

**John 20:1-29 Part 2**  
3<sup>rd</sup> February 2019 am Hill and Arcadia  
**Paralysing Fear**

In recent months our suburb has been targeted by criminals. There have been regular reports on our community group of break ins and hijackings. And so, at dinner this past week my daughters **shared their plans** in the event of an emergency.

**Jamie's plan** is to hit the panic button and hide in the big bush outside the back door. Shelley said she would hit the panic button but rather hide under her bed.

The truth be said is that my children and many others in our community **are scared**.

**Fear** is a common response to threatening circumstances that leave us feeling vulnerable, in danger and at risk. Many of us face circumstances that leave us with...

## 1 Paralysing fear

It was true of **the disciples**...

*John 20:19 On the evening of the first day of the week, the doors been locked for fear of the Jews...*

They were scared. **They feared** for their lives. Understandably so as...

For 3 years they had been in **the company of Jesus**. He had boldly and courageously tackled wrong doing and had unflinchingly faced His enemies...

Even when He **turned over the tables** of the corrupt moneychangers in the temple no one stopped Him from continuing with His ministry. The same is true when in *John 8:59* the crowds responded to His preaching by **picking up stones** to throw at Him.

Nothing, **not even** accusations of insanity and demon possession (*John 10:19*) seemed to bother or deter Jesus from pressing on in His mission in a fearless, uncompromising and resolute way.

The power of Jesus is reinforced when in *John 11* Jesus **demonstrates His power** by raising Lazarus from the dead.

My point is that the disciples had many good reasons **to feel safe**; as long as they were with Jesus. In the event of trouble, He would be there to protect them.

**But then suddenly** the tables were turned; the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, the arrest of Jesus, the false testimony, a charade of a trial, the unfair conviction of Jesus to be crucified, the intense humiliation of the cross, being insulted with a crown of thorns, being spat at, ridiculed, jeered at...

And Jesus **does not defend** Himself. He passively submits to the angry crowds and blood thirsty soldiers abuse, hurt and ultimately even kill him.

The disciples now witness what **Isaiah** had described in *Isaiah 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep before that before his shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

From feeling safe and secure to a place where the carpet has been ripped out under their feet, **the disciples were scared** that the Jews would do to them what they had done to Jesus.

Fear of being arrested or beaten or killed led them to the **conscious decision** of locking themselves up in safe place.

It is not difficult to see that fear had driven them into isolation. Paralyzing fear had gripped their minds; leaving them **passive and ineffective**.

Are there any circumstances or experiences that you and I face or could face today that could bring about **a fearful state of mind**, becoming an obstacle in our walk with God and our usefulness in His kingdom?

Here are **some examples** that can so easily cripple and hamper your walk of faith and effectiveness in service:

- The belief that we could be at the mercy of **the ancestors or ghosts**. According to Luke (24:37) the disciples were scared thinking they were seeing a spirit when Jesus suddenly appeared in the room.
- The repeated sinful and disobedient and grievous **conduct** of anyone who has some measure of an active conscience. People are scared of what God may do to punish them.
- The crime ridden corrupt society where **the rule of law** is not being upheld. People are terrified even in what should be the safety of their own homes.
- The growing **racial tension** being fuelled by self-serving politicians. Different ethnic groups are becoming more and more suspicious and frightened of each other.
- The sudden news of **a life-threatening illness** and prospect of death can plunge any one of us into being afraid of the future. What will become of our children? How will my spouse cope? How will I die? Will it be painful? Will my faith endure?
- The **reality of even the prospect** of persecution or rejection in a relationship or being unemployed or not being able to cope financially or the loss of a loved one. Any person in any of these circumstances can be consumed with fear.

Being scared **is a reality** that we all experience at certain times in our lives. It is fact of life that you and I cannot avoid.

There is however **a way forward** out of being gripped by paralyzing fear.

As we continue with **John 20** where John describes the events of that day when Jesus rose from the dead there is a helpful point of application with respect to this paralysing fear.

## 2 Welcome pronouncement

The disciples (10 of them, Thomas is absent) are sitting **in a room** *John 20 ...the doors being locked for fear of the Jews, 3 Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you"*.

Locked doors may be able to keep the Jews out but they are **not an obstacle** to "*The Conqueror of death*" who has a personal concern and interest in His disciples.

The surprising **gracious greeting** from Jesus must have been quite touching and humbling to the group in the room. After all Peter had denied Him and the others had forsaken Him.

Surely it would be fair **to have expected** Jesus to demand some kind of explanation for the disappointing conduct of His close friends.

**If someone** had done that to me or to you, we probably would reprimand them by saying something like, "*shame on you, you failed me, you let me down, you stabbed me in the back, I hope you feel really bad and you really need to say sorry*".

**Jesus says**, "*Peace be with you*".

These words of Jesus went a long way toward removing the '*scare (their jitters)*' of His **sudden and unannounced** appearance through locked doors.

But far more significantly – with Jesus having achieved **such a great salvation** through His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead means that His words to them legitimately could address their 'guilty' consciences.

Having put away their sins He could now **remove the fears** of them failing Jesus. He is telling them not to be afraid. He does not come as judge to pronounce guilt and condemnation for the way they let Him down. Instead He pronounces...

### 2.1 Peace with God

Jesus comes to His scared disciples as the **Prince of peace**.

They could know peace with God. And so too every believer down through the ages can know that **welcome pronouncement**, even on that day when we see Him face to face... *Peace be with you*.

Peace with God and from God **even with** all our miserable failures, with all our sins of commission and omission. Doing what we should not have done and not doing what we were commanded to do.

Peace with God and from God **even with** our bitter divisions and conflict; where we deserve to hear, “shame on you”, instead peace, peace.

*John 20:20 When He had said this, He showed them His hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

He does this to assure His disciples that He was **really the Saviour**. He let them see that it was He Jesus who stood with them; to see that He was not a ghost and that they were not dreaming; but that He had a real body.

He was **the same person** whom they had known before the crucifixion; that He had risen in His incorruptible humanity.

By exposing the scars of crucifixion to them, Jesus is communicating the important message that there is **a close connection** between His words (*Peace be with you*) and Him showing them His hands and His side.

The marks in His side were shown to the disciples not only **to establish His identity**, not only as the trophies of His victorious fight, but principally to teach them, and us, that the basis of the “*peace*” He has made, and which He gives, is His death on the cross.

These were the **marks of accomplishment** (enmity removed, God placated, reconciliation effected); marks that are still there!

*Revelation 5:6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain...*

**After seeing** the marks in His hands and His side, v20b *Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Their fear is **turned to joy**. They were glad... fears gone, hopes fulfilled, hearts satisfied.

At this point there is a huge point of **application and understanding**... see the sequence of this unfolding drama.

- **First**, Jesus said, *Peace be with you*, and then when he had said this, He showed them His hands and His side.
- **Second**, v20b *then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

Here is **the help** we need; Peace with God (not guilty) comes through His perfect work; joy is the result of being occupied with the person of Jesus.

Getting **this distinction** is a precious secret for our hearts. As there are many professing believers who say they cannot rejoice while they remain in circumstances of sorrow; which is a terrible mistake.

Having peace with God brings with it the peace of God.

## 2.2 The Peace of God

Jesus did not change **the circumstances** of the disciples, they were still *behind locked doors for fear of the Jews*; but Jesus drew out their hearts to Himself, and thereby raised them above their circumstances.

Peter focuses on **the same principle** in *1 Peter 1*. The Christians are having to endure great affliction; persecuted, scattered abroad, homeless... But

*1 Peter 1:6 In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

Having mentioned **Jesus**, Peter immediately adds...

*1 Peter 1:8 Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,*

Their circumstances had **not been changed**, but their hearts were lifted above themselves to Jesus and because of Jesus.

**The secret of joy** is occupation and fellowship with Jesus giving the peace of God to you regardless of your circumstances.

See this blessing as we move on to **the next verse** *John 20:21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."*

This is not just Jesus **repeating Himself** saying the same thing again.

**In the same way** that the first "Peace be with you" is interpreted by what followed in Jesus showing them His hands and side; the second "Peace be with you" must be interpreted by what follows... *As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*

- The first peace was for **the conscience**; the second for the heart.
- The first had to do with **their position** before God; the second with their condition in the world.
- The first was peace **with God** (*Romans 5:1*); the second was the peace of God (*Philippians 4:7*)
- The first is **the consequence** of the atonement; the second is that which flows from communion.

Jesus **loved** the Father and the Father loved Jesus. The Father sent Jesus on a tough life consuming mission. Jesus willingly obeys in loving submission to the Father.

In a parallel manner Jesus sends **the disciples He loves** on mission; doing so as those whose hearts are full of love for Him. Their busy hands and feet are as a result of their hearts bursting with love for Jesus.

We who have peace with God and know the peace of God have the privilege of representing our Lord Jesus here on earth, as He too represented the Father.

Not only are His disciples sent to serve **as He was sent to serve**; but the disciples like Him do so in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*John 20:22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

## Conclusion

We are weak and frail and therefore **extremely vulnerable**.

- We are vulnerable and in fact **in many instances** during the course of our lifetime helpless in this broken world dominated with darkness.

We are **understandably fearful** of death, disease, criminals, rejection, persecution, unemployment and all the other destructive acts of sinful man...

- We are vulnerable and **always** helpless before God to whom we owe a debt of sin and guilt. We ought "to shake in our boots" at the thought and prospect of facing a Holy and Just God.

These inevitable vulnerabilities are **addressed exclusively by Jesus** – the death of Jesus followed by His resurrection. *Peace be with you!*

**Remember again** *John 20:31 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.*

Believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God will place you **in a position** of having peace with God...

*Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

And by believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; He will give you a **condition** (state of mind) of experiencing the peace of God even in the midst of life's storms knowing as the writer to the Hebrew Christians affirmed...

*Hebrews 13:5 ... I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

