

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

Text: John 20:19-23

Key Word: Process

Key Thought: We Need to Meet Privately with God to Go Through the Process of Change He Has for Our Lives

I have come to wonder why a few people I've met want to run before they have learned to walk? Some want to pull down gigantic mountains when they often stumble over the small hills that are set into their pathway. They should be eating meat but are still on heavenly pabulum. If they want to soar like an eagle, they better be willing to eat some spiritual protein. Common farm hens eat the grain on the ground. Eagles like their food alive and often in the air.

This problem has taken entire churches into a place that God never intended them to be. Believe it or not, these "seekers" have got out of step with Jesus and are about to face things that they are not prepared for. They influence others to look ahead and cry out to Jesus when they should be looking around to behold the tears in the eyes of our Saviour as He waits at the fork of the road urging them to return to Him and start heading in the right direction.

I believe that Jesus, like a grieving father is waiting for His wayward children/leaders to return. **Jesus is taking a lot of the brunt of the recent criticism when it has been their own rebellion that has led them to the point they are now living in.** **Many Churches in Canada have got to return to the God of its fathers.** It's not wrong to humble ourselves and admit that we are often like spoiled children who have complained to God for our stubbornness.

Don't look at your neighbour and think, wow is the pastor ever hitting him or her where it's needed. Lets be honest Church. **I believe that we are entering a time of change for the Church and we all (including me) are going to have some wake up calls.** It may not be exactly what we expect but I honestly believe we will learn valuable lessons about humbling ourselves behind closed doors with The MASTER.

God is in the midst of His people performing vital changes for those who are willing to come under His searching light. **It's time for the Church to stop focussing on its past problems and failures and begin to follow God's leading one stage at a time according to His timing to be ready for the Rapture of the true Church.**

We Need to Recognize and Positively Respond to the Process That Is Taking Place

I. TIME OF ISOLATION (John 20:19)

II. TIME OF IDENTIFICATION (John 20:20)

III. TIME OF IMPARTATION (John 20:21-23)

I. TIME OF ISOLATION (John 20:19)

"On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you!'"

John 20:19

The disciples had spent up to three years of their lives with Jesus. They had witnessed so many miracles that none of them could doubt that this Jesus was their promised Messiah. Peter's confession said what ALL the disciples knew.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Matthew 16:16

Yet when the times got tough and persecution seemed imminent, fear began to rise up in all the disciples. They gathered behind closed doors and they were not sure what their next step would be. They had ONLY been told that Jesus would go ahead of them into Galilee (Matthew 28:7). **If you ever enter a time of feeling low, DON'T DESPAIR.** **The sun sinks every night in the West but it also rises every morning in the East.** **The women who went to the tomb before the sun rose were brought to tears because Jesus wasn't in the tomb.**

It's interesting that the disciples locked the door of their gathering place even though they were told by the women that Jesus would meet them in Galilee. How many of us have come to this same point of despair? **How many of us have locked Jesus out of our lives when we needed Him most? Our mind just doesn't think straight during these times of great stress.** What are we afraid of? Do we think His treatment of us is going to hurt too much? I've isolated myself in what I thought was a place of safety at times of struggle.

Jesus entered that kind of situation and offered the kind of words that they needed to hear. He was like a doctor tenderly approaching a frightened patient and offering words of comfort.

Jesus said,

"Peace be with you."

John 20:19

How many of us know that just because Jesus says something that does not mean that we will accept it? Jesus did not say this twice, He had to say it three times (*John 20:19,21,26*) in that week. **It's not just important to get alone with God.** Have you ever felt alone when there was a group of people around you? Have you ever been in close fellowship with God when no one is around you? Both these things happen in life. **The Church in Canada has got to become aware that Jesus is willing to come and remove the fear and anxiety that has been building up! We've got to get isolated WITH God not WITHOUT God!**

II. TIME OF IDENTIFICATION (John 20:20)

"After he said this (Peace be with you) he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

John 20:20

In the final chapter of John (John 21:1-3) we are told that Jesus met with **His 7 disciples** (the number of completion) as they went back to fishing. Jesus (making the **number 8** - new beginnings) called to them from the shore to cast their nets on the other side of the boat because they had a frustrating night not catching a single fish. When they obeyed Jesus, their net overflowed with **153 fish**.

"In Hebrew, every letter has a number attached to it. The Hebrews used their alphabet as a numbering system. The numbers attached to the letters in a Hebrew word could be added together to give a numerical total. **The number 153 is the numerical total for the Hebrew words "Ani Elohim"--I AM G-D.** When Jesus caused the disciples to catch exactly 153 fish, He was declaring to them that not only was He the Son of G-d, but that He was God Himself."

<https://versebyverseministry.org/bible-answers/153-fishes-i-am-g-d?locale=en>

What will it take in our time for the Church as well as nonbelievers to cast aside their doubts that Jesus IS GOD? **One of the things that most of us have failed to identify with are the scars of Jesus.** We look for men and woman who are conquerors but yet have never bled a day in their life. **It's funny that few people look for a bleeding Saviour and Deliverer.** Jesus *"showed them his hands and side."* Why is it so hard for us to accept the fact that we may also have to suffer in our service for Christ? Christian living is Not all song and dance. We rather hide our scars and not talk about them THINKING they will go away. Have you ever wondered if you will see the scars of Jesus in heaven?

We know of at least one disciple who was missing when Jesus first appeared to His disciples. This was Thomas called Didymus (meaning *"twin"*). They kept on telling him that Jesus had appeared to them but Thomas needed the hard facts.

"When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."

Matthew 28:17

People can often identify with the **limitations** that are placed upon their lives but cannot see the **freedom** that they gain through those limitations.

II. TIME OF IDENTIFICATION (John 20:20)(Contd.)

" . . . Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

John 20:25

Would this have brought unnecessary pain to our Saviour. Does our unbelief convey pain upon our Lord? Remember Jesus hears all of our words of unbelief.

A WEEK LATER the disciples were in the same house with the same doors locked. Perhaps they never had left. Jesus came in and stood before them with their hurts and doubts and He offered them His peace once again.

"Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

28. Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God."

John 20:27,28

Thomas did not have to touch the scars of Jesus to believe. He saw the scars and that was sufficient. Let me tell you that it is often possible when we are behind doors that we lock that we can truly see and understand the scars of others. PEOPLE DON'T SHOW YOU THEIR SCARS OPENLY. God's people have become ashamed of their scars because others have told them that they are signs of weakness.

Scars can often become a visible sign of the depth of our compassion toward others as was the case with Jesus. They are not signs of weakness. They are signs of humble service.

We need to identify with the scars of Jesus even though we are 2,000 years removed from His suffering.

"Then Jesus told him (Thomas) 'Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen (me and my scars) and yet have believed."

John 20:29

III. TIME OF IMPARTATION (John 20:21-23)

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

*22. And with that he breathed on them and said,
Receive the Holy Spirit."*

*23. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven;
if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

John 20:21-23

There is a new (and what many believe to be a final) wind that is beginning to blow upon the Church of God throughout the world. It is the same breath that Jesus blew upon His disciples. The verb that is used here was also used in the Greek LXX version of the Bible in two important places.

*" the Lord formed the man from the dust of the
ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of
life, and man became a living being."*

Genesis 2:7

Adam was a lifeless piece of human flesh until God breathed life into his body. Adam had every part necessary for life but he was not yet alive. It was the breath of God that was blown into his lifeless body that made Adam a living being.

This word was also used when Ezekiel was told to prophesy to the bones in the valley.

*"Then he said to me, '**Prophesy to the breath:**
prophesy, son of man, and say to it, 'This is what
the Sovereign LORD says: **Come, breath, from the
four winds, O breath, and breathe into these slain
that they may live.***

*10. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and
breath entered them; they came to life and stood
up upon their feet - a vast army."*

Ezekiel 37:9,10

The Prophet Ezekiel was brought to a valley strewn with bones of the fallen army of Israel. God directed the prophet to breathe new life into what appeared to be a **hopeless/full of despair situation**. Nothing short of the breath of God could bring about that kind of miracle.

III. TIME OF IMPARTATION (John 20:21-23) (Contd.)

As Jesus stood before His disciples they also were a picture of dead bones strewn in a wilderness of life's problems. I have come to understand this verse as I never have before. **They received the Holy Spirit for a purpose! They were anointed to bring the message of the forgiveness from Jesus to the world! The impartation was one of forgiveness for their past sins.** Oh how we need this in our Churches today!

Jesus told His disciples

"and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:47

******* I learned an important lesson years ago about forgiveness. I had believed that there was no one that I had not forgiven. I thought that I was NOT a person to hold a grudge and therefore, I was convinced that my past was clear. I know it had given me freedom to face many difficult situations of my past.

Yet there was one that I had not dealt with. When I was 10-years-old, Dr. Charles Pender (a Cornwall Pediatrician) had told my mother that there was nothing wrong with me. He said that I was just looking for attention. His diagnosis brought me quickly to a place where I could not walk on my right leg because of the increasing pain.

Further tests indicated that I had Legg Perthes disease which meant the ball of my hip joint was losing its blood supply. Dr. Gordon W. D. (Chief of Division in the Orthopaedic) at the Ottawa Civic Hospital was concerned because I had not been treated earlier. Without me recognizing it, I had held unforgiveness in my heart toward Dr. Pender who had died on Oct 14, 1981 and was buried in the St. Columban Cemetery.

Shortly after returning to Cornwall to start this church in 1992 I saw his picture on the wall in the Hotel Dieu hospital in the Pediatric ward. He had died early in life. I must say that I struggled to let go of this attitude once it was made apparent to me. His mistake has caused me a great deal of pain, insult, and hindrance from doing things I know I would have enjoyed doing.

God had to give me a special impartation to deal with my pent up feelings. **IT RELEASED ME OF MY UNFORGIVENESS toward Dr. Pender who I'm sure helped out many more people then he hurt with his words or mis-diagnosis.** *******

III. TIME OF IMPARTATION (John 20:21-23) (Contd.)

I believe that the Church throughout the world is **entering a process of Isolation, Identification, and Impartation**. I believe IT WILL COME IN THIS ORDER. We will not be able to bypass any level of this growth. **If we have already passed one of these levels, we can expect to enter the next one**. Give yourself wholeheartedly to God and let Him do what is needed in your life. He knows where to start. He also knows where you are not yet ready to sign over your permission to begin. Lets not ever try to figure out where others are in the process. Let us just support one another as we journey through this process. Who knows, we may have to go through this process more then once.

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Date: Sept 22/24

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: Take Me In (Take me Past the Outer Court)

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II. TIME OF IDENTIFICATION (John 20:20) - *Matthew 28:17; John 20:25,27,28,29*

III. TIME OF IMPARTATION (John 20:21-23) - *Genesis 2:7; Ezekiel 37:9,10; Luke 24:47*