

Title: FROM LOCKED DOORS TO OPEN PROCLAMATION, JOHN 20:19-31
(Chatham, NJ; 05/01/11, AM) [Pc – Topical: Two-Point Outline]

Theme: When faced with opposition and struggles, the disciples strove forward because of what was in their hearts: peace, belief, and eternal life.

Purpose: To demonstrate that these things motivate Christians today, to explain what they are, and to illustrate the presence of the Holy Spirit in these elements.

Introduction:

1. Life for the disciples after the Resurrection was lived behind locked doors, 20:19.
2. Fifty days later at Pentecost it burst into open proclamation.
3. Certainly the power of the Holy Spirit was evident in miracles and power.
4. As the church matured the miracles were not as prevalent.
5. Yet there had to be some things that resided in the hearts of these Christians to keep them motivated and vibrant.
6. Washington was influenced by Joseph Addison's, *Cato, a Tragedy*. (Explain)
7. There was great fear during the revolution that overthrowing the British crown would result in him or someone else becoming a tyrant, but our first president resisted all efforts to make him a monarch or even someone with too much power. Even during his presidency he clearly valued the rule of law over the rule of one powerful individual.
8. Such was the influence of the play about Cato.

I. The church resists all attempts to let tyrants or governments dictate its mission and policies.

- A. Dietrich Bonhoeffer resisted the Nazis.
 1. They wanted the churches to keep out people of Jewish heritage.
 2. Bonhoeffer knew this changed the church in such a way that it would no longer be the church.
 3. It also gave the government the power to determine what the church should do.
 4. He gave his life to preserve the church and keep it out of the hands of tyrants.
- B. Some Chinese churches today face hostility from their government.
 1. A church in Beijing has faced intimidation from authorities.
 2. This group had been renting a facility from a restaurant whose owner was then pressured by officials to evict the group.
 3. They planned an outdoor worship which was blocked by police.
 4. See *World*, May 7, 2011, p. 48 for some of the outcomes. Persecution has been intensifying but they vow to continue Sunday worship.
 5. Many of those Christians and their leaders believe that government registration translates into government control. (Quote by Bob Fu, director of *ChinaAid*, top of page 50.)
 6. Read the second full paragraph on the right; also read the quotes in the last paragraph.
 7. What gives such people the boldness to face down the government?
- C. Story of a freed Afghan man, *World*, May 7, 2011, p. 10.
 1. This story can be told over and over with many other names in countries controlled by Islam.
 2. What gives them such daring and conviction?
- D. After the Resurrection we see the disciples cowering behind closed doors.
 1. We know they will find courage, but what will give it to them?
 2. First, the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them.
 3. Second, faith brought a whole host of blessings that gave them power.

II. Three things in John 20:19-31 provided the disciples with strength to survive.

- A. Belief in a resurrected Lord: death had been conquered.
 - 1. Thomas believed but only after he saw and touched Jesus.
 - 2. Rather than berate Thomas Jesus blesses those who will believe even though they won't get the privilege that the disciples had of seeing him.
 - 3. Furthermore, John wrote the Gospel to bring about faith, 31.
 - 4. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
 - 5. Who Jesus was is the most powerful incentive of all; the logos of creation (John 1:1-4) suffered and conquered death on behalf of humanity. "God so loved..."
 - 6. There is no truth more powerful than this.
 - 7. And it didn't happen the way many unbelieving scholars suggest (*World*, p. 28).
 - 8. People have been living, dying, and resisting the world for 2,000 years because of it.

- B. Peace – Jesus greets them with peace (19, 21, 26).
 - 1. How can they be at peace behind locked doors?
 - a. The world is shut out.
 - b. Or freedom eventually unlocks the door.
 - 2. Fullness of joy (Ps. 16:11).
 - 3. "A beautiful inheritance" (6), "not be shaken" (8), "my heart is glad" (9), "not abandon to the grave" (10), and "pleasures forevermore" (11).
 - 4. Peace is not absence of struggle or conflict; peace is being at rest with God that provides hope for the future.
 - 5. We are at peace with God when we are a part of his plan.

- C. Life in his name, John 20:31.
 - 1. Eternal life satisfies our deep longing to overcome death.
 - 2. This creates a remarkably resilient character.
 - 3. It opens our eyes to the future.
 - 4. Remaining faithful in order to obtain this gives us power.

Conclusions:

- 1. The power of the Holy Spirit to overcome struggles and resist the tyranny of the world is found in these things: faith, peace, and eternal life.
- 2. To move, motivate, and support you, look no further than these gifts of God made present and real by the Holy Spirit.
- 3. Begin with belief; this leads to repentance, baptism, and faithful Christian living.
- 4. Peace and life will accompany your decision.