

## In the midst of our Struggles

John 20: 19-29

As believers, we are aware that Jesus will never leave us, nor will He ever forsake us. Those who have been saved by His grace are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. He is our constant companion and guide. While we may not always be aware of the Lord's presence, He is always near to us. The Bible promises that the Lord will be near to those who are struggling in life or dealing with pain associated with the circumstances of life. [Psalm 34:18 – The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.](#)

There are multiple passages in Scripture where it is undeniable that the Lord was in the midst of His people, providing for their particular needs. We are never alone in the journey, and we need not fear facing life apart from His divine guidance and provision. As I pondered the Lord being that ever-present help in our time of need, I decided to search for those passages that specifically declare that Jesus was in the midst. Our text today is one of those passages. The opening verses of the passage take place on the evening of Jesus' glorious resurrection. The concluding verses take place eight days later. In both instances, the disciples were dealing with the most difficult situation they had ever faced. The Lord had died upon the cross, and although He had promised to rise again from the dead, the disciples dealt with doubt and uncertainty. At this moment, it appeared all their hopes and dreams had been buried with Jesus, and they were unsure of the future. The disciples were struggling with their current situation and their faith.

This is a passage that all can relate. While we were not there the day Jesus rose from the grave, or even the week following His resurrection, we too have struggled with situations in life that challenged our faith. In the coming weeks, I want to examine some of the passages that deal with Jesus being in the midst. As we look at the [details](#) of this encounter, I want to consider: [In the midst of our Struggles.](#)

**I. The Apprehension of the Fearful (19-23)** – On the evening of the resurrection we find the disciples gathered in the Upper Room with the door closed because they feared the Jews. At this moment, the disciples faced an uncertain future. They knew how the Jews and Pilate had treated the Lord, and they were fearful they might face a similar fate, being followers of Jesus. In the midst of their fear, Jesus came into their midst. We discover that:

**A. Jesus Appeared to Them (19)** – [Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.](#) As the disciples hid in fear, locked within the Upper Room, Jesus came and stood in their midst. They were dealing with doubt, having heard

that Jesus had risen, but they had difficulty believing Jesus was alive. In the midst of their fear and doubt, Jesus came unto them. This wasn't a dream, it was the Lord; He was there in their midst. Their hope was revived as Jesus stood among them.

- We are never far from the Lord, although we tend to forget that He is near at all times, in every situation. Acts 17:27-28a – That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: <sup>[28a]</sup> For in him we live, and move, and have our being. Psalm 145:18 – The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. Seek the Lord in your time of need; He is nearer than you think! He will come near to you and provide in your times of doubt and fear!

**B. Jesus Comforted Them (19b) – Jesus...stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.**

Can you imagine how they must've felt? If they ever needed the peace of God, it was now. They were fearful and afraid, unsure of what the future would hold. In their moment of greatest need, Jesus comforted them with His abundant peace.

- Aren't you glad for the peace of the Lord? There have been times when I faced an uncertain future, with doubt filling my mind, but Jesus showed up and brought peace to my soul. The problem may have still been there, but Jesus gave real peace. When our lives are in turmoil, and doubt has crept in, we need to look to Jesus to calm the storms of life.

**C. Jesus Challenged Them (20-21) – And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. <sup>[21]</sup> Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be**

**unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.** If any of them hadn't yet got the message, any doubt that remained was removed as Jesus stepped forth and revealed His hands and side. It was really Jesus – He was alive just as He said! All they had heard and believed was real. Whatever doubt they had was replaced with confidence and complete assurance. They were now settled in their faith and ready to move forward with the Lord.

- There's nothing any better for a fearful heart than a fresh encounter with the Lord. I've never seen Him with my physical eye, but He has revealed Himself to me! The world is dark, sin is rampant, but we serve a risen Lord. He lives today! He has already conquered all that Satan could muster.
- There is no reason to live in fear and doubt; we are more than conquerors in Christ. When times of doubt come, consider the cross, the empty tomb, and remember His promise to come again. We have no reason to walk around with our heads down; we belong to the Lord!

**D. Jesus Empowered Them** (22) – *And when he had said this, he breathed on **them**, and saith unto **them**, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* Jesus knew He would soon ascend, but He wasn't about to leave them alone without hope or divine help. They would soon have the power of God dwelling in them through the Holy Spirit.

- If you are a child of God, being saved by His grace, you have the Holy Spirit within you as well. We have the power of God dwelling within us continually. We don't have the Lord in person, but we have Him in power! The more we love Him, seek Him, and serve Him, the more power we enjoy. His power doesn't rest on the unfaithful, but if we'll remain true to God, we can have the fullness of His power. I think you would agree there are benefits associated with being committed and surrendered to Christ. Look to Him in times of doubt and claim His promises.

**II. The Skepticism of the Doubtful** (24-25) – Fear can be detrimental to believers, and doubt can be just as damaging, greatly hindering our faith and commitment. Doubt can rob our peace, joy, and confidence in the Lord. Notice the burden of doubt in Thomas's life.

**A. Doubt brings Deception** (25) – *The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.* The others told Thomas about seeing the Lord, but he wouldn't believe without seeing Jesus himself. Thomas likely wondered if all he had heard was true. Was Jesus really the Messiah? Could he really believe all that Christ had said? In his doubt, Thomas allowed Satan to deceive him.

- A seed of doubt questioned the authority of the Lord. Have we not all been there? Have there not been times when we doubted our faith? Has Satan ever caused you to doubt the truths of the Bible? If he can deceive us and cause us to doubt, he can defeat us spiritually. When confronted by the enemy, remind him of the truth!

**B. Doubt fosters Dissention** (25) – Thomas made a demand to see the nail prints and thrust his hand in Jesus' side to believe. He was no longer walking by faith, but by sight. It appears he was almost ready to abandon his faith.

- Satan continues to use the same tactics. People demand physical proof to believe. I can't explain the virgin birth. I can't explain how a man can die and live again. I can't explain how Jesus takes a heart of sin and changes it forever. There's a lot I can't explain, but I believe it all! If we aren't careful, doubt will breed dissention, causing us to question the deity of Christ. Just praise God for what you know and trust Him for what you don't.

**C. Doubt creates Despair** (24) – But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. When Jesus appeared to the disciples on the day of His resurrection, Thomas wasn't there and missed the blessing of that encounter. The others had seen and believed, and yet Thomas continued in doubt, leading to despair.

- I'm not sure why he wasn't there, but often we are no better. It takes far less to create doubt in our hearts than it did for Thomas. Many times, when trouble comes, we depart from the faith. I've never understood that. If we ever need God, we need Him in times of trouble. Thomas's doubt hindered him from being in the Lord's presence. He missed what Jesus had for Him. You will never regain what you miss when you aren't in the Lord's presence. It is important to be faithful to the Lord and His house! Doubt will rob you and defeat you, but there is hope.

**III. The Provision for the Faithful** (27-28) – I'm glad we serve a merciful God. Jesus came again when Thomas was there. It was then that Thomas made a discovery that forever changed his life. When we learn to look to Jesus rather than continuing in doubt, we can find great joy. Notice:

**A. Faith renews our Fellowship** (27) – Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. The Lord came and called for Thomas. He got to see and touch the Lord. Thomas encountered the risen Lord. Doubt will hinder our fellowship, but when it is removed, we can come nigh to the Lord. A heart filled with doubt will remain skeptical and afraid, but when doubt is removed, we can once again rest in the provision of our Lord. Unwavering faith is essential to committed service.

**B. Faith restores our Focus** (28) – And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Upon seeing Jesus, Thomas identified Him as his Lord and his God. The name Lord means Master. Thomas was identifying himself as a servant of the Lord. He was declaring his faith in Jesus as the Christ. He was no longer doubtful, but confident of the Lord he served.

- You can't focus on Jesus in faith and continue in doubt. We all will have those seasons of doubt, but if we can be reminded of Jesus, our faith can be renewed! Have you looked at the Lord lately? He has not changed. He is still all that we need and more.

**Conclusion:** How is your faith today? Has doubt clouded your view of the Lord? Has life brought a trial that you fear you can't overcome? Jesus said, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Trust in Him today for whatever need you face! He is in the midst of those who are struggling. If you are yet unsaved, look to Jesus in repentance and faith unto salvation.