

## EASTER POWER FOR CONFIDENT LIVING

John 20:19-23

Confidence – We don't see a lot of it, do we?

The Guardians just began a new season, and we wonder: will they play well? Return to winning ways? A lot of the difference between champions and losers isn't talent but confidence!

In the Economy – there is always a lot of talk about “consumer confidence”

One of the things that fascinates me about the Easter story is the sudden change in the disciples. One minute they're defeated, the next minute they're dynamic. One minute they're crushed, the next minute they're confident. What made the difference?

One sentence: When you see Jesus Christ, when you know Him personally, you will become a confident person.

John 20:19-23 ***19On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."***

What is it that robs us of confidence? Three things: Fatigue, Failure, and Fear. We see all three of these in the disciples' lives.

**1. Fatigue.** In the first place they were fatigued. Notice it says ***“it was late that Sunday evening.”*** It had been a rough week. They had Palm Sunday, they had the cleansing of the temple, they had the Lord's Supper, they had Gethsemane, they had the trials, they had the crucifixion. They're worn out. How are you doing this week? Fatigued? When you're worn out, you just aren't so confident.

Early that morning: ***But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by***

***themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.*** Luke 24: 11-12

When you're tired & fatigued, you're in a daze. Nothing makes sense. Can't remember things. Don't know what's going on. That's the disciples. Words seem like nonsense. Wondering what just happened.

Is that you? I've been there – so tired that I can't keep things straight in my mind. The most common cause of discouragement is physical and emotional exhaustion. Things look worse when you're tired. Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is go to sleep. [But not during this message, please.] It's amazing how much better things look after you've gotten a good night's sleep.

The next thing that robs us of confidence is 2. **Failure.** These guys felt like a group of losers. Matthew 26:56 ***"All the disciples deserted Jesus and fled."*** Peter denied Him. So did the others. They felt guilty over their failure. How confident are you when you've really messed up? Really failed?

They also feel like spent 3 years on Jesus – 3 years pursuing a dream. Now, nothing! They're saying, What went wrong? Jesus was supposed to be the Messiah and now He's dead.

You ever failed? We all have. Ever failed at something really important? It's easy to lose confidence. It's easy not to shake the failure, to see yourself as a failure. It's easy to fail at one thing so you expect the next thing to fail. The point is, if at first you don't succeed ... you're normal! Welcome to the human race. Life has its setbacks.

Fatigue robs you of confidence. Failure robs you of confidence.

Third, **Fear** robs you of confidence. That's the greatest one. ***"The disciples met together locked behind closed doors in fear of the Jewish leaders."*** They had seen what happened to Jesus. And they weren't too excited about what might happen to their own lives. They had not confidence because they were afraid – cowering behind locked doors.

Worry is just plain fear. What if I fail? What if I never get married? What if I get cancer? We tend to imagine the worse.

Have you ever been driving one way and the police car makes a U-turn and starts following you? We imagine the worst, don't we?

Our Biggest fear is death. Easter tells us You don't have to be afraid of death. Jesus broke the bonds of death. He rose from death – it's no longer permanent. And He'll raise you too. Easter breaks fear. But fear of what might happen is one of the biggest reasons we lose confidence.

What causes us to lose our confidence? Fatigue, Failure, Fear.

### **WHAT RESTORES OUR CONFIDENCE?**

#### **1. God's presence gives me confidence He cares and knows.**

v. 20 *"Jesus came and stood among them and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."*

When you're all alone, it's easy to think that no one cares, no one knows what you're going through. Social isolation puts people at risk – because they lose confidence, they get depressed, they become at risk for suicide. What's the ultimate act of losing hope and confidence? It's suicide, isn't it? That's really having no confidence. How does that usually happen – in groups of people? or all alone?

When somebody COMES to you, they care. Ever go to doctor, get stuck in one of those examining rooms. In little room, all alone, waiting. If doc doesn't come – first you think "He or she must be really busy." A little while longer and you think "I'm really getting tired of waiting here." And a little bit longer and you are convinced, "They don't CARE about me! They don't notice that they've left me stuck here in this room."

The disciples had lost their confidence, hiding behind locked doors, a little group. The news of the resurrection had reached them. But just knowing the FACTS of Jesus' resurrection wasn't enough. Instead, Jesus CAME to them, and stood with them.

When you lose confidence, here's God's promise: Jesus is alive, He's WITH you. He's right here in this room. He knows what you're going through. He understands – like no one else can understand.

God's PRESENCE – that Jesus is alive and with you always –that gives you CONFIDENCE that He cares enough to COME to you and that He knows what you are facing.

## **2. God's PEACE gives me confidence I have nothing to fear.**

Often people are afraid of the future – they're afraid of not having enough money, or losing their job, or something like that. But I've found that most of the things we are afraid of usually turn out OK. For example, if I go broke, I won't have enough money for food, but most likely there's a food bank or a social agency that will give me something to eat. So most of what we are fear, really isn't something we need to be afraid of.

But what about death? No other person can help us with that one. Maybe you are afraid of a dark parking lot at night because you fear being attacked by some psychotic murderer. Maybe you fear losing someone you love – a child, a husband or wife, a close friend. All those fears are about death. We fear death. And death comes because of our wrongs, our sins. We've brought death on ourselves.

When Jesus came to His fearful disciples, the Bible tells us: ***"Jesus said, 'Peace be with you!' After He said this He showed them His hands and side."*** He said, "peace" – don't be afraid. And He SHOWED THEM HIS HANDS AND SIDE. The reason they had nothing to fear is not just that Jesus was there. But the reason they had nothing to fear is that He showed them His hands and side. He showed them the marks of the nails in His hands, and the mark of the spear that was thrust up into His heart. It's not just that Jesus is alive that calms fears. But that THE CRUCIFIED ONE is alive – THAT'S what gives peace.

The marks the nails guarantee that Jesus died on the cross. He gave His life to pay for all your wrongs and sins. He PAID with His life for the REASON that we die – and so, He removed the fear of death. That the crucified one, rose again proves that you have nothing to fear. And that gives peace.

Martin Luther once wrote: **"You cast your sins from yourself on to Christ when you firmly believe that His wounds and sufferings are your sins, that He bore them and paid for them .... On this... you must**

stake everything in full reliance, and the more so if your conscience is giving your serious trouble. ... It does not matter how much penitence and satisfaction we have to offer, our sins keep on piling up and gaining the upper hand. But when we see them borne by Christ, and conquered by His glorious resurrection from the dead and we have boldness of faith, our sins are dead and blotted out.” SL.XI580,13 They are GONE! You have NOTHING to fear. Your heart and mind can be at peace!

Do you need peace? Do you need an inner calmness that everything is going to work out OK in the end? That you've got nothing to fear? What Jesus did on the cross – paying completely for all your wrongs; and what He did on Easter – rising to guarantee that your past mistakes – and even death - can't cast a cloud over your future – that gives CONFIDENCE. God's PEACE give confidence, that you've got nothing to fear.

**3. God's PURPOSE gives me confidence my life has meaning.** During the pandemic a lot of people got laid off their jobs, and then decided not to go back. They call it “The Great Resignation” – have you heard about this? Many, many Americans decided that just working was not giving them a fulfilling purpose for their lives. They want something more.

Everybody needs to have PURPOSE – a sense that their life has meaning. You are here for more than just accumulating a pile of stuff, or enjoying a moment of pleasure, or raising a little trouble. You were give a life for more than that.

That day in the room, behind the locked doors, the disciples were probably wondering, “what do we do NOW?” The goal they were living for was GONE. It looked like they just flushed important years of their lives down the tubes.

Then Jesus came. He proved He is alive and resurrected. And gave them a new direction. ***“Jesus said, ... ‘As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you.’”*** Well, what does that mean? In a few days Jesus would send them out to “make Christ followers of all people, all over the world.” A few years earlier He said His mission is: ***“The Son***

***of Man came to seek and save the lost.***" Luke 19:10 Now He's asking them to join Him in His life's mission.

There is, and has never been, a more significant task on the face of this earth than to bring the hope of Jesus to people. This is what changes people's ETERNITIES! And this is done locally, right here. The hope of the world is Jesus Christ and He is brought to people through you and me in the local church.

You talk about doing something SIGNIFICANT! You talk about having MEANING for your life! It doesn't matter if you are a man, woman, or child – a butcher, baker, or candlestick maker – God's purpose, becomes the main purpose of your life and gives your life MEANING. That fills you with confidence!

Now, how do you do that? We need power to do this! **4. God's POWER gives me the confidence to KEEP GOING.**

Everybody wants power. Notice all the books on power. How to dress for power, how to eat for power, how to shower with power.

The resurrection demonstrated how powerful God is. Jesus Christ resurrected Himself from the dead. That same power is available to us. If God can raise Jesus from the dead, then He can handle any problem I give Him. There is no problem too big. And He specializes in hopeless cases.

But you say, "You don't know my finances." God does. "You don't know my health problem... my financial problem... how my marriage is *that* far away from divorce." God does. And He specializes in hopeless cases. That's the message of Easter. That's the power of Easter.

Jesus said, ***"Receive the Holy Spirit."*** That's power. Power to live for God. Power to do His work. Power to keep going. Power to look UP to God and look AHEAD in CONFIDENCE. God's power gives you the confidence to keep going.

Ephesians 1:20 ***"How tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ when He was raised from the dead."*** God's saying that the awesome power over death that raised Jesus, is given to you, is in you. If you hear this today and you say, "You

know I'd like that for my life" – that's God working IN you, He's working new life. He is the power source for everything you do that is connected with God. If you've run out of gas, run out of energy and power in your life – Jesus promises power, the power of God the Holy Spirit to come inside you.

So Let God BE your power. Say to Him, "Here it is -- the good, the bad, the ugly. Everything in my life -- all the problems I'm having at work, with my kids, with my marriage -- all these things. Take it all." Then it's God's responsibility to work it all out. And He wants to.

God's power is not for perfect people. Perfect people don't need God the Holy Spirit living in them. God's power is for people on the grow, who don't have it all together. We're trying to learn. We're struggling. If that's you, then rely on God's gift of power. ***"Receive the Holy Spirit,"*** Jesus said. God's power gives you the confidence to keep going.

Confidence is a spiritual problem. You've got to start with the right foundation. The right foundation is you were meant to know God. You were meant to be loved by God and to love Him. I'm not talking about religion. I'm talking about a relationship, a relationship with God.

I know it's a cliché but this can be the first day of the rest of your life. I realize that some of you are barely hanging on. Some of you came in here, your career is going down the tubes, your health is going down the tubes, your marriage is cracking up. You feel like chucking it all. You really don't have too much confidence.

It may be because of fatigue -- you're just worn out. It may be because of failure. It may be because of fear.

Today Jesus is alive! And God's PRESENCE gives you confidence He cares and knows.

- God's PEACE gives you confidence that you have nothing to fear.
- God's PURPOSE gives you confidence that your life has meaning.
- God's POWER gives you the confidence to keep going.