me if you want. See that this is really me. This was not a ghost. It's not a ghost. And in fact in Luke's account as well we're told that as a further evidence he told them he was hungry. He asked them for food and they gave him a piece of ball fish and he ate it in front of them. A ghost don't eat.

[20 : 51] Jesus was showing them clearly this is me. Physically risen from the dead. Now the resurrection body is intriguing. It's not time to go off on that tangent just now.

But the fact that he was there, he could be seen, he could be felt, he could be touched. He ate things and yet he had appeared through closed doors. He had walked in through locked doors. You know it's kind of hard to get your head round all of that. But I find it comforting that the Apostle Paul when he speaks of the resurrection body in 1 Corinthians 15 he begins his preamble he says I tell you a mystery. I tell you a mystery and I think well if the Apostle Paul found it mysterious then it shouldn't bother me too much that I can't get my head round it. But this is the real Jesus, the risen Jesus with a physical body risen from the dead and that is the proof that God accepted his sacrifice that God was satisfied with the price that was paid. They could now have peace and you too can't have peace. Maybe it's been elusive in your life up until now but it is possible. It's possible in and through Jesus

Christ. We need to move on. What are we saying? We've looked at the Prince of Peace, we've looked at the price of peace and the proof of peace. Fourthly the path to peace. How do you and I get peace in our lives? What route must we follow? What path must we take? Well this peace is available only through trusting in Jesus Christ. Romans 5 says this, therefore since we have been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And you know when you have this peace with God you have peace with yourself, you have peace with your circumstances. Sometimes when I talk to people about being forgiven, about the forgiveness that the Lord offers, they'll say to me but I couldn't forgive myself. I couldn't forgive myself because sometimes we carry a lot of guilt, sometimes we have shame about our past, about maybe even about our present. You know indeed Jesus deals with our sin, he deals with the past as well. He deals with all that shame, he takes it all away. Do you remember the sinful woman who came and anointed Jesus' feet? And people shook their heads that he would let a woman like that near him. A woman of the street, a woman who had a reputation. You remember what Jesus said to that woman, he said this to her, he said go in peace, your faith has saved you. Go in peace. The peace of a pardons prostitute, doesn't matter what shame, doesn't matter what's been in your past or even in your present.

Jesus can deal with all of that, doesn't matter what turmoil there is, whether it's in your heart or in your head or in your home. You can take it all away. Remember he addressed a raging storm on the Sea of Galilee? Raging storm, you've seen raging storms not that far away from here. You've seen the sea what it's like. And Jesus said three words, peace, be still. That raging ocean was calm. Well if he can calm an ocean, you think the problems in your life and the unrest in your heart will be too much for him? Absolutely not. You know the way he calms or he brings peace? The way he deals with things that we think could never be dealt with. We may have situations in our life you think, well I'm gonna live with this forever.

I'll never be rid of this guilt. Yet the peace that Jesus gives defies explanation. Isn't the apostle Paul, he said this, Philippians 4 verse 7, he said the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. He says it transcends understanding. You can't get your head around this peace. And yet it will calm, it will guard your heart and your mind in Christ.

[25 : 44] 1555, long time ago, Nicholas Ridley was martyred for his faith. He was put to death. He was burned at the stake for witnessing to Jesus Christ. And the night before his execution his brother was visiting him. His brother was obviously concerned about him and he offered to stay with him the whole night just so there would be somebody there to keep him company. And Nicholas Ridley said this, he said to his brother, no I don't want you to stay. He says I'm kind of tired and I need to sleep. Can you imagine going to sleep the night before you're executed? You know that's the peace that Nicholas Ridley had and that's the peace that Jesus Christ alone can give. The path to peace that is through faith in

Jesus Christ. To quote Isaiah again from chapter 26 he says you will keep in perfect peace the one whose mind is stayed on you. Perfect peace and the path to it is through Jesus Christ. But I've got one more thing, the pursuit of peace finally. Fifthly, do you want, do you want through lasting peace? Well if so you must pursue it. You've got to ask Jesus into your life. You need to do something about it. We're going to sing at the end from Psalm 34 which says this, desire to know the way of peace. Pursue it with your might. With your might. Don't just say if it's going to happen it's going to happen. Because what if it doesn't happen?

What if it doesn't happen? Then the worst situation of unrest and turmoil and fear that you've ever experienced in your life is nothing. Nothing compared to what awaits you after death. The Bible says to us ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened to you. Now these verbs ask seek knock then the original Greek in which they were written it means keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking and that itself suggests to us that this is something you must pursue. You must pursue it. You must make this a matter of great importance. There's a version Jeremiah that says this. It says you will find me when you search for me with all your heart. All your heart. This must be a priority to pursue peace. And if you're a Christian here today and if you've experienced that peace with God then you still need to pursue peace. Not with God but with each other, with one another. We should be pursuing peace. The Bible says blessed are the peacemakers for theirs is the kingdom for they shall be called the children of God. If you're a Christian today are you a peacemaker or are you a troublemaker? We should be those who pursue peace with one another. The Bible tells us that in no uncertain terms. Hebrews chapter 12 says make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy. For without holiness no one shall see the Lord. If you're a Christian today make every effort to pursue peace with one another. And if you're as yet unsaved you need to pursue peace with God with all your might. So what do we see? Well we've met today once more with the Prince of Peace, Jesus. We saw that he paid the price of peace. It wasn't cheap. He paid with his life. We looked at the proof of peace, the fact that God had raised him from the dead, showed that he had paid the penalty in full. We found that the path to peace was in and through Jesus Christ. And finally the pursuit of peace.

Do you really want it? You know Jesus met a man who was crippled and he said to him do you want to be healed? Do you want to be healed? We need to ask ourselves that question. Why am I here today? Do I really want to be healed? Well if you want this peace you need to pursue it. You need to pursue it. Will you do that today?

Desire to know the way of peace. Pursue it with your might. Let's bow our heads. Lord we thank you for this peace that we find so elusive is possible. We thank you Lord that you made it possible. We thank you that you so loved the world and you gave your son. That whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. May we pursue this peace with all our might today.

[31 : 30] For it is to be found in no one else and nowhere else but in Jesus alone. We ask he sings in his name. Amen.