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The Resurrected Christ

John 20.11-23

Series: Signs of Life

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I. The Last Words of Christ

- A. College musical experiences
 - 1. Managed to find the time to continue to participate in some musical activities in between my athletic exploits
 - a. My athletic exploits – bounced around from sport to sport
 - b. Wasn't too good in any one of them
 - c. Jack of all trades, master of none
 - d. So that by the time I finished, I'd played four varsity sports
 - e. None of them well enough to do it for more than two seasons
 - 2. Music wasn't much different
 - a. I enjoyed singing; didn't do it very well back then
 - b. I also continued playing the bassoon in the college orchestra which I'd studied in high school
 - c. Both of those enterprises were kind of on-again, off-again
 - d. Picking them up when the opportunity fit my schedule and when the music was interesting to me
 - 3. One occasion, however, stood out in my experiences
 - a. College orchestra and the choral society – made up of both students and community singers – conspired one Easter season to perform the Seven Last Words of Christ
 - 4. Now there are dozens of composers who have composed settings for the Seven Last Words
 - a. It is one of the most compelling scriptural texts to have inspired musicians for centuries
 - b. And our college actually did two of them in one concert on that occasion
 - c. And two very different kinds of compositions
 - d. We did the Heinrich Schutz version – 17th Century Baroque composer; German Requiem version
 - e. Then after a brief intermission we did the rich, romantic version of Theodore Dubois, the 19th Century French composer
 - f. It made for a fascinating contrast – a remarkable sense of how different composers, centuries apart, stylistically unique, tried to give understanding and expression of Christ's last words
 - g. And of course, there are many other compositions by other composers who have their own interpretations

- h. In that concert I believe I was in the orchestra, playing the bassoon
 - i. It was one of the more memorable concerts for me personally
- B. But the problem with all of those musical versions of the last words of Christ is that, as far as I can tell, none of those compositions were actually the last words of Christ
 - 1. The so-called “Seven Last Words” are the seven last words of Christ on the cross, before He died
 - 2. Words like
 - a. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do”
 - b. “Today you will be with me in paradise”
 - c. “Woman, behold your son. Son, behold your mother”
 - d. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
 - e. And so forth
 - 3. But those are not the seven last words of Christ
- C. The reason they are not is that Jesus, after He died, rose from the dead
 - 1. And after He rose from the dead, He spent more than a month appearing to His disciples
 - 2. And when He spent time with them, He didn’t keep His mouth shut
 - 3. He spoke
 - 4. And when He spoke, you better believe that if the disciples didn’t pay too much attention to Jesus before He rose from the dead
 - a. They certainly paid attention to Jesus after He rose from the dead
- D. Previous study in our Gospel of John series we examined the resurrection of Christ
 - 1. This morning we examine the Resurrected Christ
 - a. And look at the occasions when He met with His disciples before His ascension
 - 2. And in the Gospel of John we discover that what Jesus says in those 40 days are cherished by the Church
 - a. And they encapsulate so much of the nature of the relationship we are to have with the risen Lord
 - 3. And since He is risen, and no longer in the grave – we would well to pay attention to these last words of Jesus
 - a. Whether or not they have captured the imagination of the composers
- E. Text – **John 20:11–23** (ESV) —
 - 1. 11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb.
 - 2. 12 And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet.
 - 3. 13 They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”
 - 4. She said to them, “They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.”
 - 5. 14 Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus.

6. 15 Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?”
 7. Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.”
 8. 16 Jesus said to her, “Mary.”
 9. She turned and said to him in Aramaic, “Rabboni!” (which means Teacher).
 10. 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”
 11. 18 Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”—and that he had said these things to her.
 12. 19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”
 13. 20 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side.
 14. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.
 15. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”
 16. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.
 17. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”
- F. These are not all of the last words of Christ – even in the Gospel of John
1. We’ll see some others in the final messages in our series
 2. But these give us a good start in discovering what the risen Lord wants us to know

II. **A Tender Call**

- A. Recall that Mary Magdalene had gone to the tomb with a number of other women early that Sunday morning
1. That had carried spices with them to anoint the body of Jesus, adding to the spices that had been used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus when they buried Him
 2. The group included Mary, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Joanna and perhaps some others
 3. When they got there, things were not as they expected
 - a. The stone which had been covering the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away, leaving the entrance open
 - b. Presumably they had expected the soldiers guarding the tomb to open it for them; they were nowhere to be found!
 - c. And it appeared that the body of Jesus was not in the tomb
 4. So they group dispatched Mary Magdalene to go and get the disciples
 - a. She ran and found Peter and John

- b. They raced to the tomb and had their encounter which we examined in our last message
 - 5. And Mary followed, but well behind
 - a. And by the time she got back there, Peter and John had had their encounter, and they had left
 - b. And the other women had long since departed
- B. So Mary is by herself, confused, disoriented
 - 1. Distraught by the disastrous events of the past week
 - a. Overcome with grief
 - b. Not knowing what to do or where to begin
- C. Turns out she wasn't by herself after all
 - 1. A couple of angels appear to her
 - 2. They say, "Woman, why are you weeping?"
 - 3. She replied, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him."
 - 4. And evidently, in her grief, she turns away from them and from the tomb – probably buries her face in her hands, weeping
- D. When she turned away she saw a man
 - 1. Turns out it was Jesus – the resurrected Jesus – standing
 - a. But through her tears, and because in His resurrected body He probably appeared different, she didn't recognize Him
 - b. She thought He was the gardener
 - 2. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?"
 - 3. She said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away."
 - 4. This, of course, is crazy talk; the words of a woman in grief
 - a. The words of whose view of reality is warped by the overwhelming distress she is experiencing
 - b. How in the world would a woman like Mary Magdalene carry away the body of full grown man? Makes not sense
- E. When you're in the midst of grief? When you are overcome with distress, do you always think straight?
 - 1. It's difficult, isn't it, to keep your wits about you; to think coherently
- F. But then Jesus said to her, "Mary"
 - 1. "Mary"
 - a. This One she did not recognize spoke her name
 - 2. "Mary"
 - a. And immediately she knew who He was
 - 3. "Rabboni!" which means Teacher! in Aramaic
- G. Jesus speaks her name – and she knows it's Him!
 - 1. She knows her Lord is calling her
 - a. And she immediately seeks to grasp Him; to hold Him
 - b. To embrace Him
 - c. Just as she had so many times before

- H. It's a **Tender Call**, isn't it?
1. But it's the same tender call that each one of Jesus' disciples, Jesus' people, have received at some point in their lives
 2. Has He called your name?
 - a. I know – it probably wasn't an auditory experience like Mary's
 - b. But if you belong to Jesus, if you're one of His people – one of the "Jesus people" – you've heard Him call your name
 - c. And you've responded to His call
- I. We've already seen that in our study of John, haven't we?
1. **John 10:4–5** (ESV) —
 - a. 4 When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.
 - b. 5 A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."
 2. **John 10:14–15** (ESV) —
 - a. 14 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
 3. **John 10:27** (ESV) —
 - a. 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
- J. The first of the resurrected Jesus' last words is a tender call
1. If you're a disciple of Jesus, you've heard that tender call
 - a. And you've followed the Shepherd
 2. But what if you haven't yet trusted Jesus as your Savior?
 - a. Is He calling your name?
 - b. Is He speaking to you now?
 - c. Not audibly – but just as real
 - d. Is He speaking to your heart?
 - e. Is He saying to you, sinner, "Come to Me and find forgiveness for all your sins?"
 - f. Is He saying to you, you who are burdened with so much of life's challenges, "Come to Me, you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest?"
 - g. Is He saying to you, you who are confused and disoriented, not knowing which way to turn, "Come to Me and find true purpose and hope?"
 3. Oh, friend, don't miss His voice
 - a. Mary found forgiveness her sins – which were many!
 - b. Mary found relief from her burdens
 - c. Mary found resolution to her doubts and distress, and found hope for her soul
 - d. You can to
 - e. Listen for His voice

III. **A New Relation**

- A. Mary grasps Jesus, embraces Jesus, just as she had in the past
 - 1. And yet she is surprised that Jesus resists her embrace
 - a. Tenderly, to be sure, but He puts some distance between the two of them
- B. **John 20:17** (ESV) —
 - 1. 17 Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, ‘I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.’ ”
- C. In doing so, He is not resisting a relationship with His disciple – He defining a new relationship
 - 1. I remember when my kids were teenagers, going through all the ups and downs of dating and relationships with guys and girls
 - a. They would use a term that I hadn’t heard before
 - b. They would talk about a prospective couple, and would say about them that they are having a DTR conversation
 - c. DTR? What’s DTR? Sounds like an insecticide
 - d. No DTR meant “Define the relationship”
 - e. They were having a conversation to “define the relationship,” to sort out where this relationship is headed
 - f. Is the relationship going to grow more serious? Or are we just friends? That sort of thing
- D. What Jesus is saying is, I am risen from the dead
 - 1. The way you related to me in the past will change
 - a. We will have a new kind of relationship with the risen Lord than you had when I was present with you before My death and resurrection
 - 2. “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”
 - a. “I’m only here for a brief time – and then I’m going to My Father”
 - b. “And you know what, He’s your Father too! He’s your God too!”
 - c. “And because I’m going to the Father, you will receive the Holy Spirit”
 - d. “The Holy Spirit – through whom I will dwell in you”
 - 3. And that is a new relationship
 - a. A relationship in which Jesus’ embrace is no longer physical, but spiritual
 - b. Closer than He ever could be when He was on earth
- E. **2 Corinthians 5:16–17** (ESV) —
 - 1. 16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh.
 - 2. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.
 - 3. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- F. That’s the second of the last words of Jesus
 - 1. We now, because Jesus is the resurrected Christ, have a new relation
 - a. The old has passed away, the new has come

- b. We are new creatures in Christ
- 2. We are not the same as we once were
 - a. Jesus is not just another amazing person
 - b. He, by His Spirit, indwells us
 - c. Transforming us, motivating us, captivating us, energizing us
- 3. Because He is the resurrected Christ
 - a. We now have a new relation to Him
 - b. And to His Father
 - c. Who is our Father

IV. A Precious Provision

- A. **John 20:19** (ESV) —
 - 1. 19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, **“Peace be with you.”**
- B. What a precious provision!
 - 1. Because in the world, there is little peace
 - a. Whether between nations
 - b. Between political parties
 - c. Between ethnic groups
 - d. Between estranged family members
 - e. Oh, how we need peace
- C. Biblically, there are two kinds of peace that we all need
 - 1. One is **peace with God**
 - a. Because by our sin we are separated from God
 - b. We are estranged from God
 - c. We are enemies with God
 - d. God is holy; we are not
 - e. We are by nature rebels against His rightful reign and rule!
 - f. But in Jesus Christ, He has reconciled us to God by the blood of the cross
 - g. By faith in Christ, we are declared not guilty – Christ Himself has paid the penalty for our sin
 - h. We are justified before God – just as if we’d never sinned
 - i. “Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God” (Romans 5.1)
 - j. That is an objective peace; objective in the sense that it may or not correspond to our feelings, our emotions
- D. The other kind of peace we need is the **peace of God**
 - 1. The peace of God is a subjective peace
 - a. In which the turmoil of our souls is resolved
 - b. In which the turbulent waves of the hurricane’s storm surge turns into a placid pool of reflection
 - c. Reflecting the very face of God, calming our spirits
 - 2. **John 14:1** (ESV) —

- a. 1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.
- 3. **John 14:27** (ESV) —
 - a. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.
- 4. **Philippians 4:6–7** (ESV) —
 - a. 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
 - b. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- 5. What a precious provision!

V. **A Compelling Commission**

- A. **John 20:21** (ESV) —
 - 1. 21 Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.”
- B. Evidently, the peace of God, which Jesus promises – that precious provision – is not meant to be kept to ourselves
 - 1. The peace needs to be passed
 - a. Passed on to others
 - 2. We are being sent as ambassadors of the peace
 - a. Both peace with God
 - b. And the peace of God
- C. This is John’s version of the Great Commission
 - 1. Each gospel writer has a version of the Great Commission
 - a. We tend to think of Matthew 28.18-20
 - 2. **Matthew 28:18–20** (ESV) —
 - a. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
 - b. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
 - c. 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
 - 3. Or perhaps the one by Luke in Acts 1.8
 - 4. **Acts 1:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
 - 5. But this is John version
 - a. And his emphasis is that Jesus is sending us
 - b. And our sending is comparable to the sending of Jesus by the Father!
 - c. Now that’s astounding!

- D. There's too much to unpack in that this morning; but let me make one observation
 - 1. Jesus was (is!) the incarnate Son of God
 - a. So when He was sent, He came with the power and authority of God Himself
 - 2. But we have learned that as Jesus goes to the Father, He promises to send His Holy Spirit
 - a. His Spirit – the Spirit of Christ (Romans 8) – to indwell us
 - 3. That means that we are kind of like a second incarnation
 - a. That's how the Church is like Jesus Christ
 - b. The Church is the body of Christ
 - c. Because of the Spirit of God – Christ indwells His church
 - 4. So as the Church goes to fulfill the Great Commission – we also go with the authority and the power of the incarnate Son of God
 - a. Chew on that for awhile!

VI. A Powerful Presence

- A. **John 20:22** (ESV) —
 - 1. 22 And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”
- B. We've already seen this extraordinary promise in our study of the Gospel of John
 - 1. How in Chapters 14 and 16 Jesus promises that it is good for Him to go to the Father because in going He will send “another Helper” the Holy Spirit to indwell believers
 - a. It's a promise unlike anything any other religion could even imagine!
- C. And of course, this promise is integral to the Great Commission
 - 1. In Matthew Jesus promised, “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (**Matthew 28.20**)
 - 2. When Jesus declares, “Receive the Holy Spirit” He is making good on this wonderful promise
 - 3. And indeed, if we are going to be sent “as the Father has sent me” we will need His powerful presence
- D. Having said that, there is some degree of confusion regarding this verse
 - 1. Is “Receive the Holy Spirit” merely a prospective anticipation of what will actually happen at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit is poured out on all believers?
 - 2. Or did these disciples actually receive the Holy Spirit – weeks before Pentecost?
- E. I actually believe they did receive the Holy Spirit on this occasion
 - 1. Even before Pentecost it's not as though the Holy Spirit was completely missing from the people of God
 - a. The Spirit of God was quite active – albeit given to specific people for specific occasions or roles
 - 2. I think this is kind of like Pentecost – the Prequel
 - 3. You know how certain movie franchises, as they unfold in a series of

movies, sometimes have a movie that actually is meant to provide the background, or backstory, of the rest of the series

4. Like Star Wars
 - a. The original Star Wars trilogy was released from 1977-83
 - b. But the Star Wars trilogy that was released from 1999-2005 was actually the prequel to the original series
5. I think this is Pentecost – the Prequel
 - a. Jesus gave these disciples the Holy Spirit in anticipation and in preparation for the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh, on all believers at Pentecost
- F. But whatever – it is Jesus’ promise of a powerful presence
 1. Yet another extraordinary provision that Jesus includes as one of His last words

VII. A Sobering Responsibility

- A. **John 20:23** (ESV) —
 1. 23 If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”
- B. This does not refer to a special authority given to a designated priesthood
 1. The scripture is clear – from beginning to end – that only God can forgive sin
 2. What is this text, then, saying?
- C. It’s talking about the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ
 1. That as the people of God, the Church, proclaims the Gospel, we have the sobering responsibility of declaring that only in Jesus Christ can sins be forgiven
 2. That when people place their faith in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation, we have the authority to declare their sins forgiven
 - a. Not because we have that authority in and of ourselves
 - b. But that we know that in Jesus Christ, sins are forgiven
 3. And – that when people reject Jesus Christ, or seek their salvation in someone or something else – we, the Church, have the authority to declare that their sins are not forgiven
 - a. And that’s what makes the responsibility sobering
- D. And so in these last words of Jesus, He brings us into the gravity, the enormity, the glory of our message
 1. That in Jesus Christ – and in Jesus Christ alone – God is reconciling the world to Himself
 - a. And that there is no other way
 - b. No other gospel
 - c. No other One in whom we might find salvation
 2. Don’t make the mistake of thinking that you can accuse God of not doing enough to provide salvation for a lost humanity
 - a. He sent His own Son
 - b. To live a life as a human being that you and I could never live – a

- sinless life
 - c. And then He died on the cross, taking upon Himself the just punishment for all the sins of all those who would believe on Him
 - d. And He was raised from the dead, declaring with power that He is who He claimed to be
 - e. And He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father – reigning and ruling
 - 3. Don't think that you will stand before God and tell Him that that's not enough
- E. Jesus said "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me."
 - 1. He calls you by name – it's a tender call
 - 2. He establishes a new relation with God
 - 3. He gives a precious provision – the peace of God
 - 4. He provides a compelling commission
 - 5. He gives us a powerful presence to go with us
 - 6. And He calls us to a sobering responsibility – the proclamation of the gospel