

The Resurrection and our Fears

Gospel of John, Part LXX

John 20:19-23

Stuart W. Bryan

I. The Controlling Power of Fear

Edmund Burke wrote, *"No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear."*

II. He is Risen!

- A. Discovering the Empty Tomb (1-10)
- B. Appearances of the Risen Lord (11-29)
 - 1. To Mary Magdalene (11-18)
 - 2. To the Disciples sans Thomas (19-23)

Jesus appears on Sunday evening, *the first day of the week*, the beginning of God's re-creation of the world through the resurrection of Jesus. When He appears, He declares, " *be with you.*" Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He could declare their sins forgiven and their relationship with God reconciled. Their encounter with the Risen Christ transforms their into *gladness* (20b).

Jesus then commissions them to serve as His messengers to all the world. *"Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you."* Jesus sends His disciples into the world to proclaim the Gospel of salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ, sinners can have peace with God and everlasting life.

But Jesus does not merely give His disciples a task to accomplish, He also imparts the Spirit to enable them to fulfill this task (22). In the first creation, God breathed into Adam the breath of life; now, in the beginning of God's re-creation of the world, Jesus breathes forth His Spirit on the new humanity, the Church (1 Cor 15:45). The imparts the *resurrection power* of Jesus to us.

Jesus further expands on His commission in v. 23: *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained"* (23). Our message is twofold: a *promise of* for all those who believe in Jesus and a *warning of* for all those who reject Him. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, the but the wrath of God abides on him"* (Jn 3:36).

III. How the Resurrection Reshapes our Fears

- A. The Resurrection and the Fear of God (Ps 118 cf. Rom 4:25; 8:9-17)
 - 1. Free from the fear of condemnation (Rom 4:24-5:1; 8:1; 1 Jn 4:17-19)

The resurrection transforms our fear of God's judgment. Though as sinners we should fear the judgment of God, as those who believe in Jesus, we can have confidence of with God. The righteousness of Jesus Christ *"shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered up [crucified] because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification. Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom 4:24-5:1).

- I. Prologue: The Identity of the Son of God (1:1-18)
- II. Jesus Proven to be the Christ & the Son of God in His Public Ministry (1:19-12:50)
- III. Jesus Proven to be the Christ & the Son of God in His Passion and Resurrection (13:1-20:31)
 - A. Introduction: He knew His hour had come (13:1)
 - B. Jesus Prepares the Disciples for His Departure (13:2-17:26)
 - C. Jesus Departs this world to the Father (18:1-20:29)
 - 1. Jesus' Arrest & Trials (18:1-19:16a)
 - 2. Jesus' Crucifixion & Burial (19:16b-42)
 - 3. Jesus' Resurrection & Appearances (20:1-29)
 - D. Conclusion: Purpose of the Gospel (20:30-31)
- IV. Epilogue: The Future Mission of the Son of God (21)

2. Filled with the fear of God (Ps 130:4; 1 Pet 2:17; Rev 14:7)

Yet the Gospel does not teach us to dispense with the fear of God altogether. Psalm 130 teaches us to sing, “*There is forgiveness with You, That You may be _____*” (Ps 130:4). The forgiven man lives evermore in the fear of God by the grace of God. He confesses that the fear of the Lord *is the beginning of knowledge* (Pr 1:7) and *the beginning of wisdom* (Pr 9:10); the fear of the Lord *prolongs life* (Pr 10:27) and *is a fountain of life* (Pr 14:27); the fear of the Lord *is a treasure* (Is 33:6).

B. The Resurrection and the Fear of Death (Mt 10:16-39; Rom 8:31-39)

Earlier in His ministry, Jesus had spoken to the disciples about the *fear of death* (Mt 10:27ff):
²⁷“*Whatever I tell you in the dark, speak in the light; and what you hear in the ear, preach on the housetops.* ²⁸*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.* ²⁹*Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.* ³⁰*But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹*Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.*”

The disciples had gone out boldly and seen fruit from their ministry. But it was easier to be bold when Jesus was still with them. Now they thought He was dead. But He was risen!

C. The Resurrection and the Fear of Man (Ps 118; Pr 29:25)

- The King Summons Everyone to Praise the Lord (1-4)
- The King Recounts the Lord’s Favor and Expresses His Hope of Salvation from Death (5-18)
- The King and People Sing Antiphonally (19-28)
 - The King Vows to Enter the Sanctuary (19-21)
 - The People Acknowledge Him as the Messiah (22-24)
 - The King Prays for Salvation (25)
 - The People Laud Him and Offer a Sacrifice (26-27)
 - The King Praises the Lord (28)
- The King Summons Everyone to Praise the Lord (29)

Note well the solid hope that anchored King Jesus in His crucifixion. He was in distress (5a), persecuted by those who hated Him (7b) both among the people (8b) and the princes (9b); the Gentiles surrounded Him (10a, 11a-b, 12a) and someone (Judas) pushed Him violently to kill Him (13a). But the Lord was on His side (6a), so He did not fear (6b); the Lord was for Him (7a) so who could be against Him (7b)? In God, He was a Conqueror not a Victim (10b, 11c, 12b-c). Therefore, He praises the strength of the Lord with joy (15-16) and knows that though God has chastened Him as a Father does His Son (18a), yet God has not abandoned Him to death (17a, 18b). He shall live and proclaim the works of the Lord (17b).

Confident of the Lord’s salvation, therefore, He enters into the sanctuary to offer Himself a sacrifice for His people (19-21). Though rejected by the rulers (22a), He was anointed by God and shown to be the Messiah (23). When? On the day that He rose from the dead. So the people rejoice in *this day* (Sunday!) and are glad in it (24). Confident that the Lord will hear Him, the King prays for salvation (25). The people confess that He is the Blessed One (26), the Light of the World (27b), and the sacrifice for sins (27c). The King rejoices in His God (28) and summons all Israel to join Him in praise (29).

IV. Conclusion