



... SO **SEND** I You

John 20:19-31

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They were terrified! Worried sick about what was going to happen to them. Locked up behind closed doors, fearing for their lives! Who wouldn't be, after what they just went through. The angry mob. The arrest. The trial. The crucifixion. The burial. And now, the missing body! What was going on? Who was next? Surely, those closest to Jesus!

It was the evening of the first day of the week. Sunday. The eighth day. The day of resurrection! The day of re-creation. The day of hope and joy and life! And yet, they were fearing for their lives. As one father famously put it, *"I believe. Help thou my unbelief."* And we all know what that father was talking about. We've all been there. Believing, yet at the same time, doubting.

And so, we can feel for the disciples - we who live on the eighth day, the day of resurrection - filled with hope and joy because of the Risen Christ, singing *"life is worth the living, just because He lives!"* And yet, at the same time, living in fear. Fear of the unknown. Fear of the future. Fear of what's going to happen to us.

Very early that morning, some of the women had come with the most unbelievable news! They had gone to Jesus' tomb to finish preparing His body. But when they arrived, they found the tomb empty! Jesus was gone! Soon after, He appeared to them, alive. Risen from the dead!

What were the fear-filled disciples to think of such news? Could such a thing really have happened, or was it all a dream? *"These words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them."* (Lk 24:11) And if Jesus was alive, why hadn't He appeared to any of the *rest* of them? Where was His body? And what about them? Jesus had been killed. Why wouldn't *they* be next?

And so, even with the reports of the resurrection, the disciples were still scared to death. Out of sight, hidden away, with the doors locked! The same people who crucified Jesus would *surely* come after them as well.

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus ... when Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ... When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ... And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them. (Lk 24)

Into their prison house of fear and unbelief, Jesus comes, appearing out of thin air! No longer bound in an earthly body. They were *glad*. Who wouldn't be? It was the Lord! You couldn't mistake Him. He's the one with the wounds. (William Cwiria) *And by His wounds, you are healed.* Whenever you're fearing, it's good to have a risen Jesus show up, vanishing all fear, and bringing peace instead!

Show and tell. Jesus had showed them that it was really Him, not a dream, not a spirit. He showed them His hands, His feet, His side, His appetite. Now He has something to tell them, to tell us. *Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything 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 said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Lk 24)*

The Scriptures, as they always are, were fulfilled. God's Word always comes to pass. You can count on it! The Scriptures, that were all about Jesus, as Jesus Himself said to the two on the road to Emmaus, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

The Christ, the Messiah, Jesus, had come. He suffered. He rose on the third day. That had *all* come to pass, just as the Scriptures had said. Jesus had completed the mission for the which His Father had sent Him - to save the world from its sins. And *now* what? What was left? "... **and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed ...**"

Jesus had completed *His* mission for the which His Father had sent Him. And now, it's *your* turn. Your turn, to be sent by Jesus. *Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

Notice, it's not just forgiveness, but what? *Repentance* - for the forgiveness of sins. Not just some cheap forgiveness that means you can go right on in your sin, unchanged. But a *real* forgiveness. Forgiveness for having done something you need forgiving for. Forgiveness for a heart that is broken by its sin. Realizing the sin committed and being in sorrow about it. Sensing the weight of your sin; the guilt of your sin. *Burdened* by the wrongness of your sin. The wrongness of your heart. A wrongness in your relationship with God and a wrongness in your relationship with others. A heaviness of heart because of your sin.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. Twice, Jesus speaks His word of peace. The first time, is peace for themselves - to quiet their fear, to turn their sorrow into gladness. Jesus is with them. With you. There's nothing to fear. This second word of peace is for others - to move our feet out of our little locked room and out into the world. (Cwirila) 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 withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Forgiveness can also be translated *freedom*, released, unlocked. What do you need to lock a door? Keys. To unlock a door? Keys. Keys lock and unlock. Bind, shackle, lock. Unbind, unlock, free.

What binds us to our sins? What declares us guilty and locks us up? God's **LAW key**. "... Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God." (Rom 3)

What unbinds us, frees us from our sin, declares us not guilty? God's **GOSPEL key**, His "Good News" key. "... for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Rom 3)

The LAW KEY binds us to our sin, declaring us guilty. The GOSPEL KEY sets us free from our sin, declaring us innocent. Jesus says the same thing to Peter in Matthew 16. *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you **bind** on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose** on earth shall be loosed in heaven."*

And again, to His disciples in Matthew 18. *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, [if he repents] you have gained your brother. ... Truly, I say to you, whatever you **bind** on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose** on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

The KEYS of the kingdom. Also known as the POWER of the keys, or the OFFICE of the keys, or the MINISTRY of the keys. That special authority which Jesus gives to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant.

It's an **act of love** - from God and from us. It's applying God's Law and God's Gospel to the human heart. With God, it's always a matter of the heart. To afflict the comfortable and to comfort the afflicted. To *afflict* the heart of those comfortable in their sin by declaring to them the guilt of their sin and the wages of their sin - death. Why? Out of *love* for them. Loving those who are comfortably on the road to hell, that they might be cut to the heart, repent of their sins, and turning to God, cry out to Him for mercy.

Afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted. *Comforting* the heart of those who've been afflicted by God's Law, by God's judgment on them - cut to the heart before God. Comforting them with the Good News that at the cross, Jesus received the punishment for their sins, freed them from their sin, and welcomes them with open arms!

"Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am 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 any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Empowered by the Holy Spirit to afflict and comfort the heart before God.

But *how do you know which* key to use - the LAW key or the GOSPEL key? How do you determine whether to *extend* forgiveness or *withhold* forgiveness? By the *response* of the person you're speaking with. Do they seem comfortable in the sin? Okay with their sin? Unrepentant? Then you use what? The LAW key. No forgiveness. Only condemnation. Why? Out of love, in order to lead them to repentance.

Do they seem *uncomfortable* in the sin? Burdened by their sin? Not blaming others, but taking responsibility? Freely admitting their wrong? Seeking to repair the damage they've done? Repentant? Then lay aside the LAW key and bring out the GOSPEL key, declaring them free from their sin and comforting them in Christ.

Ten of the eleven disciples are there that Sunday evening. Thomas is absent. The other disciples tell him what happened, how they saw Jesus! But Thomas, like the others had done earlier, refuses to believe. In fact, he even says, "Unless I touch his hands and side, there's no way I'll ever believe it."

Fortunately for Thomas, he's there eight days later when again Jesus appears out of nowhere, no longer bound in the flesh by time and space! What does He say? "Peace, be with you." And again He shows them His wounds, the wounds that bring us peace. And He turns to Thomas. "Go ahead, Thomas. Put your finger here, see my hands. Stick your hand in my side. Do not disbelieve but believe."

And Thomas believes and confesses what he believes: "My Lord and my God." Thomas, the unbelieving skeptic, becomes Thomas the believer, disciple and apostle, *sent one*. (Cwiria)

Jesus says to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Blessed are you. You have the *words* of Jesus. And you have His *wounds*. Be believing and be going - by the Wounded One who is sending.

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 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)

"... it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. (John 14)

What are these "greater works" that we will do because Jesus is going away? Sounds intriguing! Jesus isn't promising the ability to perform miracles feats at the drop of a hat. As one Bible scholar puts it, "Jesus' works were done in the shadow of the cross, and his activity was *confined* to Israel. The *disciples'* works will be done in the light of the *resurrection*, in the power of the Spirit sent by the exalted Christ (14:15-17, 25, 26), and will embrace the *world* of the Gentiles too." (Franzmann)

Jesus' *going to the Father*, means that now *His* work is being done, not just in *one* place, by *one* man, but *all* over the world, every place His Name is confessed. His Word. His work. in His Name. *Powerful* and effective. (James Douthwaite)

Resurrection day. Tomb empty. Jesus Risen! From fear, to peace! Now what? *As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*" Sending you with a divine set of keys. *Powerful* keys! God's LAW key that *binds* us to our sins, leading us to repentance. And God's GOSPEL key that *frees* us from our sins, leading us to eternal life!

Jesus was sent by the Father to be our Savior. Now, Jesus is sending *you*. Sending you into the world. Sending you into your home. Sending you into your neighborhood. Sending you into your school. Sending you into your workplace, into your community, into the world wherever you are, wherever you go. Sent with the Spirit - the Convicter, the Comforter. Sent with the power of the keys of the kingdom to bind and lose. To afflict and comfort. To bring to repentance and faith. To bring life, eternal life. The eighth day. The day of re-creation.

As the hymn writer put it, "So send I you to take to souls in bondage the word or truth that sets the captive free. To break the bonds of sin, to loose death's fetters. So send I you, to bring the lost to me."