

A Commission, Doubt, and Faith

People who doubt never accomplish anything because they never believe that what should be done can be done and so don't attempt anything. They rather remain in their comfort zones maintaining the status quo. People of faith accomplish a lot as they don't see what is but what can be, not because they are able to make it happen but believe in a God who is able to make all things happen.

John 20: 19 – 29

1) A Commission

- These were two of Jesus' post resurrection appearances to His disciples.
- Some facts that we learn about Jesus' post resurrection body:
 - He could appear and disappear without physical limitations. Both times the doors were locked and He stood amongst them. Jesus appeared to the two disciples on the Emmaus Road and then disappeared suddenly after He broke bread with them. (Luke 24)
 - Jesus was recognisable to His disciples. When Jesus appeared to His disciples on the beach they knew it was Him. Jesus said, "Come and eat!" But none of the disciples dared ask who he was. They knew he was the Lord. (Luke 21: 12)
 - He still had the scars on His hands and side from the nails on the cross and the spear that He was stabbed with on the cross.
 - Although He could appear and disappear without physical limitations His body was still tangible and He could hold and break things, like the fish and the bread, eat, and be touched.
- The disciples were already fearful because of the Jews and Jesus suddenly appearing in their midst would certainly have startled them. He puts them at ease with the typical Jewish greeting of "Peace be with you"
- Their response was one of being overjoyed.
 - Let us consider that they were in a place of fear and despair as Jesus had been crucified and all their hopes had been dashed, besides having just lost someone who they had grown to love over the past three years.
 - Now, suddenly, there He was again. The joy of seeing someone who they had lost alive. Their hopes revived.
- Now that they are filled with a renewed joy, peace and hope Jesus reiterates His greeting of a blessing of peace on them before He commissions them to do what He wants them to do.
 - God always works in us before He works through us.
 - He often takes us through times of brokenness, disappointment, shattered dreams and failure before He restores us and fills us with a newness of life.
 - They were probably wondering what had happened, was it all a dream?
 - Peter had failed Jesus by disowning Him three times and was probably in a miserable state.
 - The rest of the disciples had run away and deserted Jesus in His greatest time of need.
 - Would He ever forgive them?
 - Yes, He appears and blesses them with peace.
- As long as we're holding to our past failures, disappointments, hurts, etc. we'll be too self-focussed to fulfil the fullness of the Lord's purposes for us.
- The commission: As the Father sent me, I am sending you. So how did the Father send Jesus?
 - With love for the world and to give eternal life (John 3: 16)
 - With a purpose of serving and giving His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10: 45)
 - To call sinners to repentance (Luke 5: 31 – 32)
 - To make disciples (Matthew 28: 18 – 20)
- Now we can't give eternal life or give our lives as a ransom – a sacrifice – for the sins of the world, but we can love the people of the world, call sinners to repentance and point them to the one who gives eternal life through His sacrifice, and make disciples.
- However we can't do this in our own strength and abilities and need to empowering of the Holy Spirit to fulfil God's purposes for us in the world.
 - Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."
 - Acts 1: 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

2) Doubt

- Thomas hadn't yet seen the Lord as was very explicit in His doubt by saying that unless He sees tangible proof of the risen Lord then he would not believe.
- This attitude is common in the world with so many people wanting to see tangible proof of the existence of God before they believe.
- Some believe that Jesus existed as a man or even a prophet but not as the Son of God and that He wasn't crucified.
- Others believe that He is a god along with other gods.
- Others don't believe that He ever actually existed.
- Many believe that He was who He said He was but doubt His resurrection.
- Jesus often rebuked His disciples for their lack of faith
 - Matthew 8: 26 He replied, "You of little faith, why are you so afraid?" (In a boat during a storm)
 - Matthew 6: 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?
 - Matthew 16: 8 Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? (Jesus talking about the teaching of the Pharisees after He had fed the 4000)
- Thomas was unfortunate to have been labelled with the nickname "Doubting Thomas" when all the disciples were often rebuked for their lack of faith.
- Doubt had prevented them from trusting God for His provision for their lives, His miracles, His keeping them in truth.
- Doubt puts limits on God – who He is, what He has done and what He can do.

3) Faith

- After Thomas sees and hears Jesus with the evidence that He was looking for He exclaims: "My Lord and my God!"
- Faith acknowledges the reality of the existence of God objectively as well as subjectively
 - MY Lord and MY God.
- Unbelief can acknowledge the objective existence of God but faith brings us into a personal knowledge of God.
- Even the demons believe in God
 - James 2: 19 You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder.
- Faith affects our lives in positive ways
 - We need faith to please God
 - Hebrews 11:6 And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
 - Faith gives us hope
 - Hebrews 11: 1 Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
 - Faith moves us to offer what is pleasing to God.
 - Hebrews 11: 4 By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings.
 - Faith moves us to obedience even when we don't understand the full purposes of God at the time.
 - Hebrews 11: 8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.
- God is pleased with faith in Him and what He's done for us even when we haven't seen but believe.
- This type of faith with moves us to fulfil all of God's purposes in this life and so be pleasing to Him.