

John 20:19-31 NIV

The Living Jesus Is Seen and Heard!

Sunday, April 27 at 8:00 & 10:45 + Monday, April 28 at 7:00 PM

Second Sunday of Easter – 2014

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Let's be honest, in the eyes of the world we – *as Bible-believing followers of Jesus* – appear to be foolish, shallow, closed-minded, and weak:

- ✚ We believe the Bible is God's Word, *yet many do not!*
- ✚ We believe God created, *yet many believe we evolved!*
- ✚ We believe right and wrong is set by God, *yet many believe right and wrong is set by people!*
- ✚ We believe forgiveness is essential, *yet many believe that "good" is good enough!*
- ✚ We believe Jesus is God, *yet many believe He was simply a good teacher who set a good moral example!*
- ✚ We believe Jesus lived, laid down His life, and was raised back to life, *yet many deny His resurrection!*

For all those reasons and more, we appear to be foolish, shallow, closed-minded, and weak, yet – *in reality and only with God's great blessing* – we are wise, deep, open-minded, and strong! Now – *as we go to one of the most-clear accounts of Jesus' resurrection* – may the Holy Spirit grow our relationship with our Risen Savior!

1. **Jesus Appears to Most of His Disciples:** ¹⁹ **On the evening of that first day of the week** [*Easter Sunday evening*], **when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!"**

²⁰ **After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.** // *Can you imagine their joy!* They ♦lived with, ♦traveled with, and ♦learned from Jesus for three years; then, *they saw their hopes destroyed* when He †was arrested, †was crucified, †died, and †was buried. However, *on that first Easter Sunday – on the Festival of Firstfruits, when they were in a secure room with the doors locked* – Jesus appeared to His disciples and showed them that He is alive! *Wow, what joy!*

2. **Jesus Authorizes His Disciples to Forgive Sins:** ²¹ **Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."** ²² **And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."** ²³ **If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.** //
 - a. So God the Father sent His Son to remove all sins – *to bring reconciliation between God and man*; then the Son sent His followers to announce the fact – *the good news* – that all sins have been removed! Dr. Kretzmann adds: **"The Gospel is not only a report of the salvation earned by Jesus, but it is the application of this message, the imparting of the forgiveness of sins."** (NT 1:525) The blessings are intended for everyone, but, unfortunately, *many continue in unrepentance – without sorrow for sin and without faith in Jesus as Savior!*
 - b. John 20:22-23 is also the basis for what we call the office of the keys; Martin Luther wrote: **"The Office of the Keys is that special authority which**

Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.” (SC) Every believer can announce, *thus impart*, God’s forgiveness, but pastors – by virtue of their call to a congregation – are authorized to *publicly announce God’s forgiveness* to that congregation.

3. **Thomas Doubts and Demands Proof:** ²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not [οὐ μὴ] believe it.” // Again, try to imagine the excitement of those who did see Jesus alive on that first Easter Sunday; ♦*their certainty of His resurrection* and ♦*their joy overflowed to Thomas, yet he demanded so much more!* Thomas wanted not only to see but also to touch the very wounds of Jesus! Then, in the strongest way a negative can be written in the Greek, Thomas said: Without such proof, I will surely not believe that Jesus is alive!
4. **Jesus Provides What Thomas Demanded:** ²⁶ A week later [literally, after eight days – which is one week later if you count both Sundays] his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” ²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my

God!” ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” // Sometimes we say more than we mean; when Jesus addressed Thomas as he had requested, it seems that Thomas – *even without touching Jesus* – exclaimed: “My Lord and my God!” Thomas saw the physical evidence and – by God’s grace – He believed, *thus he received the benefits of Jesus’ finished work!* But we are even more blessed; *without having seen the physical evidence, but relying only God’s Holy Word, we – by God’s grace – believe in Jesus as our only Savior!*

5. **God Wants Everyone to Believe in Jesus for Eternal Life:** ³⁰ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written 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 why did John write his gospel? Dr. Kretzmann wrote: “His aim was to prove the deity of Christ and to work conviction in the hearts of men by such proof, in order that they might believe and by faith have the everlasting life which is in Christ...” (NT I:526)

Conclusion: So sin really is a problem for all people; therefore, Jesus really lived, died, and rose for all people! Now, all who →are sorry for their sins and →know Jesus as their Savior are in possession of God’s gift of eternal life! So, having that precious gift, let us live with joy and announce God’s forgiveness to others! And all God’s people said: **Amen!**

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Having been saved thru Jesus, let us live for Him and share the good news!
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