

# The Road to Transformation - Peace for the Task

## INTRO: READERS THEATER OF THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

And so it began. The weakness, the betrayal of the disciples. Judas, who turned his back on Jesus completely - even giving him a sign of friendship to turn Him over to the Roman soldiers. The rest of the disciples were men Jesus had been with for three years. Men that followed Him wherever He would go, learned from Him about the coming kingdom of God - men that Jesus trusted. And this is where it began.

We all know the story of Peter. Not only did Peter run that night in the garden, but he made perhaps the ultimate betrayal. Peter bragged about how he would never leave Jesus - how he would die for Jesus even if everyone else would flee from His side. Yet Peter ran from the garden - and while following Jesus that night, Peter denied Jesus three times - just as Jesus said he would.

TRAN: I start with a story that we might normally go over at Easter time because it is a good starting point for us today. The passage we look at today is going to give us more hope for the future. Last week we began by talking about the hope we have in transforming our church, really by transforming ourselves. By way of quick review: Who does Jesus love? (People) What is the heartbeat of Jesus? (People) And that should be our heartbeat too. That will happen when...Christ IS life.

Today, we will see the hope that God can provide to us.

GO TO: John 20:19-22 (p. 1088)

### I. Jesus reassured the disciples

#### A. When Jesus appears to them his first word for them was "Peace!"

1. Many of you know the Hebrew word - Shalom
2. It was often used the way we use the word "Hello" - but it was more than that too
  - a) It was never used flippantly
  - b) It did not mean "Hi" or "What's up" - it was a serious greeting
3. It was also related to peace being God's gift - so it might be even closer related to our saying, "God bless you"
4. The idea of God giving peace was always connected in the NT to what Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection
  - a) Romans 5:1 "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

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- b) Little doubt that this is what Jesus means here for the disciples - He had accomplished what He needed to, and the disciples could have genuine peace *with* God
  - 5. By nature, men are at war with God - the Bible makes that clear (All have sinned and fall short of God's glory)
    - a) It was up to God to make the peace *with* man
    - b) But that means that peace comes on God's terms too
      - (1) Imagine if Japan, after having endured two bombings, came to the table and tried to set the terms for peace
      - (2) That would be crazy because the time for their ability to bargain had past
      - (3) If that is true on the human level, how much more so with God
        - (a) We can't bargain with God - even though people try all the time
        - (b) If people want peace, we have to accept it the way God provides it - through Jesus Christ
  - 6. Christ also offers the peace *of* God
    - a) As we have talked about, the disciples have gone through the most traumatic week of their lives
      - (1) Obviously they were a confused and fearful band of men
      - (2) Yet here is Christ, suddenly appearing to them offering them peace
    - b) So on this road to transformation for our church the first question is simple: Do you know the peace of God?
      - (1) It is a peace the world cannot offer - Neville Chamberlain said, "There will be peace in our time." - one year later, Hitler starts WWII
      - (2) Even if we run from the bad guys in the world, we can't find true peace in the recesses of our souls because, we still carry the disease - sin
      - (3) Have you accepted Christ's offer of peace - have you become a Christian
        - (a) I start here because no transformation of a church can be built on or carried out by people that don't know Christ themselves
        - (b) I refuse to be guilty of the sin of assuming that everyone in the church knows Christ
- B. Christ also speaks peace into our lives in different ways as well
- 1. For our church to transform, it will take all of us
  - 2. I can imagine that can strike fear into the hearts of many
  - 3. What are some of the things we are afraid of?

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- a) Some of us may prefer to remain behind “locked doors” like the disciples because we have a nice community going and opening the doors means possibly letting the sinners in
    - (1) This is one area of fear few would admit to, but many people have
    - (2) We have turned Christianity into an isolationist movement
      - (a) We want to stay away from people that are sinful
      - (b) You never know, it might rub off
      - (c) They might not think like us, or dress like us, or like our style of music, or agree with us politically, or buy our brand of toothpaste
    - (3) The problem with that understanding is, we think the sinners are outside the doors
      - (a) We fail to recognize that the sinners are inside the camp
      - (b) We are all sinners - saved by the One that came to bring us peace
    - (4) If Christ came to save sinners, than that is our mission too
      - (a) We are slowly unfolding the mission of Christ
      - (b) Who does Jesus love? (People) And Jesus came to save them from their sins
  - b) So if we are not supposed to stay behind closed doors, that means we have to go out and be among them
    - (1) Scarier still - we are on their turf
    - (2) We have to engage them where they live
    - (3) Gone are the days when many people come check out the church
      - (a) You will always have a few - some that are already Christians looking for a new church home
      - (b) On the whole, you don’t have many people that are not already committed to Christ coming to the door - we have to go to them
      - (c) Which was Christ’s mission - He came to save sinners (which we will get into)
  - c) Some of us may be scared by what that means for us if we have to go engage people out there about Christ
    - (1) “I don’t know my Bible well enough”
    - (2) “I don’t know how to share the gospel with people”
    - (3) “What if they ask questions I don’t know the answer to?”
4. The fact is, we all have some fears about the transformation of the church, but listen again to what Jesus said to calm the fears of the disciples
- a) “Peace, be with you!”

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- b) Jesus is giving the disciples peace
    - (1) Peace because He is now alive
    - (2) Peace because He just appears where they are
    - (3) Peace because of what He accomplished through His life, death and resurrection
  - c) This is the same peace Christ comes to bring us
    - (1) The fears we may have about the future
    - (2) The fears we have about engaging the culture
    - (3) The fears we have about our knowledge being enough
    - (4) Christ comes to us and says, "Peace, be with you!"
  - 5. The disciples reaction was joy
    - a) This is why I asked if each of us has received this peace
    - b) When we do, there is joy that follows
      - (1) We see the Savior and are overjoyed
      - (2) We see Jesus, we understand that He conquered death, and it changes us to the core of who we are
- II. Jesus commissioned the disciples - v. 21
- A. First Jesus appears to them, He wishes them peace, they see Jesus is real, the disciples are overjoyed
  - B. Now Jesus commissions them
    - 1. "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you!"
    - 2. Here, Jesus repeats Himself by saying, "Peace be with you" again
      - a) The reason is simple
      - b) We must be at peace before we can share the gospel of peace with others
        - (1) Before we can be on mission with Christ, we have to be at peace with God
        - (2) That is peace *with* God - having our sins forgiven and a right relationship restored
        - (3) And having the peace *of* God - The disciples had been hiding in an upper room - but Christ told them not to fear but be of good courage
      - c) What would change this group of fearful followers into courageous men?
        - (1) The Person that is talking to them
        - (2) John Stott, a well known theologian said, ""We learn then that the Church's very first need, before it can begin to engage in evangelism, is an experience and an assurance of Christ's peace—peace of conscience through his death that banishes sin, peace of mind through his resurrection that banishes doubt. ... Once we are

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glad that we have seen the Lord, and once we have clearly recognized him as our crucified and risen Savior, then nothing and no one will be able to silence us.”

- C. But peace is not the focus of the verse - the commissioning of the disciples and its relation to Jesus' commission
  - 1. These words are a command to evangelize, but they establish a pattern as we evangelize
    - a) The key words are “as” and “so”
    - b) “*As* the Father has sent me, *so* I am sending you.” - in our version in the pew Bible, the Greek word for “so” is untranslated
  - 2. So our mission in the world is to be patterned after Christ's mission
- D. What does that mean for us?
  - 1. First, Jesus was sent into the world - so we are sent into the world
    - a) Turn to John 17:18 (p. 1084) “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”
    - b) This is what we call incarnation
      - (1) A fancy word we use with Jesus
      - (2) It means becoming one with those we would help
    - c) Think about it - Jesus came into the world
      - (1) He could have stayed in heaven shouting commands to people
      - (2) How effective would that be?
      - (3) I went to many of the football games this past season
        - (a) Somehow, when I would sit in the stands, I would always, and I mean always, sit in front of “that guy”
        - (b) You know the guy I am talking about?
        - (c) The one that yells at every player on the field for how they are to do their job
        - (d) The one that yells at the scoreboard operator if they don't post the score within 3 seconds
        - (e) The one that yells at the coach to “help him in his job”
      - (4) How effective do you think, “that guy” is?
        - (a) The only effect he had on me was to make me fall back in my holiness
      - (5) Jesus refused to be, “that guy” - standing in heaven and shouting down commands
      - (6) Jesus came into the world
    - d) That means we do not stay in holy huddles in the safety of our church and shout at society what they should know for salvation
    - e) It means we go be with them - we seek for ways to engage them on their turf

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- (1) If we don't we are failing to carry out what Jesus is saying
- (2) If we don't, we are becoming "that guy"
- f) Let's be honest, most of us are guilty at this point
  - (1) We have retreated from the world rather than invade the world
  - (2) When we do this, we are basically telling the world they can go to hell
  - (3) We are happy to spend money to send people overseas to spread the Good News, but will not engage our neighbor if it might cost us some comfort or prestige
- g) Again, John Stott says, "I personally believe that our failure to obey the implications of this command is the greatest weakness of evangelical Christians in the field of evangelism today. We do not identify. We believe so strongly (and rightly) in proclamation, that we tend to proclaim our message from a distance. We sometimes appear like people who shout advice to drowning men from the safety of the seashore. We do not dive in to rescue them. We are afraid of getting wet..."
- h) Stott goes on to say that identifying with the lost is a problem for him
  - (1) And add me to the pile - it is not easy
  - (2) But if we are going to see this church transformed, obeying Christ's commission to send us like He was sent has to become the top priority - for all of us
  - (3) The first step is praying for opportunities for specific people God put in our lives so we can be making a dent in the kingdom of darkness for the kingdom of God
2. The second way our mission is to be patterned after Jesus is in its purpose
  - a) The world is the context in which we perform the mission or the purpose - what is the purpose?
  - b) Turn to 1 Timothy 1:15 (p. 1192) "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst."
  - c) Christ came into the world to save sinners - so that is our mission - to save sinners
    - (1) As the Father has sent Christ to save sinners, so Christ sends us
    - (2) If we engage in evangelism to fulfill a duty, we are missing the point, and we don't really love the people we are witnessing to
      - (a) Nicole Dean has been setting an example of someone that is witnessing out of love

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- (b) She has been involved in her friend's life through thick and thin
- d) Jesus said, "No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draws him."
  - (1) So that means we don't have to care about them - just give them the gospel
  - (2) Wrong! Christ cared so much that He gave the gospel even to those He knew would reject it - think, the rich young ruler
  - (3) Christ cared so much for sinners that he regularly ate with them, and was looked down on by the Pharisees because of doing so
  - (4) Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
  - (5) That means we need to find ways to be with sinners - to build relationships with sinners - to point sinners to Jesus
- e) Let me point out something else from the verse in 1 Timothy - Christ came to save sinners - and then Paul said, "of whom I am the worst"
  - (1) Paul went to sinners because he realized he is one of them - not was
  - (2) The verb is in the present, active, indicative - it means Paul was keenly aware that he is still a sinner
  - (3) This is another suggestion of why we do not go - we think we are better than others
    - (a) We would have to stoop down to save some sinners
    - (b) And our back hurts - so we don't want to stoop
    - (c) We would never say that out loud - but when you think through motives, this most certainly can be a biggie
  - (4) Or we think we are too sinful and a bad example of Christianity
    - (a) Do you realize that your sin only serves to display God's grace
    - (b) If God can save a sinner like me, He can save anyone!

## III. Jesus also enabled them

- A. John 20:22 - "And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'"
  - 1. This is a beautifully done play on word pictures
    - a) In Genesis 2:7 God breathed life into the first man, Adam giving him his spirit (the word for spirit and breathed are the same)
    - b) Warren Wiersbe puts it, "The breath of God in the first creation meant physical life, and the breath of Jesus Christ in the new creation meant spiritual life."
  - 2. You see, Jesus gave them reassurance, his commission (or marching orders), and now He enables them by the Spirit
    - a) Jesus was not about the send the guys out without help

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- b) He knew He was leaving, but the Spirit would be with them wherever they go
    - (1) That is one of the reasons it is better that Jesus is not here now
    - (2) We have the Holy Spirit living inside us to guide, convict, and aid us through life - and even in evangelism
      - (a) Which is another reason why it is so important that if you have not accepted Jesus' offer of forgiveness, you don't have the Spirit
      - (b) To engage in evangelism would be crazy - you could never be effective witnesses without the Spirit, and neither could the disciples
- IV. So this is Jesus' plan for the disciples, and it is His plan for us as well
- A. Jesus offers us peace in the midst of our fears
    - 1. He reassures us
    - 2. He lets us know that true and genuine peace is available with God and from God
  - B. Jesus gives us a mission to accomplish
    - 1. Being with in the world of sinners and bringing them to Christ
    - 2. He does the saving, but we get to join Him in His mission - in fact, He left us in charge of the mission
      - a) How are we doing with it as Christians in general
      - b) How are we doing with it as a church
  - C. Jesus enabled the disciples
    - 1. He gave them the power to be able to accomplish the task
    - 2. He would not leave us to it by ourselves
  - D. The question this leaves us with is will we answer His call
    - 1. We know that Jesus loved...People
    - 2. We know that Jesus came to save sinners
    - 3. We also know As Jesus was sent to save sinners, so we are sent

PRAYER CHALLENGE: Lord, place on my heart the names and faces of people You have put in my life. Help me to love them so much that I can't help but share the salvation in Jesus with them. Give me peace, give me proper perspective, but most of all, give me love. Amen