

The Greatest Love

The Sacrificial Example of Jesus

Easter 2024

John 20:19–29

March 31, 2024

Introduction

- **Supreme Acts of God's Love** – There are 3 explicitly clear acts done by God that demonstrate His love for us:
 1. **Creation** – He made us in His image because He wanted to pour love into us and have a relationship with us.
 2. **Incarnation** – God Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God came here to earth to live among us to demonstrate for us not only what was possible, but His personal concern for us.
 3. **Cross** – The Bible says, '*greater love has no man than to lay down his life for his friends.*' Jesus Christ, dying on the cross, taking all the condemnation upon Himself so that we might be forgiven, cleansed, freed and enter into the perpetual grace of God, was the most moving act of love God has ever done.
- **He Didn't Have to** – We forget that **God didn't have to do any of this.** We wasn't lacking when He created. He wasn't lonely when He incarnated. He never needed to die for Himself.
- **We Shouldn't Question His Love** – we ought never to question the love of God for us. Yet we still do. We fall into the pattern of, '**what have you done for me lately.**' It's difficult to emotionally remain thankful for something that occurred a long time ago. No matter how many times **pastors remind** us that God's **love and salvation** is being carried out **IN THE PRESENT** and God is **continually cleansing us**, we forget.
- **He's Not Gone** – But here's the fun news. **Jesus Christ is alive.** On the last day He was visible on Earth He made a specific point to say, '**I will continue to be with you always.**' Just because they couldn't see Him didn't mean He left permanently.
 - **He's with us** – Those beautiful final words **aren't just for those followers** but for all followers. That means that today just because we can't see Him doesn't mean that he's not with us, watching us.
 - **He's not done** - and that means **He's got a ton more love to pour out** and He's pouring it out today.

Lesson

- **So, We celebrate that the LORD has Risen Today, yes? Then the **two questions** that immediately follow that are:**
- **1.) What happened next?**
- **2.) What does that mean for us?**
- **Hope, Joy & Implications** - I'd like to take our time today to share the **glorious joy and hope** that came from the resurrection of Jesus Christ and let you **ponder** the **implications** for you.

- **To begin our study of what happened next we are going to read a passage in John.** **John 20:19** is where we are beginning. It is **FOLLOWING Jesus rising** and revealing Himself to His **female disciples** and to the two men on the **Road to Emmaus**. The main **12 disciples have heard** Jesus is alive but they haven't seen Him yet. The **anticipation** must be killing them.

How Jesus Loved

- **Title**

- **Jn 20:19** – *“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.”*
 - **Why Jesus Showed Up** – **Jesus showed up to His guys because He loved them.** He already told them through the ladies. They didn't NEED to have Him show up, but their relationship expected it, and Jesus was all about it.
 - **Peace First** – something you may forget about the story right before this is **how disappointing the team had been**. We think about **Peter's denial**, but did you remember that **all of them scattered the night** that Jesus was arrested? Do you remember that **ONLY JOHN was at the foot of the cross** with the ladies? So, Jesus could have come into the room, the first time they see Him after all of that, and threw the door open and chastised them, but He didn't. **The first words** out of His mouth are, “Peace be with you.” In other words, ‘Chill guys, we're good.’
 - **More Than Practical** – What I see in that arrival is more than practical. I see kindness and even more, **GENTLENESS**. They are seeing the evidence right in front of them that the guy they let down is God Himself, the King of Kings. But **Jesus doesn't even let them go down that mental path**. He cuts them off right from the get-go and **creates peace and connection**.

- **Title**

- **Jn 20:20–29** – *“When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*
 - **Touch Me** – **If God showed up** in your room one night, or even an angel shows up unannounced to you, is your first thought going to be to touch him? NOPE. Your first thought would be self-protection. But **Jesus set the tone of peace and immediately created intimacy**. You don't touch someone you have a beef with unless you are going to fight. The physical touch was evidence that things were safe and okay.
 - **It's Your Turn** – the next thing (recorded) is that Jesus says, ‘it's your turn.’ The Father sent me to show you our Love and now it's time for you to get out there and show the world our Love.
 - **You Have Everything You Need** – without getting into the weirdness and theological implications of Jesus breathing the Holy Spirit into them and giving them some

radical authority, the bottom line is simple: **Jesus was sending them out FULLY EQUIPPED**. The goal was to bring love and hope and they had everything they needed to get that job done.

- **Title**

- **Jn 20:24–29** – “Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. [the one meeting you don’t show up to] ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.” ²⁶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although 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, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.””

- **What About the Skeptic** – Thomas was a skeptic. He was **practical**. He would have considered himself a **realist** because all pessimists consider themselves realists. When someone doesn’t believe you **it’s an insult** because they are saying that they don’t believe that you can either be trusted to know the truth or convey the truth. But **some personalities are just like that**. They have a hard time trusting anything but facts that they determine are legitimate. **So, what did God do with that guy?**

- **The Extreme Skeptic** – not only does Thomas want to see the risen Lord with his own eyes, which should be enough, **he doesn’t even trust HIMSELF to not be led astray by something he thought he saw**. He wants to TOUCH IT as evidence that it’s legitimate. Wow!
 - **These folks are hard for me** – I’m gonna be honest, if you are this resistant, I’m going to have to insult you personally. You are making things way to hard on yourself and everyone else. But hey, to each his own...
 - **More Peace** – Again, Jesus comes in (without notice or knocking may I add) and the first words are, **‘Relax Team, It’s all Good’**. Which by the way is helpful advice for anyone that’s teleporting around.
 - **More Evidence** – Jesus addresses Thomas’ skepticism. Which demonstrates that Jesus heard about that. Actually, Jesus heard him say that. **Getting called on it is awkward**. Yet, instead of chastising him first, Jesus lets him get what he needs. Then **He corrects him that Thomas can’t continue to live that way (resistant)**. **Jesus can’t always answer every question and doubt that Thomas has. At some point trust is going to need to take over.**

- **Jesus Goes the Extra Mile to Demonstrate His Love**

Love Is FELT Through Action

- **We Cannot Read the Mind of God** – What I've been showing you today is **all the ways that we could SEE the love of Jesus Christ through His ACTIONS**. He always loved us in His heart, but it wasn't until He did something that we could track on that we FELT it. **Love held but unexpressed only blesses the one holding it.**
- **Actions Reveal the Heart**
 - **Jesus' love compelled Joseph & Nicodemus to act** - What Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did was try to love on Jesus any way they could because He had been so loving to them.
 - **Jesus' love compelled the women to act (anoint)** - The group of women coming to anoint His body were coming to love on Him any way they could because He was so loving to them.
 - **Jesus' Instruction for Peter** - Jesus could have let Peter stew on his shame for denying him 3x's but He didn't. He restored him and reinstated him. John 21:15-19. In fact, the conversation on the beach they had was about the depth and exhibition of Peter's love. **Jesus explained that if you say that you love Him but don't do anything about it in action, it may not be true. Jesus needed Peter to put it in action. If you love me, you'll love on my kids.**

How We Should Love

- **God Fills Our Tank** – **Christianity is designed off the OVERFLOW METHOD**. God never tells us to generate something from nothing. God gives everything we need to us and we pour it out on others.
- **Have You Been Loved? (what will you do?)** – The majority of us this Easter have experienced the Love of God in significant ways. Our tanks have been filled. We know that. So, the question shifts to, what are we going to do with that heart full of love?
 - **We Pour It Out...**[I will say these words as a cue to play video immediately]
 - **LOVE ROSEVILLE VIDEO**
 - **A Year of Opportunity, Opportunity** - This is ONE opportunity to put our love in action that we are doing here at Bridgeway. I encourage you to be a part of it. I think that it will make a HUGE difference.
 - **We Start It But Partner to Make it Happen** – Love Roseville is managed by us but it's a Kingdom-wide movement. It involves multiple churches and multiple investors outside Bridgeway.
 - **Rock of Roseville** – On April 27th, the Serve Day, we are actually meeting at another church, the Rock of Roseville who is closest to downtown Roseville to kick it off.
 - **23 different projects across our city** – loving on people who may never come into a church. Loving on people who may not see the world like we do. Loving on people who may think the Church doesn't care.
 - **There's a project to help The Gathering In** – who reaches out to the homeless and struggling.
 - **There's a project to provide CHEMO KITS** for our local hospitals.
 - **There's a project to beautify Roseville High School**

- **And so much more...**
- **April 27th** – reminder (write this down), LOVE Roseville project day is meeting on April 27th, down by Vernon Street at the Rock of Roseville Church.
- **How Can We Not Lovingly Serve?** - How can we observe and receive that type of love from God and still be stingy with our love? How can we be resistant to love those around us when ‘while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly?’

Conclusion

- **Christian Hope & Challenge - Radical Love In Us to Give** - Let us leave here with a radical love in our hearts toward those around us and even those who are different from us. Loving those who are same is human. Loving those who are different and even those who don't like us, is heavenly.
- **Pre-Believer - If You Haven't Felt Loved** – there may be some of us today that feel like I am asking you do to something that you cannot do. You have NOT felt the love of God. You still believe that you and God are at odds, or at best estranged. If that is you, I would like to pray with you today to close that gap and begin the pouring of God's love into your heart.
 - **It takes surrender** – **Only the empty portion of a container can be filled**, right? So, as long as we are full of ourselves, God can pour any more in there. I'm going to lead you through an emptying-out prayer so that He can pour back in all the amazing things we've been talking about.
 - **Result** – that way all of us together can leave here filled up and ready to pour out.