

John 20:19-23

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Preacher: D Field

[0 : 00] We'll do three things, Lord willing. Spend about five minutes getting to know some verses of the Bible a bit better. Maybe five to ten minutes of general scene setting. And then probably about 15 or 20 minutes.

Seeing how it is that in verses 19 to 23 we might meet the Lord Jesus. And how meeting him in those verses might shed light upon the blessing that Reuben's installation as elder pastor here is could be, should be, will be.

So verses 19 to 23. Just a few minutes getting to know them. Are they up there? Good. I'm glad they're not.

On the evening I'm going to read to you a line and then ask you a question which you can answer quietly inside your own head. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week. What time of day?

What day of the week? On the evening of that day, the first day of the week. The doors being locked. What were locked? The doors being locked.

[1 : 27] What was done to the doors? Where the disciples were. Which doors? For fear of the Jews. Why did they lock those doors?

Was it morning or evening? What day of the week was it? What was locked? Where were they locked? Why were they locked? Someone, Jesus, came and stood among them.

Who came and stood among them? What did Jesus come and do? It's the evening of the first day of the week. And the doors are locked where the disciples are for fear of the Jews.

And Jesus came and stood among them. And he said to them, peace be with you. Who said to them, peace be with you? What did Jesus say to them?

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and side. When did he show them his hands and side? When he had said this, peace be with you, what did he show them?

[2 : 32] Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. How did the disciples feel? When they saw the Lord, how did the disciples feel?

What made the disciples feel glad? When they saw the Lord. And Jesus said to them again, peace be with you. Someone said to them again, peace be with you.

Who was that? Jesus said something to them again. What did he say to them again? Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you.

Who sent Jesus? The Father. And like the Father sent Jesus, then what? Jesus sends the disciples. How does Jesus send the disciples?

As the Father sent him. And when he had said this, he breathed on them. When did he breathe on them? After he'd said, as the Father sent me, even so I send you.

[3 : 39] What did he do when he'd said that? He breathed on them. And he said to them, receive the Holy Spirit.

Receive who? What? The Holy Spirit? If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you forgive the sins of whom?

If you what the sins? If you do forgive the sins of any, then what? They are forgiven them. If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.

When is forgiveness withheld? When they withhold it. If they withhold it, then what? It's withheld. Is the Father in those verses?

As the Father sent me, even so I send you. Is the Son in those verses? All over them. Is the Spirit in those verses?

[4 : 42] He breathed on them and said, receive the Holy Spirit. What verbs go with Jesus in those verses? He came, he stood, he said, he showed, he said, he breathed, he said.

How did the disciples feel? Afraid and glad. Oh, and Jesus offers them peace as well. Do you feel like you know those verses a little bit better?

The Lord Jesus, oh look, what day of the week is it? It's the first day of the week. What time of day is it? I mean, now, healing. It's the evening of the first day of the week.

Doors aren't locked. Is the Lord Jesus here? He is here by his Spirit. He's here to speak to us through his word. Brilliant. Then let's talk to him using this word.

Let's speak to the Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus, on the evening of that day, your resurrection day, the first day of the week, the doors were locked where the disciples were because they were afraid of the Jews.

[5 : 53] And Lord Jesus, you came and stood among them. And Lord Jesus, you said to them, peace be with you. And when you'd said this, you showed them your hands and your side.

They were glad when they saw you. And you said to them again, peace be with you. You said to them, as the Father has sent me, even so I'm sending you.

And when you'd said this, you breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. You told them, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.

If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. And Lord Jesus, you are here by your Spirit. You are here to speak to us through your word. And we thank you.

If the Lord Jesus said to you now, if he struck me down, so that was the end of the sermon, all the lights went out and it was the end of the sermon, or he said to you now, that's it.

[7 : 03] You've had chapter 20, verses 19 to 23. You are meant to go into the week nourished by something from those verses. What are you going to take? Let me give you 30 seconds.

What are you going to take from those verses into this week? Amen. So you've got yourself another pastor.

What difference is that actually going to make to the price of potatoes or your life? How is having Ruben as one of the pastors here really going to change things for you?

And can't you think of other things that would actually change your life a bit more? Like if you discovered a million pounds in your bank account, if you actually met her or met him, if things changed at work, if things changed with health, you can think a lot of things that would make more difference to your life than, bless you, having Ruben as another pastor here.

All sorts of things. Now that would change my life, you might be thinking. I've got nothing against Ruben, but is it really going to make much difference actually to me?

[8 : 36] And even if it were going to make a difference, how? Now we're getting closer to John 20. Because having Ruben here as an elder, as a pastor, would mean you get a little bit more of Jesus.

Every believer is a Christ-bearer. Every believer carries the Lord Jesus with them wherever they go by the Spirit. So we meet Jesus every time we meet another believer.

But what if we could meet believers who had a lot of Jesus about them? That's what we want when we appoint an elder. Somebody who's got higher than average like Jesus-ness to them.

Somebody who carries a bit more of the Lord Jesus with them than average. Jesus appointed 12 apostles so that they might be with him.

Now they saw the boldness of Peter and John and they recognised that they had been with Jesus. Paul says we're always carrying in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

[9 : 49] Paul said we think like Jesus. We've got the mind of Christ. Paul said we feel like Jesus. I yearn for you with the bowels, the heart, the guts of Jesus.

He said we smell like Jesus. We are the aroma of Christ. Every believer carries around with them the presence, the smell of the Lord Jesus.

But elders, pastors are meant to be unusually smelly people. Smelly with the Lord Jesus so that when they come into the room, when they come into your life, when they minister to you, you meet something of the wisdom and the compassion of the Lord Jesus.

Last three Sunday mornings, you've been looking at John's Gospel. I didn't hear this morning's. I have listened to the previous two, loved them. It's all about the Lord Jesus.

He is life. And last week, John the Baptist, not me, him. Ditto. Not Reuben, the Lord Jesus. We want to carry Jesus, channel Jesus, communicate Jesus, be close to him and filled by him, bring his wisdom and love and holiness and grace to people.

[11:02] Be ambassadors, representatives, embodiments. And elders and pastors are meant to be particularly intense versions of that. So not being a scholar or academic, Jesus didn't read many books, did he?

Not being charming or smooth, Jesus wasn't particularly charming or smooth. Not being an activist and charging around and having plans for everything, Jesus didn't.

Not being an organizer of movements or a builder of institutions, Jesus wasn't. Not cleverness or competence or charm or busyness, not those things. What you're getting is Reuben Hunter.

You're meant to be getting more of the Lord Jesus in the particular form of Reuben Hunter. The words Reuben Hunter, to me, mean my friend of many years, a dear, dear brother whom I deeply love, profoundly respect, I'm immensely grateful to and immensely grateful for.

Reuben Hunter. That's what you're getting. But actually, Reuben means, see, a son. So you're not getting an expert, you're not getting an executive, that sort of thing.

[12:28] You're getting a son of our Heavenly Father. That's to say, a brother. You're getting a brother. Hopefully, a more mature than most, brother.

A kinder than most, brother. But see, a son, Reuben. And you're getting a hunter. One of my favorite stories from the Desert Fathers is about Macedonius.

A certain captain of soldiers who took a great delight in hunting once came in search of wild animals to the desolate mountain where Macedonius, the hermit, dwelt.

He was prepared for the chase, having brought with him men and dogs. As he went over the mountain, he saw far off a man. Being surprised that anyone should be in a place so desolate, he asked who it might be.

One told him that it was the hermit Macedonius. The captain, who was a pious man, leapt from his horse and ran to meet the hermit. When he came to him, he asked, what are you doing in such a barren place as this?

[13:29] The hermit in his turn asked, and you, what have you come here to do? The captain answered him, I have come to hunt. Then said Macedonius, I also am a hunter.

I am hunting for my God. I yearn to capture him. My desire is to enjoy him. I shall not cease from this my hunting.

Reuben Hunter, see, a son in pursuit of God, who is particularly, intensely carrying the Lord Jesus. That's what you're getting. But carrying the Lord Jesus, what would that look like? When Jesus arrives in John chapter 20, verses 19 to 23, then you get his presence and his peace and his wounds and his intimacy and his breath all over you and good news of forgiveness.

That's what you get. And so if Reuben arrives carrying the Lord Jesus with him, and of course all of us as believers one to another, if Reuben arrives carrying the Lord Jesus with him, these are the sorts of things you'll get.

[14:45] Jesus came and stood among them. Here are some fearful disciples and Christ comes to where they are and joins them there. Here is a broken world and the Son of God comes into that world as Emmanuel, God with us.

And Jesus has a very present way of being present. You know how you and I can be here but not here. Halfway through a conversation, sorry I was somewhere completely else.

We absent ourselves but not the Lord Jesus. Look at his attentiveness. There's not much about it but look at his eye contact. There's lots about it.

Look at his touch. He's there with the person who's in front of him right now. There is something very real and personal and direct and serious when you're with Jesus and so with those who carry Jesus.

Of course, you might be behind some sorts of locked doors. There might be members of the congregation who are like behind locked doors. Of course, we're afraid of stuff. Of course, we don't want to let people in.

[16:02] How are you denying access to Christ? What are you afraid of? Think of somebody else in your life who's got locked doors.

Think of how the Lord Jesus might come and stand even though you thought you locked him out and then maybe it'll be Reuben. Maybe it'll be Reuben who comes and stands even though it's behind locked doors.

Maybe it'll be patience or prayerfulness or empathy or understanding you or knowing that he stands like you in need of God's mercy. Maybe it'll be gentleness.

Who knows what it'll be but if he is a real Christ bearer, if he is carrying Christ like the Christ of John 20, then he will get behind locked doors and be really present to you because, blessed be his name, Jesus is present.

Let's be quiet. Lord Jesus, it's the fact that you're with us behind locked doors, that's the marvel, the wonder, the delight.

[17:19] We thank you. Jesus brings his peace. He told his disciples that it was his peace he would give them.

I mean, that's back in chapters 14 to 16. His peace that he would give them. His, it's okay. Jesus had peace during his busy days.

It's okay. He had peace in the middle of storms. It's okay. He had peace in the face of vicious opposition, fickle crowds, disloyal disciples.

It's okay. He has a peace which comes from clinging on to nothing, holding loosely to and letting go of everything.

He let go of sleep and food and possessions and favour and even life. Why? Because he rested in the Father's yes. It's Easter day, this story, and Easter, the resurrection, is God's almighty yes over the Lord Jesus, over his crucified son.

[18:29] That's why he's raised for our justification. Raised for our justification means if we're joined to Jesus, God speaks an almighty Easter day yes over us, too. It's okay because God says a big, loud yes.

Put those two together and see how Jesus speaks peace. It is the okay of clinging on to nothing because you're resting in the Father's yes.

So when Jesus gives us his peace, it's like he's sending waves over us of, in me the Father speaks his almighty yes over you.

That's what it's like to be in Jesus' presence and to hear Jesus' word. It's like hearing the Father's yes over you. And Jesus, when he gives his peace, it's like he's sending waves of, it's okay.

You can let go of your fear, your self-protection, your clinging and all that stuff. Forgive the word, but I've got a new ambition from the last couple of weeks when I came across this sentence of John Updikes.

[19:44] He says, I like old men, they can be wonderful bastards because they have nothing to lose. The only people who can be themselves are babies and old bastards. And the reason is this, because they've got nothing to lose.

They're not afraid of any no that you can speak over them and they're not afraid of any no that you can speak over them because they've got God's loud yes in Jesus ringing in their ears and ringing in their hearts.

cheerful serenity, ease of soul, peace be with you, cling to nothing, it's okay, the Father says yes. And when a good pastor brings Jesus into our lives, he brings the peace, the it's okay, the Father says yes into our lives.

But it's not his peace, it's Jesus' peace. Let's be quiet. Lord Jesus, it's your peace that's our delight that we marvel at.

[21:01] Thank you. Jesus brings his wounds. What does he do? He shows them his hands and his side. He brings his wounds. Now we know that Jesus' wounds are like no other.

Jesus' death and only his death deals with our sin. but we also know that there's meant to be something of Jesus' cross in our lives.

Even though it's Jesus' cross that deals with sin totally, completely, once for all, sufficiently, we can't do it, we never could. And yet, we're to take up our cross daily.

We're to carry in our body the death of Jesus. We're to have fellowship with him in his sufferings and be conformed to him in his death. And so, the pattern of the unrepeatable, unique, totally sufficient, once for all, deal with sin, death of Jesus gets played out in our not trying to save our own lives, keep ourselves, giving up, laying out of life.

In our lives, including the lives of pastors, that will take the form of poverty of spirit and sacrificial service. When a pastor shows you his hands and side, his wounds, when any believer shows you their hands and side, their wounds, they are showing you their poverty of spirit, that's to say, their fragility and their dependence, and they're showing you their laying out of their lives to be a blessing to others.

[22 : 41] That's what they're showing you. So Reuben's not coming along claiming to be strong or superior, he's actually qualified by being weak and knowing it.

I mean, there's a load of us who are weak but don't realize it, but those of us who are weak and know it, they're the ones who are going to be bringing the presence of Jesus to others.

Wounds of brokenness in ourselves, wounds of blessing to others. God, Reuben had a floor exam at Presbytery a couple of weeks ago where he has to stand up and answer various questions and he tells me that in answer to one of them, he had a complete mental blank.

It was a pretty simple question, wasn't it? And he just went blank. And when I heard that, I thought, hallelujah, thank you, Lord, God be praised.

That's brilliant. God blessed Reuben with the mental blank because, and now I'm going to use some words that Reuben used when he was telling me about this.

[23 : 46] It means that as he starts here at IPC Ealing, he comes onto the stage, his words, with a limp, not a swagger. Wounds.

Wonderful. It's the Isaiah who says, woe is me for I am lost who's cleansed and takes the message. It's the woman who's forgiven much who loves much.

It's the Peter who denies Jesus three times and loves Jesus who feeds the sheep. The foundational disposition for the kingdom is I'm frail, I'm dependent, I'm not strong.

What we want in a pastor is somebody who's weak and flawed. I mean, we better not want anything other than weak and flawed because weak and flawed is all that's on offer. What we want in a pastor is somebody who's weak and flawed but who is not trying to hide that weakness or pretend that he's better than he is.

He's been forgiven by the Lord Jesus, he loves the Lord Jesus and therefore he carries the presence of the Lord Jesus with him. Wounds. Let's be quiet.

[24 : 57] Lord Jesus, we're glad that Reuben knows his weakness but really, really, really, really, it's your hands, your side, your wounds which are healing and life for us and we thank you.

Jesus comes with a mission from the Father with whom he's intimate as the Father sends me so I send you.

In a way, the Macedonia story does that for us but just listen to one or two phrases from John's Gospel which over the next, is it 10, 15 years you'll be preaching John's Gospel, Paul?

Do not make my Father's house a house of trade. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand. The Son can do nothing of his own accord but only what he sees the Father doing.

For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he's doing. The living Father sent me and I live because of the Father.

[26 : 12] I speak just as the Father taught me and he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. The Father knows me and I know the Father.

The Father is in me and I am in the Father. I've not spoken on my own authority but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment. And on it goes. The relationship between the mission, the being sent, of Jesus and his intimacy with the Father is so, so close.

Now lots of us spend our time, our lives, I'm afraid, trying to impress our earthly Father, dead or alive and seeking his affirmation.

Others of us are cherished by our fathers and we just want to remain in his love. Others of us hate our fathers and want to defeat them and get revenge on them. Others of us just wish we knew our fathers.

With Jesus, the relationship to the Father is perfect and it forms and patterns all the service of his disciples and therefore of pastors.

[27 : 21] As any of us to each other and as Reuben carries Jesus, smells of Jesus, does the work of Jesus, it's to be characterized by intimacy with the Father in Christ.

Let's be quiet. Oh, Lord Jesus, your intimacy with the Father and how that plays out in the way you're sent and how you behave as sent.

Really, really, we want this for ourselves. But our wonder, our marvel is that you have it. You say what the Father gives you to say, you do what you see the Father doing.

He delights in you, you're always pleasing to him and he's always with you and we thank you.

Breath, spirit, just as in the garden God breathes into Adam's nostrils and he becomes a living soul, so here Jesus breathes onto or into his disciples.

I still wonder whether he goes or whether he goes or whether he goes we don't know.

[28 : 43] But he actually did. I mean, it's not just a story, is it? It did happen. There were those disciples and Jesus breathed on them and as he did so, he said, receive the Holy Spirit.

He breathed on them. You know, it's like Aslan's breath and they come into existence. Aslan's breath and the statues come alive again.

Aslan's breath and the servants are transported to where they need to go. The breath of the Lord Jesus. What breath is that? Well, obviously, the Spirit.

The Father breathes out the Spirit and when Jesus breathes in, ha, he's filled with the Spirit which means that the Father's out breath is Jesus' in breath which means that when Jesus breathes out, what's he breathing out?

He's breathing out the Spirit and therefore, when we breathe in, what are we breathing in? The Spirit. That's how it's to be. When we were at Oak Hill, there wasn't a module on how to breathe but really, there should be and it's like this.

[29 : 49] I breathe in Jesus. as he breathes his Spirit into me. I breathe out Jesus as I lay out my life in trustful love.

Breathing in as Jesus breathes on us. Laying out our life, breathing out. We're to carry and to breathe Jesus by his Spirit.

Let's be quiet. Last one.

You don't need to do your thing. Gospel authority. Jesus, as the Son of Man, has authority on earth to forgive sins and then to dismiss sins, to release us from sins.

He has that power in himself because of his death and resurrection. So as we carry around the Lord Jesus, as we breathe his Spirit, spread his aroma, speak his word and offer his peace, we are bringing his forgiveness with us.

[30 : 59] It's like we've got anti-venom serum or debt cancellation notice about our person ready to hand over. Ours, it's true, is conditional.

So effectively, as believers and as pastors, we are saying, if you relate to the Lord Jesus in a posture of turning away and saying yes, then your sins will be dismissed.

If you don't, they won't. Ours is a conditional announcement whereas Jesus is an absolute one. We're ambassadors.

We have the right to bestow honours and to provide sanctuary and to grant citizenship, but we do so on behalf of the king with his authority.

All the ways that Reuben will make a good difference relate to him carrying Jesus, being a bit of Jesus. And one of them is he carries and announces the forgiveness that Jesus does.

[32 : 11] But it's his forgiveness. Blessed be his name. You hear that, don't you? Please hear that. The presence, it's his presence.

The peace, his peace. The wounds, his wounds. The intimacy mission, his intimacy mission. The breath spirit, his breath spirit.

The authoritative announcement of forgiveness, his authoritative announcement of forgiveness.

Blessed be his name. his name. Six wonderful things about the Lord Jesus and therefore six wonderful things about those who smell like him, who breathe him, who speak with his words, who carry him around.

No wonder, therefore, the sentence we didn't look at, the central sentence when it says, the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. To the degree that Reuben carries the Lord Jesus around with him, you will be glad, and to the degree that you want Jesus, you will be glad when you see Reuben.

He will bring these things with him. This is what makes the Lord Jesus great. This is what we're all called to. This is Reuben's very special privilege and calling and God's gift to the church in Reuben.

[33 : 35] But back to last Sunday morning, the three-word summary, not me, him, not Reuben, Christ. He's here now by the Spirit.

You believe that? He's present. He offers his peace. He shows us his wounds. He sends us on his mission in intimate relationship with the Father.

He breathes on us and he announces the dismissal of our sins and gives us that message for others. That's Jesus. Blessed be his name.

Let's pray.