

## WARM UP

- 1) What was your greatest fear as a child? Have you outgrown this fear?
- 2) How do you react when you are in a stressful situation? Is there anything you do in particular that helps you regain peace of mind?
- 3) Who do you run to when you have something to celebrate?

## WORD

**Key Scripture: John 20:19 - 23 (NLT)**

*That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” He said. As He spoke, He showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! Again He said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” Then He breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”*

Uncertainty can be exciting, but it could be—in many situations—a scary thought or reality as well. Being uncertain means not knowing what lies ahead, being caught up in events beyond our power, and feeling a sense of helplessness toward the future; fear often becomes a natural human response. In these recent times especially, many of us have faced uncertainties of different kinds, which has led us to re-examine our lives, reshuffle our values, and rethink where we anchor our hope and security.

The Bible is full of stories of battles, hardships, and struggle; however, the great thing is we have a God who proves Himself faithful, powerful and sovereign even in the scariest, most uncertain circumstances. Not only does God win our battles, He shows us that our struggles are never wasted. Let’s look at the story of Jesus appearing to His disciples after His death and resurrection and why He makes an “insensitive” mandate to His followers when they found themselves amidst an uncertain time.

**1. PEACE IS WITH US**

*“That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” He said. As He spoke, He showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!” - **John 20:19-20***

Jesus's disciples were facing their own "lockdown" situation in the aftermath of Jesus's death. In this passage, we see them hiding behind locked doors, afraid that they will share the same fate as their Master, and fearing Jewish leaders are on the hunt. They were panicking for their lives, and validly so. Being human, too, we fear for our safety, our families, and how we will survive when we suddenly find our future at stake. What are the "doors" we hide ourselves behind? What do we run from when our lives suddenly take an unexpected turn?

Out of the blue, Jesus meets His disciples in His resurrected state, comforting them with the words: "Peace be with you." Peace is not only the absence of war/conflict, but the presence of something better in its place—Jesus who is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus shows His disciples His scars, erasing their doubts and restoring their joy.

Philippians 4:6-7 explains how prayer and praise leads to peace that "surpasses all understanding." How can you receive this peace today?

## 2. JESUS SENDS THEM OUT

*Again He said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*  
- **John 20:21-23**

The second time Jesus says "Peace be with you," He tells His disciples to do something that seems insensitive and unreasonable: He sends them out into the hostile world. The dangerous times and situation they were living in was far from over; yet, Jesus instructs them to go! Why? Because a world in fear needs a friend in faith. Tempting as it is to hide inside our own caves and cover in fear during a crisis, the mission remains to proclaim Jesus's message of salvation and hope.

Jesus does not simply command His disciples, and then abandon them. Just like He promised before ascending to heaven (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus empowered His people with the Holy Spirit to go out and carry-on with His work. As His followers, we have been given His peace, presence, and power. The question is: will we obey and go? Do we trust Him to be with us always, to the very end of the age?

## 3. FOLLOWING JESUS TODAY

*<sup>18</sup> Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations,<sup>[a]</sup> baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. <sup>20</sup> Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* - **Matthew 28:18-20 (NLT)**

Being a follower of Jesus has serious implications. It takes our focus away from ourselves and places it on the bigger picture that He has in mind, which has not changed from when He came into the world to save us. Jesus commands us to deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24-26). Why? For whose sake? For the sake of those who are yet to believe, for those in our neighbourhoods who are hurting, for our lives, our families, and our legacies. Following Jesus means leaving the majority for the sake of the minority or one in great need of God.

***Following Jesus means leaving comfort and leaving the known.***

If Jesus can leave the familiarity of heaven, if the disciples can leave the locked room and venture into the unknown world before them – can we? Remembering what Jesus has done for us, trusting His Word, and asking the Holy Spirit to guide us, we can do the same.

## **APPLICATION**

1. Reflect on your situation today. How are you responding to the difficulties you are currently face? Is your mind and heart set on Jesus?
2. Think about your family and friends. Is there anyone who needs to hear God’s Word and about the peace offered amidst pain? How can you share the love of Jesus during this time?
3. Be a friend to those who don’t know God—they are waiting. Write down 2 or 3 names of people you can contact and start conversations with this week. (Note you do not have to jump straight to spiritual matters; simply asking how someone is doing and listening to what they share can go a long way in our present time.)

## **Prayer**

1. Pray that God will use you to minister to your friends and loved ones who are in need. Ask for wisdom to build a deeper relationship and more trust with them. Ask Jesus to grant you and them His peace that transcends understanding.
2. Pray for people around your neighborhood to be physically, spiritually, and mentally healed. Pray for opportunities for you and others who part of Jesus’s Church to be a blessing to them and build relationships that will last.
3. Pray that people across New Zealand will be receptive to the gospel and many will accept Jesus as the Saviour of the world (John 4:42). Ask the Holy Spirit to work in and through His Church to continue His work that He sends us out to do.