

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Fully Alive

PART

50

TITLE

The Great Giver

SCRIPTURE

John 20:19-31



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It is great to see you and if you are at home or perhaps even over in the amphitheater, welcome. We're all so glad that you have joined us. I want to ask you to actually turn with me. We'll be in John chapter 20, starting in verse 19 and we'll head all the way through the end of the chapter. But there in John chapter 20 of course, is the summit of our faith. It's when Christ rose from the dead. You see the greatest display of mercy that's ever been seen is when the perfect actually went to the cross to pay for our sin and then the greatest display of power that's ever been seen is when that same Jesus rose from the dead; and we give our life to him.

That is why we gather, and I think this is so important that you really understand this. In particular, if you don't know Christ as your savior and lord and that is we would invite you, first and foremost, not to seek out Christ teaching, but first that you would seek out an understanding of his resurrection. Because if Jesus did not rise from the dead, his teachings are interesting, but if he did rise from the dead, then what he said is absolutely essential. So what we find here in John 20, verses 19 through verse 31 is some of the very first encounters, that Jesus as the resurrected king and lord over all of the universe has with some of his own followers, with his own disciples. It's really fascinating how uninspiring their life and faith and character actually is in this early day.

So if you would, let's bow and let's pray together. Father, as we come to you and more to your word, we confess to you that we are deeply in need of hearing a word from you. For Father, the fear and the aimlessness and the skepticism that we see in these verses, God, we see traces in our own life. So Father, I pray that you would speak through weakness and that you would glorify Jesus Christ, that you would help us to see how a passage that was written so long ago and has been preserved through literally thousands of years, God, how it is pertinent to our life today. I pray that by your spirit that you would do the miracle in our heart to help us to believe this to be true. To really understand it, of how it can apply to our life. Then God, would you give us the courage in the different areas where you're gonna highlight in each one of our lives, how we are to put this into practice. So I pray, God, for your mercy, God. Would you use this time, would you redeem this time from wastefulness? We pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

Years ago, I made a tragic decision. It didn't start tragic, it started with an intent to bless my wife who was not at the house at the time. I was gonna iron one of my shirts, all right? And at least up until this time in our life and marriage, I wasn't real familiar with the iron, okay? We'll just put it like that. So I was looking for the fastest way to get this done and so I thought, "You know, there's really no, no, no need to get an ironing board." In particular, when you have this big dark green cloth ottoman that looked like a really good alternative just sitting there. It was already out in the living room. So I start ironing and soon thereafter, these really dark streaks start to appear on my white shirt, and I think, "What in the world is going on?" So I slid the iron off the shirt onto the ottoman in order to get a closer look at my shirt, because the shirt was so important.

Then eventually, when I went back to the iron and I picked it up, it was ... You know, those things aren't made out of fabric. Did you know that? It had like dark green, melted ottoman, right? Dripping off of the iron and it was ... She didn't consider herself blessed when she got home that day either. But, you know, I say that because it's really, really sad when we see our stuff ruined, but it's tragic when what is ruined is a human life. You look around this world today and you see all kinds of people that are ruined in all kinds of different ways. There's a lot of people that are ruined by skepticism. There's a lot of lives that are ruined by aimlessness. They just have no destination, there's no target. Just wake up, have no idea what to do in my life, and so I'm gonna piddle my whole life away. Then there's a lot of people whose lives are ruined because of unrelenting fear.

What we find here in John chapter 20 the very same day that Jesus rose from the dead, is we see how he seeks to protect our lives by giving us three things that counteract skepticism and aimlessness and fear. So let's read, this is what it says starting in verse 19, it says, "On the evening of that day, the first day of the week," Now that's Sunday, the day Jesus rose from the dead, "The doors being locked where his disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then his disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you, as the Father has sent you, 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 and if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.'

Now Thomas, one of the twelve called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.' But eight days later, his disciples were inside again and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' And then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.' And Thomas answered him, saying, 'My Lord and my God.' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.' Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and that by believing, you may have life in his name."

So I want to show you three things that Jesus gives. He gave to his disciples and he gives to us if we'll look to him. First is that Jesus gives peace for our fear. He gives peace for our fear. Now, I want you to think about what's actually happening here, okay? Roughly about 12 hours after Jesus rose from the dead and they saw him that morning. Early that morning, at least two of them did, and Mary Magdalene, and we're told here that these same disciples now, they had locked themselves into a room; and the reason is because that they're afraid of the Jews. You see, Jesus' body was obviously missing because he rose from the dead and they knew that the Jews who hated Jesus and wanted to get rid of the entire life and memory of Jesus is that they would look to them first as the culprits for stealing his body from the grave.

In fact, Matthew chapter 27, we actually read here that when Jesus had been placed into the grave itself, the Jews went to Pilate and said this, “We remember how that imposter said while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people he has risen from the dead. So here, on the greatest day in human history, the day that you and I will sing about forever, Jesus’ disciples have locked themselves into a room where they’re feeding off each other’s mutual fear.

You see at this point in time, God did not feel very near. You’ve been there before, where the circumstances of your life are such that when you think about Jesus’ nearness, when you think about his resurrected glory and his presence in our life, it’s the farthest thing from our consciousness. His promises and his power and ... We scarcely care one way or another that they were ever even written down at that moment. We’re living as if we and our circumstances are the only, are the only variables in the equation of life. This is exactly where they were on the very day that Jesus rose from the dead.

You see, you look at this door, it’s interesting right? Here they were and a locked door was the only source of security that they feel like they could muster. Just imagine being behind this and you think, “Okay, well, we know it’s locked and we know we have a two by four here that’s gonna hold out the gates of hell and all the Jews and Rome.” What’s amazing is what happens next. With no knock on the door, with no call from the window, “Hey guys, let me in.” Right? No commotion, no shaking of the chains, no shaking of the board, all of the sudden, it just says that Jesus appears and stands in the midst of them. Not in the corner of the room, no he gets right in the middle. He just appears right in the middle. This is a small group and they’re circled up. He’s standing right in the middle. In the midst of each and every one of them. They first think that he’s a spirit or a ghost.

Luke chapter 24, verse 39, Jesus says, “Guys, touch me and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” There Jesus stands and he simply says, “Peace be with you.” In other words, I think this is what he’s saying when he’s saying “Peace be with you.” Is he can examine past all of the circumstances, he can examine past all of the flesh and he can look directly into the heart. This is what he says after seeing, he’s saying, “Guys, you guys are sucking on fear like a lollipop right now. You’re turning it over in your mouth and I want you to know that this is gonna ruin you. You see I am the sovereign ruler over heaven and earth. Over matter, over all creatures, over all laws, over all causes, over all things visible and invisible, and I just rose from the dead and conquered evil and sin and death and I am with you. Peace be with you.” All of the sudden, it says the disciples were glad.

They were glad. So what you see here is the transition of emotion. A condition of the heart to where they're paralyzed by fear, they see him, and now they're glad. It's interesting that this is a fulfillment that we actually read back in John chapter 16, verse 20 and 22 where it says, "You will weep and lament but the world will rejoice." Meaning, when I'm in the grave when I die, the world isn't gonna think this is a great day, and you're gonna cry about it. "You will be sorrowful but your sorrow will turn into joy. So also, you will have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice and no one will take your joy from you."

You see when you're in this place of fear, you need to remember that Jesus gives peace. If this is indeed true that Jesus gives peace for our fears, then let's look to Christ when we feel afraid. Let me ask you something right now, what are you afraid of right now? What's the most dominating fear that you've experienced this last week? There may be many of them. There's a lot of things that I just naturally ... Fear just kind of percolates up into my life, right? Every week, at some point in the week, I fear not being prepared for this very moment. Every week. I always get there, but there's a point I'm like, I feel afraid. I feel that knot within my heart that says, "I'm not ready. Will I be ready?" There's times when I fear that will the church prosper? Will disunity find a foothold within our body? Will potential displacement hinder momentum within the body?

I fear my son's jump from young adulthood to being actual adults. There's a lot of things that I think each and every one of us naturally fear in life and what I love about the fact that Jesus just enters and stands in the midst is because it shows that he can reach us and he can reach into us like no one else. Like no doctor, no friend, no counselor, only Jesus can do this. You and I can think that we're locked inside a prison of self-focus or bitterness or eviction or unforgiveness or anxiety or fear, and all of the sudden we turn around in our room thinking we're alone and we see Jesus standing in our midst and he's saying, "I am ready to deliver you from this prison. You don't have to be here any more."

There's been so many times in my life personally where different emotions seemed to lock me in. There was one time in particular, I remember several years ago, to where I wasn't, I don't believe, depressed, but I just suffered this darkness that just lasted for a period of time. Many of you know what that feels like. In fact, you may know what it feels like even to many degrees beyond what I knew, but I just remember thinking all the light in my life seems like it's in the past and not in the future. It is amazing that at that very moment, I had an opportunity to do one thing or another. You see, repeatedly Jesus continued to come and stand in my midst. Do you want to experience my deliverance over this? It's at that moment of fear that you have to look to Christ. You see, Jesus gave us this instruction. It's also an invitation and he says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

You see, what Jesus did with these disciples, he can do for you. You may think that your prison can not be penetrated and Jesus says, "You're wrong. I have the power and the authority to tear down any wall in anyone's life in anywhere in the world." So I just want to encourage you, if you're in this place where they were at, just suffering, debilitating fear, I encourage you today to look to Jesus, the author and perfecter of your faith and he can deliver you.

The second thing I want you to see is this, is that not only does he give us peace for our fears, but he gives us purpose for our lives. You see this in verse 21, 22, and 23. He gives purpose for our lives. You see there are few things that will ruin a life more than aimlessness. See, it's one thing not to have a rudder, meaning there's no means to turn your life. It's another thing not to have a destination. To drift aimlessly through the sea of life, having no hope to arrive anywhere, all right, that is a recipe for ruin. Some of you may be there. You wake up and the most creative amazing thing you can think of doing is piddling around your garage organizing your bolts and screws.

The creator of the universe, who made beauty and intricacy and all things, has more for you than organizing a closet. I'm not saying that bolts and screws and closets can't be organized, but if that's the best thing going in your life, that's a life that's headed to a recipe that you're gonna go, "Man, I just feel like I wasted so much time." So what Jesus does, is after giving peace again, he says, "Guys, peace be with you and then he commissions them. He says, 'Look, as the Father has sent me, even so, I am sending you.'" In other words, what he's saying is, "Guys, I was sent by my father to glorify my father by saving you and I did my work. It's accomplished, so I'm going back to Heaven and now I'm commissioning you to glorify my father and me by telling other people about the savior."

All of the sudden, what he does is sort of an interesting thing, there's a lot of people who these two verses are very confusing to a lot of people. He says that he breathed on them and said "Receive my spirit." What's happening there? Breath on him? Well way back in the second chapter of Genesis, it says that God breathed into humanity and gave life. What's interesting is that in John chapter three, if you remember, it says that people have to be born again in order to go to Heaven. So Jesus, I believe symbolically, I think he's coming to them and he's saying, "Guys, I, I'm gonna be giving you my spirit." Now if you look at this, it's sort of puzzling because of what we also know within the rest of the New Testament. You see, shortly after this, Jesus tells them to wait in Jerusalem and pray together until the Holy Spirit will come.

Acts chapter one, verse eight, he says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit is come on you." So that's exactly what they did. They gathered together and for 50 days, from the time when they were feasting for Passover until Pentecost, they gathered and did exactly what Jesus said; and then we read in Acts chapter two that God sent his spirit down upon them and they began to experience tremendous power for the mission. So it appears here that what Jesus is doing is simply preparing them to receive the coming Holy Spirit.

But I would ask you, don't miss the point, 'cause what Jesus is saying, is he's telling us where to get the fuel which is the Spirit, to put into the car, which is our life, in order to accomplish his mission, and that is to glorify God by introducing all peoples to Jesus Christ and growing them up to love and worship him. He's saying, "The power is not in you, the power is in my Spirit."

Then he says something that is really puzzling. He starts talking about the authority that we have to tell people that they're forgiven and not forgiven. He says in verse 23, "If you forgive the sins of any, they're forgiven them; and if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." Now this is when it's really amazing and such a gift that God gave us four different gospels, because they give clarity as to exactly what he means by this. In Luke's gospel, the same moment, same account, chapter 24, verse 47, Jesus says, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations."

So what is Jesus saying here when he says, "If you forgive the sins of any, they're forgiven, and if you withhold forgiveness then it is withheld."? I believe what he's saying is this, he's saying, "Guys, you are my ambassadors in this world. My representatives. When you tell other people what I have accomplished by dying on a cross and rising from the dead, people are going to believe and those who do believe, I'm going to forgive, so I am authorizing you to tell them that they are forgiven. If they trust in the gospel, I'm authorizing you, like, to give them hope and to give them assurance that they are actually forgiven. However, if you tell them the gospel that I rose from the dead and they do not believe, I am not going to forgive them. They want to rest and trust in their own merits instead of my accomplishments and my merits, well they cannot be forgiven of their sin and so I am also authorizing you to tell them that they are still in their sins."

So Jesus looks at us and he says, "Guys this is the mission. This is what's going to rescue you from a life of aimlessness. It's to invest in a kingdom that is going to survive our death." It's gonna be able to pour our life into something that's more significant than our garage, or our boat, or our job." So let's look to Christ when we feel aimless. You see, aimlessness, it's fascinating how it happens. It begins to creep into our hearts whenever we're full of ourself. Our most dissatisfying days are our most selfish days. A life of selfishness, frankly, is a life of emptiness and what's amazing is that we're all at risk here, because every single one of us are like the guy or the gal who appears for two seconds as an extra in a movie and then concludes that the movie is about him or her.

You see, you and I, we're all extremely, extremely important, because we're created in his image and because God loves us, but this movie is not about us. You see, Christ created us. Christ loved us. Christ gave us instructions and we rebelled. That's our two seconds as being the extra, okay? So Christ was promised was promised for thousands of years and then Christ came and he was born of a virgin; and Christ lived a righteous life and then Christ died on a cross. Then Christ was buried and Christ rose from the dead, and Christ ascended into Heaven; and Christ is right now praying and interceding for us and Christ is gonna come back again. Providence, this movie is not about us.



When we discover this and we bend our knee in faith, we're propelled to live for the glory of Jesus Christ who is the hero of the story. You see, when we look at Jesus, when we feel aimless, Jesus propels us to participate in going, really by doing a number of things.

One is by praying for the mission. One is by sharing the gospel. One is by giving so that other people can take this gospel to the ends of the earth and then the fourth is by us getting a plane ourselves and going. So let me ask you, do you feel aimless today? Do you feel like your life is not just spinning out of control, it's just not spinning anywhere? If that is the case, I urge you today to look to Jesus Christ who is the author and perfecter of everything your eyeballs can see. He wants to give you purpose. He has a mission for your life that is worth the preciousness of your limited number of days. So Jesus gives amazing peace. He gives amazing purpose.

I want to show you one other thing, he gives us grace. Jesus gives grace for our doubts. For the skeptic and this was Thomas. You see, when Jesus first appeared, Jesus, we're told, wasn't there. So he didn't get to see the hands, and he didn't see the feet and he didn't see the side. Now it's interesting, that even though he has heard from the disciples that they have seen the Lord, in fact the verb actually indicates that they kept telling him, so it wasn't just one conversation. No, like, "We saw him." And then that's it. No, they kept going, saying, "No, Thomas. Seriously. Like, we, we really did see the Lord. He came, he stood among us. He just appeared. I don't know how he got there, he just got there. We saw him." Eight days later, he's resolute in his unbelief.

He says, "Unless I see with my eyes and can touch the holes in his hands and his side with my very hands," He says, "I will never believe." This is really, really serious. The reason it's serious is because Jesus had made a promise. You see, in Matthew chapter 16, Jesus has been hanging with his disciples for over a year and he says, "Let me ask you something. Who, who do the people say that I am?" And they say, "Well, you know, there's some people who say that you're Elijah. There's some people a prophet. Or." He goes, "That's really interesting, well let me ask you a question. Who do you think that I am?" Peter, he says, "Well, you are the son of the Living God." And Jesus smiles and he says, "You know what, Peter, you really did a good job." He goes, "In fact, you did such a good job it's impossible that you did it. My father had to reveal that to you. There's no way you would have come up with that on your own but God by his spirit, he's teaching you. He's showing you and you know what? You're right."

Then this is what it says in chapter 16, verse 21, it says, "From that time, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. Now we're told at least on three different occasions in each of the gospels that Jesus had sat his disciples down which included Thomas and said among other things, "I am going to rise from the dead." Now Jesus is resurrected and he is resolute because he has not had the opportunity to see for himself. Everyone else has been an eyewitness except Thomas, and Thomas is not saying if he lets me I will believe, he takes the negative approach.



He says, "Unless he lets me, I will never believe." He's firm. He's also standing in opposition of every single person that's commended by God in the whole Bible. Because what God commends in the Bible is faith. Think about Abraham, God comes to him. He says, "Abraham, this is what, this is what I'm gonna do. You don't have any kids. You're really old." In fact, Romans says he was so old, he says he was as good as dead. Okay? Not the greatest compliment, but that's old. Okay? His wife was old and barren, and God says, "This is what I'm gonna do. In order to glorify myself, I'm gonna make nations out of you. Go down to the beach and pick up some sand." He goes, "You can count the number of grains of sand on the beach, so shall your offspring be."

A few chapters later, he goes, "Why don't you look up into the sky tonight? Just see how many stars you can count." He goes, "So shall your offspring be." He goes, "I realize you're old. I realize your wife is barren, but I'm gonna pull this off." And you know what it says? It says that Abraham believed God. He just believed God. Romans chapter four tells us of Abraham. It says that "He grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised." And do you know what God did? He says that he credited his faith with righteousness. God looked upon Abraham and he says, "I'm gonna make a promise and if you'll believe that promise even though you can not see all the evidence of it taking place, I'm gonna look at you and I'm gonna say, "Now there is a righteous man."

In Matthew chapter eight, there's a Roman centurion, he's got a sick servant. Sick to the place of death and so he comes to Jesus himself and he says, "Would you heal my servant?" And Jesus says, "I'll come and heal him." And the Roman centurion says, "Oh, you don't need to come. You just say the word and I will believe your word, because I know that if you say the word, you're making a promise and you are gonna fulfill your promise." It says that Jesus was astonished at this level of faith and he says, "I've not seen this kind of faith anywhere." Now consider Thomas. He's heard Jesus' promises. "I will rise from the dead." He has heard at nine other eyewitness accounts, saying "We have seen the Lord." But he lacked the one thing that God wanted and that was faith. He didn't believe.

Faith is the whole point of the whole book of John. This is what he says in verse 30 and 31 when he says, "Look, Jesus did many other things than this, but these have been written down so that you'll believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God and in believing, you'll have life in his name." So what does Jesus do? Just like he did eight days before this, it says that Jesus entered a locked door where the disciples are still holed up and again he declares peace again. They're still behind a locked door. He comes to them and he, the first thing he does, he says, "Thomas, you know you're wrong." He says, "Don't go on disbelieving, but believe."

But what he does, to me that's so amazing, and this is where for each and every one of us, because we're all skeptics at some point in time, even if you're not a skeptic of the resurrection, if you're trusting Christ, there are things that you've read or heard in the Bible and you say and think, "I don't think that's gonna ever take place in my life." We all have a heart that's given towards skepticism and doubt. I think that's why Thomas is placed in here for us. His account, his wrestling, because God knows and what's amazing is God gives him grace. He gives him what he does not deserve. See he could have belittled him. He could have written Thomas off, but instead what he does is he gives him grace.

He says, "Thomas, you asked to do a pretty crude thing. You asked to stick your hand inside the wounds of another man, and until you do, you won't believe, so go ahead." No man deserves that. No sinner deserves that kind of grace from the son of God who just died for him and rose again. None of us deserve this kind of grace and yet this is the kind of grace that God gives to you and he gives to me. Overwhelmed now with belief and worshiped, Thomas confesses, "My Lord and my God."

You know you continue to read Thomas' story and Thomas, he was stuck with a spear and was martyred for his faith, his undying faith in Jesus Christ. What was the difference between Thomas saying, "Unless I put my hand where he has been pierced." And Thomas saying, "I am not gonna recant my faith even if you pierce me."? What stands in the middle is that he's seen the resurrected Jesus Christ. See it's grace. So let's look to Christ when we don't believe. I want to urge you and encourage you this morning to consider Christ's promises. If you don't know Christ, would you consider his promises?

Would you consider Jesus' eyewitness who actually wrote down what they saw and what they heard? If you're committed to being a skeptic, at least be a good one. A good skeptic not only doubts these kinds of evidences, but they eventually get to the place where they go on doubting their doubts about these evidences. When you begin doubting your doubt, all of the sudden, then as a true skeptic, you can at least look and say, "Well, let me actually see the evidence. Not what my mamma told me and not what Brian told me and not what Bart told me and what has God said? Be a good skeptic if you're gonna be a skeptic. Be a thorough skeptic.

When you finally get to the place that we read about in John 19 where Jesus says, "Everyone who is of the truth is gonna end up at my doorstep." Then worship. Believe in him. He died for you and he rose from the dead in order to bring you and me salvation and forgiveness of our sins. You see, Jesus said, "Thomas you believe because you've seen but blessed are those who'll never have the opportunity to see and yet they'll still believe." Providence, I just want to encourage you, as skepticism rises in your heart, when you hear this and when you read the Bible on your own and you start doubting who God is and you doubt his promises in your life even today, that he'll give you wisdom if you pray.

That he'll give you power when you pray, I want to just encourage you, I want to encourage your heart to look to Jesus who did all of this, look to Jesus and believe. See the reason he can give us peace and purpose and grace is because he is the home of all of these things. He is uniquely able to be the giver of these treasures because they all reside in him.

So let's pray together. Father in Heaven, thank you. Thank you for your kindness in each one of our lives, thank you God that you're committed to keeping us from ruin. Thank you God that when we are skeptical that when we are aimless and when we are terrified, God, that you have the power and the authority and you also have the resources Lord to alleviate those needs and rescue us at the point of our need, and I pray Father that as we think about these things and as we sing to you God, that you would work in each of our lives Father. Would you appear to us in the midst of whatever prison that we find ourself in today? Would you meet us there to deliver us? And we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.



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