

## "Jesus Who Opened the Locked Door"

John 20:19–23

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### The Gospel of John 20:19–23 (PowerPoint)

#### Preface

Today is Easter, the resurrection festival, on which we rejoice and give thanks that the Lord Jesus was raised from the dead.

In the early church 2,000 years ago, there was no feast day called Christmas that celebrates the birth of Jesus.

There was only one—Easter, the resurrection festival—which was the greatest and the only feast in the Christian church, and every Sunday, worship remembering and commemorating the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was offered.

Instead of offering worship on Saturday, the seventh day, the last day of the week that had continued since the time of the Old Testament, they came to offer worship on Sunday, the first day of the new week, the day on which the Lord Jesus was resurrected.

This is the background for why we Christians still offer worship on Sunday even now.

That is to say, to offer worship on Sunday—and those who offer worship—are witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.

Also, the fact that Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, and accordingly that we offer worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, has an important meaning: it is to remember the promise of the new work that God will do, namely, to wait in hope for the new heaven and the new earth that will be re-created by the Triune God who created all things in heaven and on earth.

Sadly, as is recorded in the Book of Genesis, this present heaven and earth—which God created in six days and rested on the seventh—has become cursed because of human sin, and it has been determined that it will perish and come to an end.

Nevertheless, by the fact that the Lord Jesus deliberately resurrected on Sunday, the day after Saturday, the seventh day, the last day of the week—the first day of a new week—He showed that the present heaven and earth which God created over seven days, the old things, will pass away, and new things will come.

Even in the Old Testament, in the circumcision performed on the eighth day after a baby is born, there is contained the meaning of engraving and remembering in

the body that the old things pass away and new things come; it was an act that foresaw the coming and resurrection of the Messiah, Christ.

In other words, those who believe in the cross and death of Christ, who have received baptism instead of circumcision, and who offer worship every Sunday, are blessed people redeemed by God so as to live while expecting, waiting for, and placing their hope in the renewal of all things that is fully revealed in the resurrection of Christ.

For us human beings, the only hope of renewal given from God is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Part One**

On the morning of the day when the Lord Jesus was resurrected, the women who met Jesus ran to tell the disciples that He had risen.

However, as it is written in the passage we read earlier, John 20:19, those very disciples were hiding, having locked the doors for fear of the Jews.

What the disciples had locked was not merely the door of the room (the door of the building), but they had locked the door of their own hearts, the door of their souls.

Let us look once more at verse 19.

#### **John 20:19 (PowerPoint)**

The risen Jesus, who went to visit the disciples who were afraid and hiding, could surely have knocked on the closed door and entered the room while having the disciples open it for Him; yet why did Jesus deliberately leave the locked door as it was and go to meet them by standing in their midst in a way that transcended physical methods?

Of course, the Jesus who was resurrected from the dead was no longer a finite being bound by physical limitations, and there was also, I think, the purpose of clearly showing that He is God who created heaven and earth and all things. But more than that, I think it is because He knew that unless the door of their hearts, the lock placed upon their souls, was opened, the door of that room would never be opened.

In other words, He knew that opening the door of the disciples' hearts was more important than opening the door of the room.

As long as we are afraid to connect with people, afraid to live as those who believe in Jesus Christ, afraid to stand before others as Christians, afraid to live in

society as Christians, afraid or ashamed to go out into the noise of the world as witnesses of Jesus Christ—wanting, if possible, to hide it, feeling it is something embarrassing or uncool—so long as we cannot think of the fact of the resurrection as the truth and reality we most want to treasure, the physical door of the room will never be opened.

For Jesus, what was important was to open the door of such disciples' hearts, their souls.

To the disciples who had locked the doors and were hiding, bound by the fear that they might be seized by the chief priests or Roman soldiers, the first words that Jesus spoke were, "Peace be with you,"—words that conveyed the spiritual reality, "There is no need to be afraid, because peace is with you."

And Jesus showed them the wounds in His hands and His side as proof that He is indeed Jesus.

Then the disciples, seeing such Jesus, rejoiced.

### **John 20:20 (PowerPoint)**

Like the disciples, we also, even though we are Christians, have times when we are afraid and want to hide, and there are times when we actually do hide.

We may be afraid of tomorrow, afraid of living, afraid of work, afraid because our health is not good, or afraid of the mission entrusted to us; becoming weary of living out that mission, driven by fear, we may hide ourselves.

We may sink into a world of our own, fall into the depths of thinking alone, and close our hearts.

But Jesus comes to meet such as us.

He comes to meet us, and while shining there the light of the truth that is God, He opens the closed door of our hearts.

And when we realize the fact that the Lord Jesus—who is the image of God and the only name given by God to humanity for salvation—is with us, in an instant peace comes; seeing and knowing God, we rejoice, and courage wells up to open once more that closed door.

Just as darkness disappears when illuminated by light, the darkness called "fear" is replaced by expectation and relief welling up within us.

Also, I apologize for speaking about myself, but for me, the calling from God to be the senior pastor of Tsuchiura Megumi Church is something that cannot be handled by my own strength or ability—it is beyond me, something I cannot manage—and each day, each week, is like a roller coaster with tremendous ups and downs, and there are times when I shut myself in alone, in dizziness, nausea, and fear.

At such times, as if remembering, I always practice the "shutting oneself in," the "hiding," that Jesus alone recommended, saying, "do so."  
That is Matthew 6:6.

### **Matthew 6:6 (PowerPoint)**

When I am bound by fear, by anxiety about an unseen future, by a sense that I can do no more, by the limits of my ability, and by fear of people's eyes, I shut myself in, sink deeply for a while, and then, as if remembering, what I do is to withdraw into a room in order to pray to the Father who is in secret.

When I withdraw into the room, my way of praying is simply to sit in a chair or kneel, and just murmur, "Father, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit," and after murmuring for a while, I open the Bible as if it were my only support, and while reading it, I wait expectantly for God's voice.

I have a time of prayer in which I simply read the Word of God and listen to His voice.

Then, I can declare this 100%—100%—regardless of the door of my heart that I have shut and locked in fear, Jesus stands in the very midst of my heart and gives me peace with a sense like, "Toyokazu, Poonghwa, peace be with you. I have called you by name. When you pass through the waters, when you walk through the fire, I am with you."

I do not know exactly where in the body it is, but light shines into all parts within my body, within my mind, indeed throughout my whole inner being, opens the door, and I am enabled once again to go out into the world entrusted to me by God, to live again as a witness who testifies that Christ is truly alive.

Repeating this sometimes daily, almost every week, I live this life given to me, being made to think, "Ah, this roller coaster of God is really enjoyable."

When we realize the fact that Jesus is with us and experience peace, we can cast off fear and open our hearts anew.

### **Part Two**

Also, the hearts of the disciples that Jesus opened were hearts that had been closed by failure.

When Jesus was crucified, the disciples turned their backs on Him and fled from Him.

Yet Jesus, as if it were only natural, not only forgave such disciples and received them, but also gave them a mission again.

### **The Gospel of John 20:21 (PowerPoint)**

Jesus once again established the disciples as witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus had intended to show by Himself the fact that He was raised from the dead, since He is God, He could have shown it to this world instantly and far more efficiently; nevertheless, instead of doing so, He decided to reveal it through people who had met the risen Jesus, received peace, and came to know and realize that Jesus is even now the living and working God.

### **First Corinthians 1:17–25 (PowerPoint)**

“Through the foolishness of the message of preaching He was pleased to save those who believe”—that is, God decided to reveal the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in this world through our existence, like earthen vessels that are broken, shattered, and cracked.

He accepted, received, loved, rejoiced over, honored, and cherished the disciples who had failed, turned away, and betrayed Him as if it were His own matter, and He decided to become one with them and with us, so that this world may come to know God.

This again leads to the Word of John 20:22.

### **The Gospel of John 20:22 (PowerPoint)**

The failures and setbacks of the disciples were, I think, a necessary process for them to come to have hearts that would fully submit to the Holy Spirit, who is God.

Only when they stood in the place of acknowledging—both themselves and by others—the fact that they had died before God through failure and setback, were they prepared to receive the Holy Spirit.

They came to realize that things could no longer be accomplished by their own will, determination, or ability.

Of course, that does not mean that our efforts, perseverance, the desire to keep God’s Word, or the determination to live following Jesus are all useless and amount to nothing.

Rather, it means that even those decisions, wills, and actions are all from God, and that they are not our own achievements or merits but are entirely grace, and that our hearts, ways of thinking, and worldview have been changed so that we continue to acknowledge this always in peace.

The Lord God uses those who have failed.

In Jesus, even failure and setback become qualifications and fitness.

Therefore, we do not need to blame someone or close our own hearts just because of failure.

What we ought to do is to seek the filling of the Holy Spirit, to listen for and search out what the Holy Spirit who dwells within us desires, to cultivate a heart that seeks, and as we try to obey and continue to obey the Holy Spirit, the time will come when we realize that we have come to bear astonishing fruit of the Spirit that we could not even have imagined.

### **Part Three**

And thirdly, the hearts that Jesus opened in the disciples were hearts—souls—that had been closed by sin.

Sin causes our hearts, our souls, to be shut.

It closes the door of prayer, closes the door of praise, and closes the door of loving.

The hearts of the disciples also fell into the most fundamental sin of denying the One who is God, and because of the guilt of their flight, they were closed.

Even so, Jesus spoke to such disciples, comforting and encouraging them, and declared their release from slavery to sin.

### **The Gospel of John 20:23 (PowerPoint)**

“Even though you have committed the sin of sins—denying God—proclaim the salvation, that you have been forgiven by God.

Because your sins have been forgiven by God, be at peace as you forgive the sins of others, and declare God’s forgiveness of their sins, and give them peace.

Let them also experience the peace in the Lord Jesus, just as you have.

Share the love of God, which is the forgiveness of sins.” In this way, He granted them the blessing of living as witnesses of Christ.

To live as witnesses of Christ—to do mission and evangelism—is to tell people the good news, the gospel, that they can receive forgiveness of sins from God; and the disciples, by proclaiming the gospel, were able to be assured not only of the forgiveness of the sins of those who received Jesus, but also of their own unchanged forgiveness of sins.

Therefore, the disciples were able to forgive even those who persecuted them, who tried to take their lives, and who actually took lives, and to proclaim the gospel of God’s forgiveness.

To receive the Holy Spirit in Christ is to forgive the sins of others.

To forgive someone's sin is to proclaim the gospel, and to proclaim the gospel is to be continually made to confirm within one's own soul and heart that one has already been, and will forever be, forgiven of sins by God and will live eternally. And it is to live in blessedness, rejoicing in the life that has been forgiven.

### **Conclusion**

The One to whom we must always turn our eyes, without taking them away, is the Lord Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead.

How much we are able to keep our eyes fixed on this One determines our life.

How much we continue to look to this One determines our life.

The decisive factor that determines our life and our living depends on how much, in Jesus, the door of our hearts is opened.

This is the consistent teaching of the Bible and the truth that God continues to speak to us.

The One who opens the doors of our hearts that have been shut by fear, failure, and sin, and who gives us peace and rest, mission and calling, forgiveness and blessing, the sense that we are alive and the reality of eternal life, is Jesus who was raised from the dead.

How blessed it would be if we, fixing our eyes on the risen Jesus, could live a life that fulfills the mission of the resurrection that Jesus has given to this world and to its people.

We desire to be those who live in that way.

Let us pray.

Benediction: The Gospel of John 20:21