

Title: The Stone was Rolled Away

Theme: The resurrection of Christ - Easter Sunday

Object: A large trunk

Scripture: ¹“After the day of worship, as the sun rose Sunday morning, Mary from Magdala and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. ²Suddenly, there was a powerful earthquake. An angel of the Lord had come down from heaven, rolled the stone away, and was sitting on it. ³ He was as bright as lightning, and his clothes were as white as snow. ⁴ The guards were so deathly afraid of him that they shook. ⁵ The angel said to the women, ‘Don’t be afraid! I know you’re looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He’s not here. He has been brought back to life as he said. Come, see the place where he was lying.’”

(Matthew 28:1-6 God’s Word Translation)

As you can see, I have a great big tub with me this morning. How many of you would like to see what is inside? Okay, gather around and I will open the tub and you can see what is inside. Well, how about that! The tub is empty!

When I was a child, we would sometimes have special assembly programs at school. One of my favorites was when a magician would come and put on a show. As you may know, a magician always has an assistant who helps him perform his tricks. **SLIDE** One of my favorite tricks was when the magician would put his assistant into a box. Then he would close the door and lock the box. As we watched with great anticipation, he would tap the box with his wand, unlock and open the door. To our amazement, when he opened the box, it was empty.

On the Sunday morning after Jesus was crucified, two women named Mary went to visit the tomb where Jesus had been buried. **SLIDE** When they arrived, there was a great earthquake and an angel stood by the stone that was rolled away that had been covering the entrance to Jesus' tomb. The angel said to the two women, "Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. **SLIDE** He is not here - for he has been raised, just as he said. Come, see the place where he lay." You see, the stone was not rolled away so that Jesus could get out of the grave - it was rolled away so that his followers could go in and see that the tomb was empty.

I always knew that the magician making his assistant disappear from the box was just a trick, but the empty tomb of Jesus was not a trick. **SLIDE** Jesus had risen, just as he said he would! Today we celebrate the fact that the stone was rolled away, not so Jesus could come out, but so that we could see that He has risen from the grave, and because of His victory over death, we can enter into eternal life with Him.

Heavenly Father, we are thankful that the stone has been rolled away and because the grave is empty, we can enter into eternal life with You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

John 20:19-23

Slide The Meaning of Jesus' Resurrection

The Bible is divided into the Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament tells of Jesus' coming. The New Testament has 27 books: four gospels to tell the life of Jesus, 21 letters to explain the meaning of Jesus for our lives, one book of history about the early church, and one of prophecy. All 27 of the New Testament books deal with Jesus as alive, that He is raised from the dead and that He is the central and living reality in the universe today. Jesus is both fully God and fully man. Jesus is the Christ!

Today I want to explore Jesus' first appearance to all His frightened disciples after the resurrection. Jesus rose from the grave and the day would become known as the Lord's Day, Sunday – a day of celebration until He returns. Is the resurrection just an event we celebrate? Or was it a "Key Event" that changed all history? Did the resurrection result in change for the disciples and for us today? To answer these questions I want us to explore how the risen Jesus acted right after the resurrection. What the risen Jesus said on this first appearance to the disciples, as a group? We find the answers to these questions in John chapter 20. Please turn in your bibles to John, chapter 20, and beginning in verse 19.

The first part of John 20:19 we read; **Slide** "So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst..." What can we learn from this verse? Well, let's see.

Slide Three Facts and How Jesus Deals With Us

This is the evening of the Sunday that Jesus rose from the dead. That morning Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:1–18). But now He appears to all the disciples at once. Notice three things - **Slide** the doors are locked, **Slide** the disciples are frightened, and **Slide** Jesus comes to them and stands in their midst. Those three facts tell us three things we can know about how the risen Christ deals with us today and will lead us to three results of Jesus being resurrected from the grave.

Slide Doors Were Locked.

Jesus did not have to knock. He did not even have to open the door. He simply was there and He wasn't a ghost. Look at verse 20; **Slide** "He showed them both His hands and His side." We read in Luke that Jesus said, **Slide** "...touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." (Luke 24:39) So Jesus has a physical body. Not exactly like ours - the same - but yet different. He was simply there, in spite of the closed doors. **Blank**

Which means that today in your life, Jesus can go where no one else can go. He can go where no counselor can go. He can go where no doctor can go. He can go where no lover can go. He can reach you, and reach into you, anywhere and at any time. There is no place where you are, and no depths of personhood that you are, which Jesus cannot penetrate. Jesus' resurrection from the dead enables Him to do what no one else can do. There is no one else like Jesus in the entire universe. He is alive, and He is the one and only God-Man. What Jesus is capable of we cannot fully imagine. It is a healing wonder to contemplate all the complex layers of your life, which neither you nor anyone else can fully understand, and yet they are familiar territory to Jesus.

Slide They Were Afraid.

Back to verse 19, **Slide** “...the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews.” The disciple’s leader had just been crucified as threat to Caesar and the Jewish leadership. Their fear is totally understandable. Yet, into that fear Jesus comes. **Blank**

I suppose I want to draw your attention to this because this is the way I feel the need of the resurrected and living Jesus most often. Fear. Fear that I won’t be prepared for what I’m expected to do. Fear that the church won’t prosper. Fear that my children and grandchildren will make shipwreck of their faith. Fear that I won’t have the faith to die well. Fear that I might drift into worldliness and uselessness for God’s kingdom. Fear that I might bring dishonor to Jesus, My Lord.

Jesus is saying by His action in appearing to His disciples - I come to my own when they are afraid. I don’t wait for them to get their act together. I don’t wait for them to have enough faith to overcome fear. I come to help them have the faith to overcome fear. I testify after nearly thirty years of being a Christian, this is still true. The risen, living Jesus is still doing this. He comes when we cry out to Him in our fear. He helps us. I have called to Him a thousand times, “Jesus please help me!” He has come near with the promise, **Slide** “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10). He will do this for you too, if you receive Jesus into your life for who He really is. That is key – believing in the Jesus of the Bible.

Slide Jesus comes and stands in their midst.

Again reading from verse 19, **Slide** “...the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst...” The point here is that

Jesus came right into the middle of their meeting. He did not come to the edge and call out through the wall or deal with them as a distant deity. He wasn't playing games or toying with their faith. He wanted the disciples to see Him, touch Him, and know Him, and believe in Him, and love Him. **Blank**

That's what Jesus wants for you today. That's what I want for you today. I want you to experience the living Jesus. To know Him and to have Him draw near - into your life where no one else can go. To have Jesus help you in your fear the way no one else can help you. To have Jesus come to you — close to you, not calling to you from a distance, but coming right into your midst. That's what I pray happens in this teaching.

Slide Three Gifts in What Jesus Says

We have seen how Jesus acts as the resurrected, living Christ. Now, let's explore what does He say. In this first appearance to the disciples Jesus says three things. These three things turn out to be three gifts for the disciples and to you and me -

Slide the gift of peace, **Slide** the gift of power, and **Slide** the gift of purpose. **Slide**

The opposite of peace is conflict. **Slide** The opposite of power is weakness. **Slide**

The opposite of purpose is aimlessness.

Many lives are ruined by conflict, weakness, and aimlessness. Jesus did not come into the world and die and rise again to ruin your life. But on the contrary Jesus came to save your life. Jesus saves us from ruining our lives by **Slide** His becoming our peace and our power and our purpose. These are the result of Jesus' resurrection. I am praying that God will make Jesus your peace and your power and your purpose. Will you let Jesus into your heart? Will you let Him in – today?

Jesus said, **Slide** "Peace Be With You." He wanted His disciples and us to know it is

important that He brings peace. Jesus said, "Peace Be With You" twice to show its importance.

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, Sunday, the doors being locked and the disciples hiding for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." In verse 20 when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad and comforted by seeing the Lord. In verse 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you."

Before Jesus says anything about power or purpose He wants to establish peace. The order here is important. The peace that Jesus gives is before and underneath any of our empowered actions or any of our purposeful deeds. We do not initiate peace with Jesus by our actions - Jesus initiates peace with us.

The Apostle Paul — who wrote 13 of those 21 New Testament letters — explains it like this, **Slide** "For He (Jesus) Himself is our peace, who made both *groups* (Jew and Gentile) ... that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace ... **Slide** *reconciling* them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (*hostility*) ... HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR..." (Ephesians 2:14–18)

Jesus brought peace then and brings peace today between all races of mankind for those who believe in Him as Savior and Lord.

Slide Peace Accomplished

The peace that Jesus offers the disciples is the peace that Jesus accomplished when He died for them on the cross and was resurrected to eternal life. That's why after Jesus had said, **Slide** "Peace be with you" in verse 20 we read, **Slide** "He showed them both His hands and His side." Jesus is saying, "I am the One who died. I am

the One you abandoned. I am the One who was **Slide** “pierced for your transgressions” (Isaiah 53:5). The reason I can offer you peace is because by My blood I have covered all your sins and I live. If you trust Me, if you believe in Me, your sins won’t be held against you. The wrath of God is turned away. That’s what Paul meant when he said, Christ reconciled us **Slide** “both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity (*hostility*).” (Ephesians 2:16) All the hostility between God and us was absorbed on the cross. Jesus is saying, “Here, look at My side and My hands. I made peace with these. Justice was satisfied with these. Peace between you and God, and Me was established with these wounds and my blood.”

Slide How Peace Comes into Your Life

So there are five relationships where the crucified and resurrected and living Christ brings peace into your life:

Slide **Peace between Jesus and us.** This is the first and most obvious meaning - He is standing there among the disciples offering them Himself as a friend and helper and not as a judge. Jesus created peace for those who believe in Him as the Christ.

Slide **Peace between God and us.** This is why God sent Jesus — so that God’s justice and wrath could be satisfied another way besides eternal punishment. God makes peace with us by substituting His Son’s suffering for our penalty. Now God, through Christ’s death and resurrection, comes to us as a loving Father.

Slide **Peace between us and others who are in Christ.** To be reconciled to God results in us being reconciled to all who are children of God. No hostility vertically between heaven and us or horizontally with our fellow brothers and sisters. No racism - no nationalism or classism or sexism, but, loving and serving others. As Paul

made clear, **Slide** “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28) Because of Christ and through Christ we have unity.

Slide **Peace between us and our own souls.** The New Testament letter to the Hebrews says, **Slide** “The blood of Christ ... *will* cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Hebrews 9:14). O the precious peace of a clear conscience. How many people labor under the misery of a defiled and guilty conscience? A man confessed to me that he had committed adultery some years ago. He said, “I cannot forgive myself.” I gently said, “That’s what Good Friday is for!” Peace with yourself doesn’t mean that you start seeing past sins as desirable. Peace doesn’t mean that past sins cease to be painful. It means they cease to be paralyzing. The pain may not be taken away immediately, but the penalty is taken away immediately through the resurrected Christ. That makes it possible to heal and to move on with a hope-filled life.

Slide **Peace with the world.** Colossians makes it clear that when Jesus died He did what needed to be done so that someday, in God’s time, **all** evil will be cast into outer darkness and the entire new creation will be full of Jesus’ peace and righteousness. **Slide** “There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace ... with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. (Isaiah 9:7) We will have - Peace with Jesus. Peace with God the Father. Peace with others in Christ. Peace with ourselves. Peace with the world. It was and is an amazing achievement – one that has changed eternity.

Slide **How Do You Receive This Peace?**

How do you receive this peace? Unfortunately, not everybody has it. It’s a gift of

God. We receive it or we walk away from it. It would really be better for me to say, we receive the resurrected Jesus or walk away from Him. Jesus is our peace. If you have the risen, living Christ as your Savior, and Lord, and Treasure, and Friend, you have the peace that Jesus gives — the peace that He is. A peace the world does not understand or possess.

As our study of the Gospel According to John has revealed **Slide** “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.” (John 1:12) Paul also made this clear in his letter to the Romans saying, that **Slide** “having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) The resurrected Jesus offers you this unparalleled peace. I, as a minister of God and His Word, offer you peace on God’s behalf. It is free. I hope you receive it. **Blank**

I’ve spent most of our time on the gift of peace because it is foundational. If we don’t have peace with God we will take all His other gifts and use them to try to make peace. It never works. Peace is first and it is free. Everything else is the effect of peace, not the cause. Everything else is the fruit of peace. A life of the believer has the peace of Christ as its root.

So let me just point in closing to the power and the purpose Jesus gives. Both are mentioned in verses 21 and 22, **Slide** “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace *be* with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” This is the purpose statement. Then Jesus continues in verse 22, **Slide** “And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” Thus the resurrected Jesus gave them the power of God – He gave them God the Holy Spirit to live within them.

Slide Power by the Spirit

Jesus was going to pour out the Holy Spirit when He ascended into heaven as we may read in Acts chapter 2. (Acts 2:33) That happens about seven weeks after His resurrection. We read about it in the first chapter of Acts, **Slide** “... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you...” (Acts 1:8) The work of the Holy Spirit that the resurrected Jesus gives is that He makes us able to do what we are simply not able to do on our own. He gives us power. Power to overcome the temptation of sin. Power to live holy. Power to share the Gospel of Jesus with the lost world.

Here in John 20:22 Jesus performs a miracle - **Slide** “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” Jesus said in effect - realize that My breath, My life, My word will be in the Holy Spirit and you will have holy power. We’ve seen this before in John 14. Jesus said, **Slide** “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” – you will have My Spirit. (John 14:18) The risen, living Jesus has come to us. He has sent us the Holy Spirit. His Spirit. He has breathed on each believer and they are indwelt.

This resurrected Jesus, this person — this power — is our only hope for accomplishing the purpose Jesus has for us. Jesus states that purpose in the second half of verse 21, **Slide** “as the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” Jesus is saying, I want you to live in the world as My representatives and My ambassadors. I want you to take My peace and take My power, and glorify My Father in just the way I have – live your lives to the glory of Me and this will bring glory to God the Father. (John 12:27-28)

Slide Our Central Purpose for Existence

Jesus comes to us and gives us His peace with God. Then He gives us power to do

the kinds of things that mere humans can't do — like defeating our own selfishness, loving other people and treasuring Christ above all. Then with that peace and that power Jesus gives us our central purpose for existence, **Slide** “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.”

Jesus is saying, I am sending you to extend My peace and My light and My truth and My life in the world. I am going to My Father, but I give you My Spirit. I am the power in you. Go and glorify Me in this world. That's our great purpose — in the peace of God, by the power of God, to do the will of God for the glory of God, and for the good of others.

If you are puzzled by verse 23, here's what I think it means. It's a good way to end our time this morning. Jesus says to the disciples, **Slide** “If you forgive the sins of any, *their sins* have been forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they have been retained.”

What the resurrected Jesus means is this - when you tell people about what I have done, speaking My word, about My work, in the power of My Spirit, I am the one speaking through you, so that if anyone believes your word, the word I have given, I forgive their sins. If anyone does not believe your words, the word I have given you, I don't forgive them. Since you are My voice and My truth, I speak of you forgiving them, and you withholding forgiveness.

Which simply means that right now what you make of this message from this fallible, sinful, human messenger will decide whether you are forgiven or not. As an ambassador of Christ, I urge you be reconciled to God and receive as a free gift His peace, His power, His purpose. I say these things in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.