

071025

I. My Notes ... WWC message 7/12

II. Series: That You Might Believe

- Title: Your Starting Point
- Text: John 20:19-23
- Quote: Doubt is not the opposite of faith; it is one element of faith.

Paul Tillich (Theologian)

III. Introduction

- Life is a journey, not a destination. I'm sure that you have heard that before. Our journey is one that is filled with joy and happiness, with twists and turns, with bumps and bruises. That's what life is. If you typed into Google or Bing search, "what is life?" There would pop up all kinds of scientific ways to determine what was living and what was non-living. Eventually, you would find the philosophical – "what is the meaning of life?" And that can lead us into an entirely different conversation. Life, as we know it, is full of big moments and little ones – it is filled with endless questions, some of them have eternal consequences. What I know is that if God isn't the center, things are out of balance ... *"7 For we don't live for ourselves or die for ourselves. 8 If we live, it's to honor the Lord. And if we die, it's to honor the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. 9 Christ died and rose again for this very purpose—*

to be Lord both of the living and of the dead.” (Romans 14:7-9 NLT).

- We live in a day where conspiracy theories abound and what we know is being challenged. Doubt and mistrust have put many in a place where they don't know (or think) if anything is true. Truth has become subjective (personal, slanted toward individual preference). It's different with God ... Author Philip Yancey wrote, “One bold message in the Book of Job is that you can say anything to God. Throw at him your grief, your anger, your doubt, your bitterness, your betrayal, your disappointment — he can absorb them all. As often as not, spiritual giants of the Bible are shown contending with God. “(Disappointment with God, 1988). If God is big enough to handle everything about me then He certainly can be trusted. But again, that's just my opinion.
- I bring this up to remind all that doubt is what brought us to Jesus Christ. If you were with us on our journey through Proverbs, I spoke about Jesus being the embodiment of wisdom and truth. When we have questions, the answer is found in wisdom and understanding – the answer is found in Jesus. And our faith walk is about following (embracing) Jesus – then the questions I face, the misunderstandings I have, must drive me to Jesus. It's a lesson that John addresses in this portion of his Gospel.

IV. Continuing the Story

- Picking up from last week. The Resurrection has taken place – Mary has been to the empty tomb and told the others what she had seen. Peter and John had rushed to see it for themselves. They found the grave without a body; their Lord was not there. The message began to sink in with John, but they went back to tell the others. And Mary, unable to leave the empty tomb, encountered the Risen Lord. He sent her to tell the others.

- **John 20:19-20 CSB**

19 When it was evening on that first day of the week, the disciples were gathered together with the doors locked because they feared the Jews. Jesus came, stood among them, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

20 Having said this, he showed them his hands and his side. So the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

- I think about this moment and wonder what it was like in the room with the Disciples that were there. The stress and tension of the last few days had to be wearing on them. The news that the tomb was empty must have caused despair and confusion. They were afraid for their lives. And maybe they were all trying to appear calm and collected to support one another. It must have been like seeing ducks on a pond ... calm on the surface, but their feet paddling like crazy underneath.
- It was the evening of Resurrection Sunday ... it had already been a full day. They are secluded and unsure. Through the locked door, through the walls, in a crowded and tense room, Jesus shows up. I think that John included this to show the difference in the Resurrected body of Christ. When Lazarus

was brought back from the grave (resurrected), he was fully healed and restored, Lazarus was fully human again. He would live the way he lived, and he would die once again. The Resurrected Body of Jesus was different, much like our bodies will be. Jesus had been raised to new life, never to die again. This is what we are looking forward to.

- Jesus showed them the physical evidence of His death. He showed them the wounds. This was more than evidence of death, it was an indication of the price that salvation had cost. And they rejoiced, they celebrated that He had overcome death, that victory reigned!

V. Peace

- **John 20:21-23 CSB**

21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you.” 22 After saying this, he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

- The wounds were more than identification – they were reassurance that Jesus was exactly who He said He was. Now, Jesus spoke to them again – not another lesson, no more teaching, but Peace ... the peace that comes from God.
- Then Jesus gave them their “marching orders” ... He showed the Disciples the road before them. He sent them into the world in the same way that God (the Father) sent Him (Jesus) into the

world. The Disciples were to continue to fulfill the reason that Jesus came.

- **Luke 4:17-19 NLT**

The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come.”

- What Jesus read is from Isaiah 61:1. It is a declaration of the mission (the reason) of the Messiah. Jesus said, “...*The Scripture you’ve just heard has been fulfilled this very day!*” (Luke 4:21). Now, the Disciples were to continue in the way the Teacher had shown them. To minister to the needy – the “less thans” – the hurting – the lost. They were to tell the Good News of God’s love and grace.
- They would accomplish this with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit. Believers need the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit that anointed Jesus to bring the Good News, to help those searching for hope, to heal, is the same Spirit that empowers you to show mercy and grace to those around you.

VI. Forgiveness

- There was a time when it was common for forgiveness to be bought – either financially or through acts of penance. It’s not much different today. There are many that think that forgiveness

must be earned. That our worth must be proven by the “good works” we do.

- The only work that saved us was the grace demonstrated by Jesus. It is belief and trust in His sacrifice that gets us to a place where we are in a right relationship with the Lord God.
- I am sure that you have heard this before ... *“8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this **is** not of yourselves, **it is** the gift of God; 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” [(Ephesians 2:8-9 NASB) emphasis added]*.
- It is grace that saves us from ourselves, from our sins. This grace comes from God and is seen in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (God, the Son). We connect to what Jesus did for us by faith (trust, belief) that also comes from the Lord God. None of this is within our capabilities ... it is a response to the love that God has poured out on us.
- We find forgiveness in and through Jesus Christ. It is important to understand this. We can forgive others because we know the forgiveness that has been given us. But that is not what Jesus is telling the Disciples. He is instructing them that they (and us) are able to proclaim others as “forgiven” if that have come to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- I cannot require you to do anything to “pay” for your misdeeds, for your sins. It isn’t effort that forgives and forgets, it is love – God’s love. I know people that say they have forgiven someone for a wrong that has happened, yet it always seems to be

brought up in times of stress or tension. That isn't forgiveness and that isn't what God does. The slate is wiped clean. And according to what Jesus taught it is a continual process (see Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 6:37)

- God is willing to forgive us and to pay the cost of the debt we owe because of our sin. This forgiveness is a catalyst for change, for transformation. It allows us to embrace a new way; it gives us a fresh start. And because of this, we are better able to reflect the kindness and compassion we have been shown.

VII. The Holy Spirit

- I want to take a moment and remind us about the role of the Holy Spirit in our (daily) lives. Jesus began telling the Disciples about “the Helper” that He would send to them when He departed. Now, the time for Jesus to leave is very close. Look at what Jesus said about the One who would Help and Comfort them. Not only does this apply to His Disciples, but it also applies to every believer today.
- He will dwell in us ... *“He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn’t see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.” (John 14:17 CSB).* The Holy Spirit is with us, always.
- He will help us understand and remember what Jesus said ... *“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.” (John 14:26 CSB).*

- He testifies about Jesus ... *“When the Counselor comes, the one I will send to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father—he will testify about me.”* (John 15:26 CSB).
- I would say He transforms our behaviors. Jesus said it this way ... *“8 And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment. 9 The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me. 10 Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more. 11 Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.”* (John 16:8-11 NLT).
- He guides to truth, all truth ... *“13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.”* (John 16:13 NLT).
- Remember what Jesus had told them just a brief time before saying this about the Holy Spirit ... *“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6 CSB). The Holy Spirit point us to Jesus.
- He glorifies Jesus ... *“He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”* (John 16:14 CSB).

The love Jesus shared (and continues to share) and the lessons He taught were important. The Holy Spirit lets us understand the significance of every step, each deed, all words. It’s about kindness and compassion – it is a love worth finding. And it is the Holy Spirit that shows us the way.

VIII. Wrapping Up

- There is a lot to this passage. Jesus showing up broken a lot of barriers. Passing through the walls and locked doors was Jesus showing them that faith, trust could overcome the barriers of fear and uncertainty. His intrusion into their hurt and fear brought peace in the storm they were dealing with – it revealed that the God of Truth and Justice made reconciliation available to all men. Once again, Jesus modeled for them the way that He wanted them to act. To break down the barriers that kept others from knowing and receiving the saving grace which He willingly offered. And to do it by loving and serving others right where they were ... Bringing the peace of God into the chaos of life.
- The fact that Jesus “breathed” on them so that they could receive the Holy Spirit brings us back to creation – when God breathed life into man. This was new life that Jesus breathed into them. It provided a new way that man would connect with God.
- A certainty of eternity, reconciliation, right standing with God, and justification were more than just hopeful ideas. It was reality. And the evidence (Jesus Christ) was standing right in front of them.
- Let's Pray
- Grace First, Grace Always