

John 20:19-29 - Tom Grass

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Preacher: Tom Grass

[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known. This morning, we continue our study on the Gospel According to John.

I never start with jokes, but here we go, Mark. They're corny and they're bad, but here we go. If you knew Sean Collins, they were along those lines, all right.

Oh no, he says. I went to the doctor. He said, you're overweight. You've got to do something about it. I said, okay, doc, what do you want me to do? He says, I want you to run 10 miles a day and call me in a month.

Okay, doc. So I ran 10 miles each day for a month. I called the doctor. He said, how are you doing? I said, I'm fine, except I'm 300 miles from home. Went to the doctor. I said, doctor, I've got yellow teeth.

He said, wear a brown tie. I know they're bad. I'm sorry. Doctor, I think I have athlete's foot. He said, that's funny. They're attached to an old man.

[1:10] I'm glad you're laughing because I wasn't sure how this would go because I'm not a joke teller. I asked my kids. Doctor, I can't hold my water. I'm having problems holding my water.

He said, get off my new carpet. That's true, isn't it? And here's one of the three stooges used to say, doctor, doctor, I feel like a deck of cards.

He said, sit down. I'll deal with you later. I know it's bad. Really bad. But if you can imagine the homestead picker saying those jokes while you're watching them play at Silver Dollar City, you might have more appreciation for them.

Or if you knew Sean Collins really well. If you were at the marriage seminar a couple weeks ago at Bethel here, you're probably impacted by, what was it, four videos or something like that?

It was way too many in a short time. But that's beside the point. One of the things that came out is, you know, how to say things to your spouse. And so I tried that, you know.

[2:13] Please understand. I said this to Nikki the next day. I said, Nikki, what I love about you is your... Hold on. Your free-spirited attitude.

I love that about you. And she looked at me, and I had a hard time saying it, and she had a hard time receiving it. So we're working on that.

You know, it's funny, isn't it, how interpersonal things are difficult sometimes. As we come to this section in John, chapter 20, verse 19 through 29.

Let's open with a word of prayer. But I want you to know that I feel like I got, I don't know, I got tricked into this message because I was supposed to speak in a couple weeks, and we're going camping instead with the family, and so I switched with Kent.

And I'm like, then I started looking at the passages, and I'm like, wait a minute, this isn't right. You know, David gets the lollipop next week, I get this one. And I'm just teasing, of course.

[3:17] But I thought, you know, John the Apostle, the writer of the book, he throws a few things out here that are like, there's no background, there's no introduction, there's no follow-up, it's just out there.

And it's like, well, here's this older man that was with the Lord and had all this insight and stuff, and he doesn't share anything, he just throws a few sentences out there, and you go, what is that doing there? You know, and then you get it as your passage.

So that's how I feel about some of these verses. But let's just open in prayer. Father, we thank you for your word. Thank you for the opportunity after Easter to think about the resurrection and to guide

us in your truth.

There are a few things here in this message that are hard. The later part of the message is going to be very direct and very cutting, and I pray that our hearts will receive it in Jesus' name.

So let's start with reading these verses 19 to 29 in John chapter 20. Then the same day, this is resurrection day, this is later in the day, so all those appearances we heard about resurrection, this is the same day.

[4:21] First day Jesus rose from the dead. 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, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be with you.

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send 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 any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained.

Now Thomas called the twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. So he said unto them, Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of his nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Just think, he says, I will not believe. And after eight days, his disciples were again inside, and Thomas was with them.

[5:30] Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace to you. Then he said to Thomas, Reach your finger here and look at my hands, and reach your hand here and put it into my side.

Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God. My Lord and my God.

Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet have believed. A lot there, right?

There's a lot there, guys. Verse 19 to 21, I'd like to look at those, the beginning of this message. It's obvious Thomas wasn't there the first time Jesus appeared.

And these followers are fearful for their lives. They're fearful the Jews, we read. They might kill us, too, they might be thinking. Jesus didn't knock on the door and come into this room.

[6:39] He appeared in the midst of them. And he says, you know, fear not. They were able to confirm who it was because of the marks in his hands and his sides.

Jesus, in his resurrection, had an identifiable body. And he had qualities, and he had abilities that defy the normal laws of humanity, right?

He was able to walk right through a wall. His body was glorified, a spiritual body, but yet not subject to laws which govern the physical part of man in this life. It's worth noting that this is a type of body that we might have, right?

He is the first fruit. He is the first one risen from the dead, and we'll be like him. We'll have a body like this, which is interesting to think about. Two times in these verses, 19 to 21, Jesus offers the disciples and those present in the room, peace.

He says, peace be unto you. It was an ordinary greeting in this culture at the time, and it was very appropriate in the fact that he just appears in this room, right?

[7:52] He just says, peace be unto you. God, through Jesus Christ, offers peace to everyone. You get that? Peace be unto you.

He offers that to everyone. Anyone. There's a simple phrase that some of us say, no Jesus, no peace, and oh Jesus, no Jesus, no peace, right?

We've all heard that, right? If you know Jesus, you have peace. If you don't know Jesus, you do not have peace. In Luke chapter 8, after Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood, he said, daughter, be of good comfort.

Thy faith has made thee whole. Go in peace. You'll see that phrase sometimes in the scriptures if you will study on it. You'd think the apostles and the people that were in that upper room didn't need his peace.

Some fled from the scene. Some ran. They betrayed him. One betrayed him. You know, the group's kind of a mess at the moment. David Guzik in his commentary states, after their desertion of Jesus on the day of his crucifixion, the disciples probably expected words of rebuke or blame. [9:09] Instead, Jesus brought a word of peace, reconciling peace. Isn't that like our Lord? We mess up. He says, peace. Come back.

I have peace for you. Charles Spurgeon wrote, Our Master came to his cowardly, faithless disciples and stood in the midst of them, uttering the cheer for salutation. Peace be unto you. It's amazing. Man had just been crucified by wicked men, betrayed by everybody. Peace be unto you. This concept of truth, this concept, start over.

The concept and truth of peace being offered to the believer continues in the New Testament writings. If you get past the book of Acts, you will find at least 15 times where we'll see the phrase, grace and peace.

Grace and peace. It's even in the book of Revelation. It's especially prominent in Paul's writings, the introductions. If you just do a little search, you'll see it 15 times.

[10:14] Most times it's in the first chapter of books. As we go on to the next section, verse 21. Jesus says, As a father has sent me, I also send you.

In Luke chapter 24, we found a parallel account of Jesus appearing to the group in the upper room. In these accounts, he declares that they will be his witnesses in the world. If you want to turn to Luke chapter 24, I'm going to read 44 to 49.

And Jesus said to them, These are my words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which were written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you. But you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.

[11:32] Similar passage, similar thoughts. In verse 22 of John 20, it says, And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

In your minds, resolve that issue right now. What does that mean? Jesus tells them, breathes on them and says, Receive the Holy Spirit.

That's nice. Your mind is probably going through various attempts to reconcile this verse with your theology, maybe, with how the scriptures line out.

It's a good thing to work through. The Greek word used here is the only time it's used in the New Testament. In the Septuagint, which is a Greek translation of the Old Testament, that word is used when it speaks of God breathing life into Adam.

So we have two examples in the Bible. From what I know, I didn't study all that out. I'm taking other people's word on that, right? Other commentaries, other learned men. At first, this verse seems problematic.

[12:44] I thought the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost. What did Jesus say in the Gospels of John earlier about the Holy Spirit coming? Let's look at those verses.

In John chapter 16, verse 5 to 14, it says, You could turn back a few pages, But now I am going to him who sent me. And none of you ask me, where are you going?

But because I have said these things, sorrow has filled your heart. Verse 7 of chapter 16, But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away. For if I did not go away, the Helper will not come to you.

But if I go, I will send him to you. And he, when he comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment, concerning sin because they do not believe in me, and concerning righteousness because I go to the Father and you no longer see me, and concerning judgment because the rule of this world has been judged.

I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. For he will not speak on his own initiative, but whatever he

hears, he will speak.

[13:56] And he will disclose to you what is to come. He, the Spirit of truth, will glorify me. For he will take of mine and disclose it to you.

One thing the Holy Spirit does is always glorifies Christ. He always leads you to understanding about Christ. In Acts chapter 1, 4 to 8 and verse 8, we read, Gathering them together, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, which he said, You heard of me.

For John baptized you with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. Verse 8, We see from the scriptures that the coming of the dwelling Holy Spirit does not come until after Christ ascends to heaven.

So this in John means, when he breathes on them, means something a little bit different. So what are we to make of it? It's best to explain that this is a symbol, a pledge, and a confirmation to those present at this appearing of what they would receive on the day of Pentecost.

The Schofield Reference Bible has a footnote which reads, The risen Lord's unique action in breathing on those present and imparting to them the Holy Spirit was probably for their spiritual quickening in preparation for the full endowment of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost.

[15:32] And if you think about it at this point, Thomas also isn't there, right? This happens with the absence of Thomas. Just a side note, something to think about.

The Holy Spirit does come, we know, on Pentecost. One thing I like to say about the coming of the Holy Spirit is the next big thing in this interim time before Christ goes to be with the Father.

The next big thing, the next big event is the coming of the Holy Spirit, indwelling man. He is the promised one. And he will be next.

Verse 23 of John chapter 20. If you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they have been retained. Now this does not give you, like some religions will have, confession to mankind and this succeeding progression of people who stand in the place of Christ to receive confession.

That's not what this means. The primary meaning of this passage is that the gospel has the power to take away sins. When the gospel is received, a person is translated from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of light.

[16:49] Sinners are transformed from death to life. Romans 6.23 says, For the wages of sin is death. The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus. When Peter spoke in the house of Cornelius, he said, Whoever believes on him shall receive remission of sins.

And Paul preached the gospel in Antioch and Pisida and said, Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. After a good portion of this message, I'm going to go back to this issue about sin and forgiveness.

And we'll talk about that again before we go into the breaking of bread. In John chapter 20, verse 24 to 29, I'd like to read these verses and then we'll comment on them.

Now Thomas called the twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord.

So he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the print of the nails and put my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days his disciples were again inside and Thomas with them.

[18:03] Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst and said, Peace to you. Then he said to Thomas, Reach your finger here and look at my hands and reach your hand here and put it into my side.

Do not be unbelieving, but believe. And Thomas answered and said to him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed.

Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed. Thomas did not believe the other people's witness, the other people's testimony, did he?

The scripture tells us a whole week goes by and he's still in unbelief. Could you imagine doing that? Can you imagine being Thomas?

I've thought about that a lot this week. You know, what kind of mood would you be in for that week? Here are these other people that saw the risen Lord, the women, the people that were in the upper

room.

[19:07] They surely would have told you. How would you feel? How do you go on with that unbelief for a week?

It's easy to look back on it and say, and judge him in that. But if your life's like mine, you know, what was Thomas doing for that week? We don't know. How's your week been? What have you been doing?

He's living, right? He's living life. But this thing about the resurrection must have just been hitting him every day. Like, these deep, deep friends of mine are telling me the Lord rose from the dead. I don't believe it. I can't believe it. And I can appreciate that about a person. You know, I'm a little bit of a skeptic myself. I understand about how Thomas might have felt having a heavy heart. You know, the Lord's been dead. His life's turned upside down. This past week for me, it's kind of been crazy. It was a busy week on the calendar already. And last Sunday, you know, we started out the day we had breakfast, came here early, helped with breakfast.

[20:20] My mom went in the hospital. I get a text during church, mom's in the hospital with pneumonia. My mom's 88. Well, that's been on and off this whole week. You know, that Sunday night was really traumatic for our family.

We thought mom was going to die, and we went to the hospital, this and that. And so it's been a real heavy week for me. It's been mentally and emotionally stressful.

When you have a heavy heart, it's hard to believe or have confidence in any good news. Isn't it? Throughout the week, your mom's getting better. Your mom's not getting better. She's eating. She's not eating. She's not taking liquids. She is taking liquids. You know, if this doesn't turn around, we're going to do this. You know, it's like, all right. Just tell me what I need to do next. You know, my brother Joe is very involved with my mom.

And I said, Joey, just tell me if you need me to do something because he's very in control of what's going on and things. Not in a bad way, in a very great way.

[21:21] But look at the first words out of Jesus' mouth to Thomas. What does he say? Peace be unto you. So in the midst of anything, we can have peace with God.

This is the third time in eight verses that Jesus spoke the same phrase. Clearly, Jesus wants his followers to have peace. In this life, you'll have tribulation. Be of good cheer.

I've overcome the world. That comes to mind, doesn't it? Yeah, sure. Jesus says, Thomas, don't be unbelieving.

You know, here, okay, Thomas, you want to say those words? Come here, stick your hand to my side. Here, here's my wounds. You know, Thomas is like, all right, you know. Charles Spurgeon comments on this section.

Jesus' interaction with Thomas shows that the resurrected Jesus is full of love and graciousness and gentleness to his people. That didn't change. The whole conversation was indeed a rebuke, but so veiled in love that Thomas could scarcely think it so.

[22:27] It was such a rebuking thing, he said to Thomas, but it was so wrapped in love and compassion, it came across only as love. That's how our Lord is. That's how good he is.

Thomas, what's he going to say to that? What's he say? My Lord and my God, you are everything. You're my God, you're my Lord, you are, you know.

So, it contains expression of astonishment, delight, repentance, grief, faith, confession, adoration. It's the last account of Jesus' deity in this gospel.

Isn't that interesting? This skeptic, if you will, declares your God, your Lord, your deity. And that's where John kind of leaves it in his writing that, what else can I say about this Lord Jesus, God in the flesh, except my Lord and my God.

You sense the urgency and the five words and the declaration, these simple five words, you know. What can you say about those who do not see and believe?

[23:32] Well, you can look up Romans chapter 10, 8 to 13, but it's going to go to the last verse, Romans 10, 13. It says, everyone who calls on the Lord will be saved.

You know, the message goes out to people who will not see Christ anymore. But everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. As we conclude this message, I want to talk more about sin.

I'm coming back to this thing about sin in the life of a believer. I really was impressed this week as I was preparing this message to deal with this topic. It's not something that I signed up for.

It was given to me. In our van, our green van, you know, I had this CD in the deck. I didn't even know it was in there. And I, hey, there's a CD in there.

What is it? It was Erwin Lutzer's message called, Now That You've Blown It. And it's all about reconciliation and dealing with sin in the believer's life and things like that.

[24:34] I'm listening to this. I'm like, really? And then after that marriage thing a couple weeks ago, you know, it's like, really, Lord? You want me to talk about this? I'm like, okay. When that happens, I say, okay, right?

Here's the question that comes out of that study. What do I have to do to be fully right with God? Dealing with sin in your life.

What do I have to do? What do I have to do to be fully right with God and man? Reconciliation.

What's in your life? What's in my life?

Well, I can't speak on this and not have addressed that question this week in my life. So yesterday morning when I woke up, I said, hey, Nikki, I've got to talk to you. I've got to ask you forgiveness for a couple things. Remember in that marriage seminar?

You know, that openness in marriage and things like that. Openness before the Lord. But we've also offended in our sin other people. And you have to make restitution. You have to ask for forgiveness. So I did that yesterday morning.

[25:31] It wasn't a simple thing. She was gracious, of course. But it's hard to humble yourself and ask for the Lord forgiveness.

And ask another person you've offended. It could be years of yourself denying that you need reconciliation. You brush the sin under the rug. It's easy to do.

There's a law of the sower. You will reap what you sow. You may not reap it now. But you will reap what you sow.

Second part of the law of the sower is that you won't reap now, but you will reap later. You plant seed today. You reap the crop later. The harvest is going to come.

You see that. We know that in people's lives. Some examples from Scripture. Cain and Abel. Cain lived. But he's kicked out of the family, right?

[26:31] Mark on his head. What a disaster. Samson's love of women. Yeah, he delivered Israel. Got his eyes gouged up. Died tearing down a temple, right?

Or whatever that building was. David and Bathsheba. Most of us are familiar with that. In the New Testament, Hymenaeus and Alexander. You can read about that in 1 Timothy, where they make a shipwreck of their faith.

And, again, Irwin Lutzer, in the study, gives several examples of people that blew it. Not blew it, but just had to make reconciliation, restitution for things they've done.

One was a builder who built homes, and he bid the jobs with a certain quality of material. When he did the work, he used a lesser, inferior product, made money, went on down the road.

Years later, he's praying. His daughter's getting married, I think the story goes. And he's praying, and the Lord says to him, Basically, what are you trying to do?

[27:33] What are you trying to ask? Really, you want to talk about something with me? When you've got this unresolved sin in your life? So the guy went back and made restitution.

He went back to the people he built these homes for, told them his problem. What he did, his lie, his sin, his deceit, made restitution. Mortgages, you know, got a mortgage on his house, got a mortgage, a loan to pay right back, and was broke.

But he made it right with the Lord and with the people he'd wronged. Second example he gave was a man who at 17, a young guy at 17, had committed murder. You ever hear of this today where a young guy will say, I just want to see what it's like to kill somebody, right?

People do that. They go, what's it like to murder somebody? So he had this secret. He murdered his neighbor's wife, this woman. He was 17. 22 years later, he has a family and he's married. And this same kind of thing comes up where the Lord says, don't talk to me, you've got unresolved issues in your life. He wasn't a believer when he killed the person. The Lord says, I want you to confess that murder. He does.

[28:41] He goes to jail. He's convicted of second-degree murder. And in jail, he said, I was freer than I ever was before. Isn't that crazy? When I worked in the city, I knew a young man.

Him and his brother were drug dealers. And the one guy, and I knew their father. He lived around the corner from the store I was working at. And the one guy's car had been shot at a number of times and we repainted it.

And then he went to jail, that guy. His brother was not in jail. And one time, he was still dealing drugs. He swallowed the drugs because he didn't want to get busted, right?

They got lodged in his intestine. So I went to the hospital and visited him. I said, what are you doing? You know, I heard he was in the hospital. And some girl was there, too.

And I'm like, you know, you're going to kill yourself if you keep this up. It's pretty obvious. I said, why do you keep running with the devil? And I told him he needs Jesus, you know. I said, look at your brother.

[29:40] You know, but would he listen? You know, what I mean by saying these stories is sin has its consequences. You know, you can run and you can have fun and you can deal drugs, whatever it is.

You're going to reap what you sow. In this past week, a former NFL player for the New England Patriots, Aaron Hernandez, hung himself in jail.

His ex-teammates were going to the White House to visit after winning the Super Bowl. He hangs himself. So he's on the way to the morgue. They're going to the White House. What irony, right?

Here's this guy that had some of the best hands in football, \$40 million contract.

He used his own hands to string himself up with a sheet because he couldn't deal with the guilt in his life. You know, he had murdered people. He had been convicted of all kinds of things.

It's horrible. If we are honest with ourselves, we don't have to think very hard to come up with examples of sin that have long-lasting consequences, sexual immorality, adultery, stealing, drunkenness.

[30:43] In Hebrews 13, 4, one of the verses shared a couple weeks ago, Marriage is honorable and all in the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

God is going to judge sin. Galatians 6, if you want to flip there, these verses will jump out at you. Galatians 6, 1 to 2 and 7 to 10.

I'm going to hit just on the meat of it. Verse 7, Do not be deceived. God is not mocked. For whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption. But the one who sows from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians teaches us to sow to the Spirit and not to the flesh. It is as if God is saying to us, Stop sinning and start serving, is my own phrase.

[31:43] Stop sinning and start serving God or others. 1 Thessalonians 4, 1 through 8.

I'm not going to be able to read all these verses, but here's a highlight. Verse 3, For this is the will of God, your sanctification. You want to know God's will? Be sanctified.

Be holy. Simple, right? Well, for some of us, it means we need to confess some sins to people. You start with God, but then you've got to go out and you've got to tell the person you're wrong.

That's hard. Verse 6, 1 Thessalonians. Because the Lord is the avenger in all these things. We don't talk about this a lot. But God avenges sin.

God is going to avenge sin. Verse 8, So he who rejects us is not rejecting man, but the God who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

[32:40] Don't reject God. This is not my idea to talk about. I'll tell you that right now. Colossians 3, verse 1 to 6.

Huh? What did you say? How about verse 1 of Colossians? Therefore, if you've been raised up with Christ, seek those things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

There you go. Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth. Verse 6. You could read verse 5. I might as well. Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

For it is because of these things the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. The world is going to be judged for sin. You want to partake in that? You're going to be judged too. But God does judge sin.

There are many other times in the New Testament. You could look it up. I'm wrapping this up, so if the musicians want to come up, that'd be great.

[33:46] Be sure of this. The wages of sin is death, right? And for this cause, and for these things, the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience.

You can see that in Romans 6.23, Ephesians 5.6. Also know that when we confess our sins to God, we may also need to confess our sins to others that we have wronged, and repent of those sins, and change our behavior.

As we continue our meeting this morning, strive to be at peace with God. Let's be at peace with God. So we're thankful for the Lord, what He's done on our behalf, in the cross, you know?

He died on the cross for our sins. Full atonement, full payment for sins. There's nothing you can do to pay for your sins. Just accept the forgiveness of the Lord in your hearts.

And be at peace with God and with others around you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[34:52] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.