

Jesus Gives Peace

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So What: Why the Resurrection Matters | April 19, 2026 | John 20:19-29

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

All right, if you have your Bibles, I want to invite you to grab them and turn to John chapter 20.

I was with a group of pastors this past Monday, and they gave me a subject to speak on. I was to address these pastors and speak on the subject of why preaching through the Bible in a systematic way matters. I'd never preached on this subject before. I was looking forward to it, and what I really loved about it was, as part of my introduction to this group of pastors, I just recalled to them my original calling to pastor and preach. I was preaching to a group of pastors, so it made sense.

As I was thinking about that, knowing what we were talking about this week, it's just amazing how it lined up. You know, I first sensed a call to preach and pastor when I was 11 years old. I can remember being in a church setting. I was in the sixth grade, listening to a pastor preach, and I remember thinking, "If I don't coach football, I could do that right there." I remember thinking that as an 11-year-old.

Then, at 17, I turned my heart toward ministry, and I began to work out what this was going to look like - to pastor and to preach. I can remember people saying, "Well, what are you going to do? Do you want to be a pastor? Do you want to be a student pastor, youth pastor, music minister?" We had all these positions in church, just like we have today.

I can remember vividly saying to them, "You know what I think I'm going to do? I'm not going to be a youth minister. I'm not going to be a music minister. I'm definitely not going to be a music minister. I'm going to be a minister to doubters. That's what I'm going to be."

For so long in middle school and high school, I struggled with doubt. I doubted my salvation. I can remember being in church, listening to a traveling evangelist preach. He would just bring the fire down, and at the end he'd have this invitation. He'd say, "Do you know that you know that you know you're saved?" And I thought, "Well, I did until you put it like that." Then I'd doubt, you know?

I can remember going to my student pastor on numerous occasions and just trying to talk it through with him: "Is this something that I really believe, or is it just something that I grew up in? How do I know that this is my faith?" I talked to him about doubt.

I can remember being at student camp, and it was just such an emotional high. You're there listening to the preaching of God's Word. Again, I loved everything about it. But I would think, "God, how can I be saved and be in a relationship with You if I'm still struggling with this sin over here, and it just keeps coming up and grabbing me by the ankles?"

I struggled with all sorts of doubt. I was plagued with doubt. That's why I said, "When God calls me to ministry, I'm going to be a minister to doubters."

Well, in today's message, we're going to see someone who struggled with doubt. In fact, this guy's name is synonymous with doubt. We know him. You can fill in the blank. He is Doubting Thomas.

Our text today is John 20, verses 24 through 29. We're looking in this series at several of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. They're important because they're eyewitness accounts. They're the greatest evidence that we have that the resurrection was a historical event. In every post-resurrection appearance, we learn something about Jesus, and we learn something about ourselves.

So far, if you remember Easter, it was "Jesus is hope." That's what He showed Mary that day, early Sunday morning at the tomb. Then last week, we talked about the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and Jesus brings understanding.

The subject today, the title of the message, is "Jesus Gives Peace." Our focus is going to be verses 24 through 29, but what I want to do is read John chapter 20. I'm going to start in verse 19, just for larger context's sake. I'm not going to preach verses 19 through 23, but I will refer to them.

Just an interesting note: verses 19 through 23 are their own post-resurrection appearance, separate from any of the others that we're looking at. We're not going to look at this one in this series, so you can read it at home in your own time alone with the Lord.

Let's start in John 20, verse 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."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

— John 20:19-23

Maybe the greatest understatement in all of history right there: "Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord." Okay?

We're going to cover this mission that God gives us in the post-resurrection appearance of the Great Commission, where Jesus does send them all over the world.

Again, this is a commission given to the disciples to authoritatively declare forgiveness of sins in Christ. Here we get to our main text today, our key verses, starting in verse 24:

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

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."

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."

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."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

— John 20:24-29

Doubt Is Normal

You read any commentary on this passage of Scripture or listen to nearly every preacher who preaches this passage of Scripture, and all of them are going to say that Thomas gets kind of a bad rap, knowing him as Doubting Thomas. I mean, can you imagine being forever known for something that you struggled with? That was how you were identified? That would not be a good nickname to have.

And yet, all of us, at one time or another - there's not a person in this room or watching online who has not struggled with doubt.

If you're taking notes, I want you to write this down. It's just a point I want to make: doubt is normal.

I hate that this story is in the Bible for Thomas' sake. I love that it's in the Bible for my sake, because Thomas doubting makes me feel okay about my doubting.

It wasn't just Thomas who doubted. The other disciples doubted. When Mary returned saying she'd seen the risen Lord, Luke chapter 24, verse 11, says:

But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

— Luke 24:11

Doubt was normal after the resurrection. I mean, dead people don't just get out of the grave.

But it wasn't just normal after the resurrection. It was normal before the resurrection. Think about some of our heroes of the faith. Think about the Hebrews 11 series that we came out of in the fall. Some of the greatest people we know were doubters.

Abraham doubted. Moses doubted. King David - read the Psalms. It's a journal of doubt: "Where are You, God? Why aren't You listening to me, God? Do You hear my voice, God?" Job - the first 38 chapters - doubt.

John the Baptist. Jesus said of John the Baptist:

Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.

— Matthew 11:11

This is the man who saw the Holy Spirit descend like a dove. He baptized Jesus. And yet, when he's in prison, he sends word to Jesus, "Are You really the Messiah?"

Doubt is normal. And you know why doubt is normal? Write this down: doubt is normal because doubt is natural.

Think about it. Part of having faith is because doubt is a reality. If doubt wasn't present, you wouldn't need faith. It's been said that faith is not the absence of doubt. It's choosing to trust in the midst of doubt.

As we get going today, I want to underscore this. I want to emphasize this. Doubt - hear this - is normal. It's natural. And doubt is not the problem. Unbelief is.

That's the word that's used here in verses 24 through 29. It's not even doubt that Jesus addresses. It's unbelief. Look at the second part of verse 27:

Do not disbelieve, but believe.

— John 20:27

He pinpoints Thomas' unbelief because of Thomas' own words. Look at it there in verse 25:

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.

— John 20:25

There is a huge difference between doubt and unbelief. Doubt is struggling with belief. Unbelief is refusing to believe.

In other words, doubt will hang out and ask questions: "Could this be true? Might this be possible?" Unbelief doesn't ask questions. Unbelief makes statements. It makes declarations: "No way is this true. This could never happen."

In Scripture, to doubt, by definition, is to be double-minded. James says in his letter that a man who doubts is double-minded, and he's like a wave of the sea, tossed to and fro. Doubt is to be double-minded. Unbelief is to be closed-minded.

What Thomas was flirting with here in John chapter 20 - he is on the edges of unbelief. And unbelief is super dangerous from a spiritual standpoint because it's unbelief that leads us to fall away from God. It's unbelief that closes God's work in our lives and shuts the door on God's activity in our lives. Unbelief hardens the heart.

Let me give you two verses that speak to the dangers of unbelief. One is Matthew chapter 13, verse 58. Jesus is in Nazareth. This is His hometown, where He grew up. Listen to what the Scriptures say:

And he did not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.

— Matthew 13:58

Just think about that. The people's unbelief effectively prevented Jesus from doing all that He could have done. I mean, that's a thought right there - that our unbelief could, in some ways, handcuff deity. Something to think about.

The second verse is Hebrews chapter 3, verse 12. Again, it'll be on the screen for you. Look at what the Bible says:

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.

— Hebrews 3:12

An unbelieving heart - that's a hard heart. That's a calloused heart. When we refuse to believe, we close the door on God's activity in our lives.

It's not that God's not speaking to us anymore. What it is, is that when we say no to God and refuse to believe, our heart is like deadened skin, and it callouses. It's not that God's not speaking to us. It's just that we can't hear Him because we have a dead heart, dead to His voice.

By the way, this word "unbelief" here, where Jesus says, "Don't disbelieve," every time it's used in the New Testament, it's a word that is used to describe the faithless. It's a word that is used to describe someone who doesn't know God, who is outside of a relationship with God.

The end result for unbelievers, those who live in unbelief - read it for yourself. Write this verse down and look at it later: Revelation chapter 21, verse 8. For unbelief, there is a destination that comes with it. The Bible says that those who live in their unbelief and die in their unbelief will experience the second death and will be separated from God forever and ever.

So unbelief is extremely dangerous, and we've got to be on guard against it.

Jesus knew this is where Thomas was. He was on the edge of unbelief. And so, in His grace, He comes to Thomas and gives peace to his soul. He does it in two extraordinary ways. One is in the fact that He speaks, and the second is in something that He does.

How Jesus Gives Peace

If you're taking notes, write it down. How does Jesus give peace?

Number one, He speaks His Word.

Three times in this larger passage of Scripture, Jesus speaks the word of peace over them. In verse 26, He speaks it directly to Thomas:

Peace be with you.

— John 20:26

You go to Israel today, and you'll hear Jewish people in conversation saying this to one another as they greet one another or as they depart: "Shalom." It means peace.

It's the state of being that signifies wholeness. It's more than a salutation and a greeting. It's almost like wishing health and prosperity and blessing over someone's life: "May you experience peace and rest internally and externally. Shalom."

Well, when Jesus died and rose again, shalom moved from a greeting to a brand-new state of being. Because Jesus was raised to life, the disciples - and therefore me and you - can walk in the fullness of what shalom really is. It's no longer a wish. It's now a reality. He gives us peace.

He speaks it through His Word over our lives. In the midst of confusion, in the midst of doubt, in the midst of questions, He speaks.

I don't know what it is you're doubting as you walk into church this morning. It could be, like me, you're doubting your salvation: "Do I really know Christ?" You're looking at your life. Is there fruit there? You're trying to discern, "Do I really know Him?"

Or maybe you're doubting God's forgiveness in your life. You made a choice or decision, and you've lived with the consequences for years. You can't get it out of the repeat cycle of your mind. You can't forgive yourself, and so you think, "God certainly can't forgive me."

Maybe you doubt God's love: "God, if You loved me, why am I going through this? Why is my loved one having to endure this?"

I don't know what doubt you came in here struggling with today. But if you want doubts to grow quiet in your life, my encouragement today is to get into His presence and listen to His Word. When you open up His Word, I promise you, He speaks. And what He will speak is peace over your life.

I liken it to Mark chapter 4. Do you remember Mark chapter 4? I love this story. Jesus is with the disciples, and He's out on the Sea of Galilee when the storm comes up. It's a bad storm, all right? The Bible says it's a great windstorm. The word "great" is "mega" there. It's a mega windstorm.

These are professional fishermen. They've been out on the sea. They know a bad sea storm, and they are wiggling out. They are panicking.

Do you remember what Jesus is doing? He's asleep. What was rocking their world was rocking Jesus to sleep.

They wake Him up in a panic, and they're like, "Master, get up! Don't You care that we're perishing?"

Do you remember what Jesus said? Mark chapter 4, verse 39:

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"

And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

— Mark 4:39

There's that word "great." In verse 37, it was a mega storm. But when Jesus spoke His Word, it became mega calm, like a sea of glass.

See, that's what doubt has a way of making us feel like on the inside - a wave of the sea. We're turning within. We're uncertain. It's scary. It causes panic: "God, are You really hearing my prayer? Why aren't You coming through? Do You really love me? Can You really forgive this sin?"

Jesus, in speaking a word, can make those doubts that you're having as calm as a stilled storm. He can speak a word.

All you've got to do is open up the Word and experience His presence. What He'll do is speak His peace. It's the power of the Word of God. This is why we've got to give our lives to it. That's why you wake up every morning and get alone with God: "God, I need to hear Your Word." And He'll give you His Word.

You know, when I'm in hospitals or maybe calling somebody before surgery, one of my favorite verses to give them is Isaiah chapter 26, verse 3:

*You keep him in perfect peace
whose mind is stayed on you,
because he trusts in you.*
— Isaiah 26:3

Jesus will give you peace through His Word, and you'll receive it when your ears are tuned in and listening to it.

Think about how Jesus gave His disciples peace. He speaks a word, but then He does something else. Look at this. This is very important: He shows His wounds.

He did this on two different occasions. He did it to the disciples when Thomas wasn't there, and then He did it when Thomas was there. He showed them the nail-pierced hands. He showed them the spear-pierced side.

Don't miss this. Peace came - and we could say it like this: fear left, questions left, and doubt left - when the disciples, and when Thomas, realized who Jesus was.

How did they recognize Jesus? His wounds. That's how He was identified - by His scars.

By the way, I've heard it said - I don't remember who said it - that the only thing that is man-made in heaven are the scars of the Lord Jesus Christ. That's how we'll recognize Him.

The wounds of Christ are a reminder that the peace He gives came with a cost. It came with His life.

Listen to commentator Edward Klink. He says this: "The display of wounds is not simply an act of identification, a proof to the disciples that the man standing in their midst is Jesus. Rather, they explain the source of his peace. The peace of God was entirely dependent on these specific wounds. The scars from the crucifixion declare shalom for the world."

Isaiah was speaking about this very encounter when he announced:

*The punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.*

— Isaiah 53:5

I mean, Thomas, my goodness. No doubt he was in the dark. Can you imagine what he must have been feeling, to miss out on seeing Jesus? That's FOMO at its worst, right?

You look at verse 25. The tense of the Scripture indicates that the disciples kept on saying to him, "We have seen the Lord." They kept repeating, "We have seen the Lord. We have seen the Lord."

Can you imagine Thomas? He's like, "Stop saying that!" Because Thomas hadn't seen Him. He had to be miserable to miss being in the room where it happened. All right, I almost called the sermon that - Hamilton, "The Room Where It Happens." He missed being in the room where it happened.

Where was he? We don't know. Scripture doesn't tell us.

There are two other instances where we're given insights into the personality of Thomas. We don't have time to look at them, but if you read the two other instances where Thomas is mentioned in Scripture, he seems to be kind of a glass-half-empty kind of guy, kind of an Eeyore, if you will. Now, that's just reading into it. We don't know that to be the case.

But it could be that he just wanted to be by himself, just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus last week. They wanted to get out of Dodge. Maybe that's how Thomas processed his pain. And he had pain.

Again, we shouldn't be too hard on him. He watched his Messiah, his dream, shattered on the cross and laid in the tomb.

It's a good word for us, playing off last week. When you're discouraged, when you're down - let me add, when you're having doubts - the last thing you need to do is isolate yourself and be away from people, especially God's people.

If you're struggling with doubt, you're in the right place, because you're in a room full of people who know what it is to doubt. You're in a room full of people who are gathered to hear God's Word. This is where He gives His peace, at the speaking of His Word.

Don't isolate yourself. Instead, give yourself to and press into community.

It's amazing, the grace of Christ in this, when He shows up and speaks to Thomas. Did you notice that, even with the disciples earlier, He didn't rebuke them? He didn't come into the room and go, "Where were y'all on Friday?" He didn't say, "Hey, when I was being lifted up on the cross, I was just looking out, and I didn't see any of you." He didn't say that.

What does He do? He gently turns to them and speaks His peace over them. For Thomas, He addresses exactly what He knew Thomas was struggling with. Do you see it there in verse 27?

Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side.

— John 20:27

Jesus addressed what was in Thomas' heart. Jesus knew exactly what Thomas was doubting and what he was struggling with. I'm telling you, Jesus knows exactly what you're struggling with. He knows exactly what your doubts are.

In His grace, He comes, and even using me as an instrument this morning, He's speaking grace over your life. You know what He's saying? "Listen to My Word and look at My wounds. I'm here for you."

Scripture doesn't tell us if Thomas did what Jesus told him to do. I tend to think that he didn't touch His scars. I think just seeing Him was enough.

He makes one of the greatest confessions of faith. One commentator said no other person in Scripture makes a confession as strong as this one:

My Lord and my God!

— John 20:28

Peter confessed Him as the Son of the living God at Caesarea Philippi. Bartimaeus confessed Him as the Son of David: "Have mercy on me." He'd been confessed at Palm Sunday as Hosanna, the King of Israel.

But Thomas' confession? "My Lord and my God."

You're here today, and you doubt whether God loves you? Look at His wounds. Stare deeply into His wounds. He loves you.

You doubt whether God could ever save you? Look at His wounds. You stare into His wounds, and you stare long enough, and your doubts will dissipate. It won't be long until, like Thomas, you have this confession of faith: "My Lord and my God." It's personal.

Practical Ways to Deal With Doubt

In closing, let me give you some practical ways to deal with doubt. I want you to be able to walk out of here, if you're struggling with some things, with something you can wrap your mind around and put into practice. I've just lifted these from the text. They're very practical.

If you're struggling with doubt, number one, name it.

What is it that you're doubting? Get to the root of it. This is what Thomas did:

I will never believe.

— John 20:25

He got to the root of it. Look, we give Thomas a hard time. Let's give him credit here. At least he wasn't putting on a show, acting like everything was good, like it wasn't bothering him. No, he was honest. He put it on the

table, and he named his doubt.

Have you done this? This is where it starts. Get honest with the Lord. Remember, God doesn't get angry with our doubts and questions and fears. When He came into the room, He came in love, and He gave His peace.

So name whatever it is. Name that doubt.

Secondly, wrestle it.

Don't isolate yourself, avoid the issue, and never think about it. "It'll be okay." No, wrestle it down.

Lee Strobel was an atheist. You've probably heard his name. He wrote the best-seller *The Case for Christ*. He graduated from Yale Law School and was on staff with the Chicago Tribune. He was an atheist, and his wife became a believer. He was like, "What is going on? She has joined a cult."

So he sets out to disprove the resurrection. For 21 months, Lee Strobel travels all over, interviewing scholars and professors. He's trying to get answers to whether Jesus really rose from the dead.

At the end of those 21 months, he locks himself in a room and says, "You know what? I've got to take a step of faith. This is true. I've got to believe this." And he gives his life to Jesus.

Listen to what he says about doubt: "Christians can have doubts, and they can have questions. And the unhealthy way to deal with it is to keep them inside, where they fester and grow and can undermine our faith. The healthy way to deal with it is to talk about it and be honest about it."

Again, name it, and then wrestle it down. God doesn't get angry at us when we express our hesitations about Him. It's fine to ask questions about God. It's permissible to wrestle with objections to Christianity. It's even okay to have doubts, as long as you pursue solid answers.

Did you notice in John chapter 20, verse 26, the first part of that verse? Do you know what it said? Look at it:

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them.

— John 20:26

Eight days later. I mean, at least Thomas is hanging around. He's wrestling with those doubts.

I guarantee the whole time I'd be wrestling with doubt if I were Thomas. Are you kidding me? Here's my mind if I'm Thomas: "You showed Yourself to the women followers of Christ. You showed Yourself to the other ten disciples. You showed Yourself to the other disciples who were on the road to Emmaus. I'm the only one who didn't get to see this?"

That's how I'd be thinking: "God, what did I do? What did I do to deserve this?"

Don't you know Thomas is wrestling with doubt? But at least he stays there. Eight days later, Jesus comes in and shows Himself.

Wrestle with the Lord. Don't leave because you have doubts. Don't abandon your faith because you have

doubts. Hang around. Stay around. You never know when God's going to show up and speak a word. You never know.

Doubt, again, is normal, and it's natural. So name your doubt, wrestle your doubt, and seek answers.

Download podcasts. I see my buddy Jeff Medders over here. We did my Forward podcast, and he dealt with doubt. You could go online. It's all about helping you move forward in doubt. Get answers.

I was at the Lanier Library last night, listening to a lecture from a guy who has forgotten more than I'll ever know. All right? He's just brilliant. We want to go to places like this so that we can grow and learn. Watch YouTube videos. Listen to preaching so that you can learn to doubt your doubts and believe your beliefs.

The third and final thing is simply: share it. Share your doubts.

Man, there's something powerful about sharing in community how you're battling doubt and how God's giving you victory to overcome it, if He is.

I promise you, when I talked at the very beginning about doubting my salvation and doubting whether God could forgive me, some of you breathed a sigh of relief because you're thinking, "Man, I'm not the only one in the room. I'm in a category with the preacher." And you felt relief.

There's power in sharing. You could set somebody free in your life group just by opening up and saying, "Man, I'm really doubting this right here. Would you help me? Would you pray with me? Would you talk to me?"

There may be somebody else in the life group who says, "Man, I struggle with that exact same thing."

You know, history tells us that Thomas took the gospel further than any other disciple. He took it all the way to India. Don't you know, in his travels to India, he was sharing the whole time? "Man, I used to battle unbelief. I used to struggle with doubt. But Jesus showed up, and He changed my life."

Jesus said something to Thomas after his confession. I want us to look at this as we close today:

Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.

— John 20:29

He's talking about me and you.

Thomas got to see Jesus. He got to hear the voice of Jesus. He got to hear Him audibly with his ears. He got to see Him physically with his eyes.

You and me? We're not getting that. We have to look to Jesus by faith. And Jesus says that when we look to Him by faith and believe, we are blessed.

Don't let doubt - don't let unbelief - have the last word. Instead, let's look to Jesus by faith. Let's listen to the Word that He speaks. Let's look deeply into His wounds.

If we do that, I promise you, we'll end up just like Thomas, saying, "My Lord and my God."

Amen?

Let's go to the Lord together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

We're going to have a time of invitation, as we do every single week here. If you're here and you need to receive Christ, I want to encourage you today: don't leave without trusting in Christ as your Lord and Savior.

You can cross over the line of unbelief today by putting your faith and trust in Christ. Where faith is present, doubt always will be. Faith just takes the step, even in the middle of doubt.

If you need to receive Christ today, I'm going to encourage you. We're going to stand and sing in just a moment. You come forward.

If you want to join our church, we've got a membership class next week. Come forward to join our church. We'll tell you about our new membership class.

If you need prayer, come forward. That's what we're here for.

If you want to be baptized, we'll heat up those baptisteries next week. All right? You'll be ready to go.

Whatever decision you need to make, I want you to come forward.