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PEACE & PURPOSE

The news is incredible. First, *Jesus is not in His tomb!* Then, *Jesus is alive!* The women saw Him, and so did two men on the road to Emmaus. The disciples are incredulous. It's too good to be true! But it gets better. As John 20 unfolds, Jesus appears, giving them three things: His peace, His purpose, His power.

As we view the resurrection of Jesus in the gospel of John, consider there are three other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Together with the book of Acts and the letters of the New Testament, they provide a complete picture of incontrovertible eyewitness testimony about the resurrection.

The apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 calls it "*of first importance*" to the Christian faith that Jesus died for sins, was buried, and raised to life. Never think for a moment that people back then weren't as smart. Paul had the equivalent of two doctoral degrees by the age of 21. The risen Christ appeared to him and changed him from a persecutor of Christians to a prosecutor of Christianity - a champion of the faith.

In John 20:19, on Easter evening, the disciples were in a holy huddle behind locked doors. Then Jesus appeared among them. Incredible! They saw Him, recognized Him, talked with Him, touched Him, and ate with Him (Luke 24). His resurrected body gives us a glimpse of what ours will be like. The apostle Paul says our natural perishable earthly body will be transformed into an imperishable spiritual heavenly body. The difference is similar to how a seed that is sown becomes a head of grain. Not a ghost, but glorified. So believers will be resurrected like Christ was, so that we can live with Him in heaven forever.

HIS PEACE - Jesus appeared and said, "**Peace be with you.**" These words are the Easter equivalent of "*tetelstal*" - *it is finished, paid in full* - that Jesus spoke on Good Friday. This connects major aspects of His "glorification" - crucifixion and resurrection - and anticipates His coming ascension.

"*Peace be with you*" is "*shalom aleichem*" and refers to the peace of complete well-being. Jesus pointed to ultimate *shalom*, eternal peace - as in Romans 5, made right with God by grace through faith. For all who believe, the death of Jesus pays for our sins, and His resurrection gives us new life in Christ. But that day, in their fear and confusion, the disciples were mostly concerned about immediate earthly peace.

Jesus shows them His hands and His side. "*The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*" Seeing was believing. Reassured by Jesus' words, they didn't realize how He was equipping them for what was coming. They would need His peace so they can share the good news and withstand persecution. Because discipleship would soon become even more demanding and dangerous. Because when Jesus came in person that day, He not only gave His disciples His peace, but also His purpose.

HIS PURPOSE - In verse 21 Jesus said, "**As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.**" About 50 times Jesus had talked about being sent to do the Father's will through His words and works. John 3:34 says "*He whom God has sent utters the words of God, for He gives the Spirit without measure. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life. Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on Him.*" The Holy Spirit brings the good news and regenerates believers.

In John 17, Jesus prayed to the Father, "*As You sent Me into the world, so I have sent them into the world,*" meaning His disciples. "*I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.*" That's you, me, and everyone who has believed since those first followers.

John 20 is his record of the great commission, echoed in Matthew 28, Luke 24, Mark 16, Acts 1. Note that each gospel writer had a theological reason for writing, so things aren't always in strict chronological order. But they record accurate history which we can harmonize for the complete picture. Matthew recounts Jesus' words, "*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore, go and make disciples.*" Jesus gives not a new mission, but His authority for us to carry on His divine purpose.

YOUR RESPONSE - Jesus' bequest to His followers was not passive but active. It was not just about what they would see or receive, but what they would do next. WE often get it all wrong - pursuing our selfish details of what we think will be earthly peace. But YOU won't experience His peace unless you're pursuing His purpose - by His power. That's what Jesus gives them next - *in next week's column.*