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John 20:19-23

The Miracles of Calvary

Miracle #6 - Jesus' Easter Evening Appearance

Introduction

There are numerous recorded incidents of the various resurrection appearances of Jesus. Jesus appeared to the two women at the tomb on that first Easter morning. He appeared later in the day to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. In the evening of that first Easter Sunday he appeared to the disciples who were meeting in a room with the doors closed and locked. The disciples, without Judas or Thomas, met to hear and discuss the events of the day. They were still in shock and fear so they met behind locked doors. The testimony of Matthew is that after Jesus' arrest, all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled in fear for their own lives, Matt 26:56. Finally, on resurrection eve someone of them called all the disciples to huddle together and discuss the amazing and baffling events of the day. They came together but were still afraid so they met in a room that could be locked. Suddenly Jesus appeared in their midst. He entered the locked room through miraculous access. This significant event demonstrates at least three lessons of the love, power, and commitment of Jesus to these men.

- I. **Jesus' Access: a Miracle of His Love**
 1. **The Situation** - If you look at their track record in the last days of Jesus' life and ministry it becomes clear that the disciples either did not understand what Jesus was saying, or they didn't take Him seriously. Evidence of this is seen in the following: they were in a debate about who would sit on the right and left of Jesus, Matt 20:20-28; Jesus told them three times about His impending death but they didn't pay close attention, Matt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; at his arrest they fled, Matt 26:56; like Peter many of them were going back to their fishing business in Galilee. When Jesus appeared to them they were frightened and astonished. They were in a room with no windows and locked behind a door for security, Jn 20:19-23. In Luke's Gospel he reports that Jesus opened the Scriptures and taught them all things concerning Him from the Old Testament, Lk 24:27, 44.
 2. **The Significance** - We all face the same situation of being locked behind the door of doubt, despair, bewilderment, and unbelief. We

make the same mistake for the same reason. We hear but don't really listen to the Words of Jesus when He said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age, Amen," Matt 28:20. We hear but we don't believe. Did you notice that in spite of their disappointing behavior Jesus did not rebuke them. Instead He said, "Peace be with you!" Jn 20:19. Why no rebuke? Note that verse 20 adds, "When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side." Then they were glad when they realized it really was Him! The rebuke was in the wounds in His hands, feet, and scars on His body. If God could resurrect Jesus, there is no problem we face that is too large for Him. Remember Paul's words in Philippians 3:8-11, "... that I may know Him and the power of the resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death ..." Phil 3:10. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17. Jesus' resurrection is a rebuke to those who think anything is hard for the Lord.

3. **The Solution** - There is only one cure for doubts and fears. It is the miracle of access. We must give Jesus access to our heart and life. Jesus came into that room not to rebuke them but to encourage them. The human heart is a locked room that the Lord will not enter unless He is invited. This is the intent of the message given to the Laodicean church, "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me," Rev 3:20. Note that the invitation is to "hear" His voice, "open" the door, and invite Him into your life, your home, your church. This is the message of Jesus, the true Shepherd as presented in John 10:1-6.

II. **Jesus' Access: a Miraculous Demonstration of His Power**

1. **The Power of Access** - The same power that allowed Jesus to exit the tomb without the stone being rolled away allowed Jesus to access the closed and locked door of the room where the disciples met. There is nowhere that Jesus cannot go. This is one of the greatest miracles of the resurrection. Jesus promised His disciples and us that He would never abandon any believer, Jn 14:17-18, but He would send the Holy Spirit as an inner witness and inner source of power. In fact, Jesus said it is "to your advantage that I go away," Jn 16:7. Jesus added that He did not depart, the Holy Spirit would not come. But when the Holy Spirit comes He will convict, judge, and guide believers, see Jn 16:8.

While Jesus was here in human form He chose to limit Himself to one locality at a time, even though he could see and discern everything as He revealed when he called Nathaniel, Jn 1:47-51. By His departure and sending of the Holy Spirit Jesus is able to minister to all and be in the life of every believer all at the same time, see John 16:7-15. He is able to access the room of your heart when you trust him, see Eph 3:14-17. Robert Boyd Munger wrote a little tractate called, *My Heart Christ's Home*. In it he pictures the result of letting Christ find His home in our heart. Christ enters the living room, the dining room, the bedroom, the game room, and the closets of our heart. Will he be pleased at what He sees in the compartments of our lives?

2. **The Power to Transform** - Jesus transforms every believer from a sentence of death because of sin, to life everlasting by way of the forgiveness of our sins. It is a remarkable transaction that takes place when we become a believer, see Eph 2:1-10. This is the power of the resurrection working in us. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you and me, Phil 3:10-11, 20-21. This is what the resurrection is all about as Paul so eloquently explained in his letter to the Corinthians, see 1 Cor 15:29-58.
3. **The Power of Peace** - When Jesus entered the closed and locked room, look at the greeting that He gave to the disciples. "Peace be with you," v. 19, and then again "Peace unto you!," v. 21. The word "peace" is the Hebrew *shalom*. It is not just a greeting it is a promise from God. Peace is not the absence of conflict but the possession of wholeness, contentment, joy, identification with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus bequeathed to his disciples, and to every believer a legacy of peace. Look at John 14:25-27, esp. v. 27, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

III. Jesus' Access: a Declaration of His Plan

1. **Jesus' Commission** - John 20:21 is the short version of the Great Commission that was given later and appears in Matthew 28:18-20. The disciples, as well as all believers, were commissioned to go forth into all the world with the good news of the Gospel of salvation. The resurrection was the grand and glorious confirmation of the truth of the Gospel message, see 1 Cor 15:1-11. This commission is for the whole body of Christ, the church. The plan for carrying out this commission is found in Acts 1:8, namely start where you live (Jerusalem) and move beyond your borders (Judea and Samaria) then

continue to all corners of the planet (the ends of the earth). True missions is in our own going, not paying someone else to go!

2. **Jesus' Command** - Next note the ability to accomplish this commissioned task is by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the source of power to do the work we are called to perform. I have often said that living the Christian life is not difficult, it is impossible! I have read with fear and trembling, the testimony of the great apostle in Romans 7:13-25. Especially alarming is his confession in verse 19, "For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not *to do*, that I practice." If Paul couldn't handle sin in his life, what hope do I have? Fortunately Paul did not stop with chapter 7. The answer is in chapter 8:1-4ff in which he reveals that our only hope for living the Christian life is the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through us. So, He commanded them to receive the Holy Spirit, v. 22. John 20:22 is a wonderful affirmation that Jesus did not abandon us, Jn 14:18, but empowered us to do the work of being a believer, Jms 1:21-27.
3. **Jesus' Charge** - We were saved to serve! The power of the forgiveness of sins is given to every believer. This is not the power to personally choose who gets forgiven or to forgive specific sins. It is power to share the Good News of the Gospel that Jesus died to save us from our sins and He alone forgives. This passage will be hard to understand and should be read in light of Matthew 16:19, which seem to say in the English translation that Peter was given authority to "bind" and to "loose." Technically in Greek this is what is called a periphrastic future perfect passive, which means the correct translation of this phrase is whatever you bind on earth are those thing that have already been bound in heaven," and "whatever you loose on earth shall already have been loosed in heaven." This means we are messengers of God's redeeming grace and not contributors to His grace. We have no power or authority but the power of the Holy Spirit to preach the Gospel, sowing the seed and waiting on God for the increase, 1 Cor 3:6.

Lessons

1. We should not be too harsh in our criticism of the disciples who abandoned Jesus at His hour of greatest need. There are times in the life of every person, believers included, when we sacrifice expediency rather than to take a stand with Christ and for Christ.

2. Even though God has given us the highest revelation of Himself in His Son Jesus Christ, and in His word, we often are woefully ignorant of the things He has taught us.
3. We make the same mistake of unbelief that feeds doubt and fear in our lives by failing to trust Him in the promises He has made to us. In spite of our lack of faith Jesus still loves and cares for His own.
4. The compassion of Jesus for the disciples and for us stands out in the encounter with the disciples when He appeared on the evening of His resurrection. It is amazing that He did not rebuke them but offered them comfort and encouragement.
5. The power of Jesus in the life of a believer is based on the amount of access we give to Him. The power He brings to our lives is in direct proportion to the access we give Him in our heart and mind.
6. The power of the resurrection is the power that transforms us from guilty and under the penalty of sin. Resurrection power is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave and it is available to us moment by moment on a daily basis to transform our lives.
7. The peace of God is not just a greeting nor is it the absence of conflict but it is the power of God that transforms our lives.
8. Jesus commissioned His disciples as a prelude to the plan He would later unveil in Acts 1:8. We are to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth.
9. To accomplish the great commission of Christ one must have the power of the Holy Spirit on their life. The only hope for living the Christian life is the power of the Holy Spirit.
10. Jesus' charge for believers is to carry forth the Word of heaven's message, heaven's messenger and with heaven's blessing and power. Our only power and authority is that given to us by the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.