



FORGIVEN TO FORGIVE, BLESSED TO BLESS

13 April 2025

Summary:

This Message explores the profound meaning of Jesus' resurrection and its impact on believers. It emphasizes the transformative power of Christ's peace, the significance of His wounds, and the call for Christians to live as witnesses of the resurrection. The message encourages listeners to embrace their past struggles as potential tools for ministry and to live out the reality of being forgiven and blessed by God.

Key Points:

- Jesus' greeting "Peace be with you" signifies more than calm; it declares the restoration of all things
- Christ's wounds are evidence of His victory and redemption, not weakness
- Our past wounds and failures can become powerful tools for ministry
- Doubts and questions do not disqualify us from faith or service
- The resurrection empowers believers to live as new creations and agents of God's mercy
- Christians are called to proclaim Christ through their actions, service, and words

Scripture Reference:

John 20:19-29 (Jesus appears to the disciples and Thomas)

Stories:

- Bruce's personal experience with cancer and how it allows him to connect with others facing similar diagnoses
- The story of Thomas doubting and Jesus' compassionate response
- An anecdote about the Bruce's granddaughter seeking physical closeness during worship
- Bruce's invitation to his grandchildren for a sleepover adventure, illustrating the importance of creating lasting memories

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does Jesus' greeting of 'Peace be with you' go beyond a simple calming message, and what does it reveal about the nature of His resurrection and our relationship with God?

In what ways can our personal wounds and struggles become powerful tools for ministry and connecting with others, rather than disqualifying us from service?

How does the story of Thomas challenge our understanding of doubt and faith, and what can we learn from Jesus' response to Thomas' skepticism?

What does it mean to be 'forgiven to forgive' and 'blessed to bless,' and how can we embody these concepts in our daily lives?

In what ways can we cultivate a sense of 'shalom' - wholeness, restoration, and right relationships - in our lives and communities?

How does the concept of Jesus as our peace challenge our understanding of peace as merely the absence of conflict?

What does it mean to be a 'movement of mercy' rather than a community of 'polished perfection,' and how might this shape our approach to faith and ministry?

How can we balance the tension between acknowledging our past wounds and embracing the new life offered through Christ's resurrection?

In what ways can we intentionally create meaningful spiritual 'memories' for ourselves and others, similar to how Bruce planned an adventure for his grandchildren?

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Opening Prayer:

Begin by asking God to open your hearts and minds to His message and to guide your discussion. Pray the Impacters prayer together as a group.

Key Takeaways:

1. The resurrection is about new life and transformation.
2. Jesus' words "Peace be with you" are more than just a greeting - they signify restoration and reconciliation.
3. Our wounds and past mistakes don't disqualify us from God's mission; they may be our most powerful testimony.
4. Doubts and questions don't cancel our calling; they can lead to stronger faith.
5. We are called to be living examples of the resurrection in our daily lives.

Discussion Questions:

1. Bruce mentions that "peace" (shalom) means more than just calmness. How does understanding peace as wholeness, restoration, and right relationship change your perspective on Jesus' greeting?
2. Reflect on a time when you felt God's peace in the midst of difficulty. How did this experience align with the idea that "Peace is not the absence of trouble; peace is the presence of Christ in the middle of it"?
3. Jesus showed His disciples His wounds after the resurrection. Why do you think He did this, and what does it teach us about our own struggles and imperfections?
4. The Message talks about Thomas's doubt. Have you ever had a "Thomas moment" in your faith journey? How did God respond to your doubts?
5. How can we, as Christians, use our past experiences - even painful ones - to minister to others?
6. Bruce emphasizes that we "carry Jesus everywhere we go." What are some practical ways we can embody this in our daily lives?

Practical Applications:

1. This week, practice saying "Peace be with you" to someone each day, remembering the full meaning behind these words.
2. Reflect on a past struggle or mistake. How might God use this experience in your life or ministry? Consider sharing this with a trusted friend or group member.
3. Choose one area of doubt or uncertainty in your faith. Commit to studying Scripture, praying, or seeking guidance on this topic over the next week.
4. Look for an opportunity to serve someone this week, using your "hands, feet, or voice" as mentioned in the Message.

5. Write a short testimony about how you've experienced God's forgiveness or blessing and be prepared to share it if an opportunity arises.

Closing Prayer:

Thank God for His resurrection power in our lives. Ask for the courage to live as "resurrection people" and to share His love and peace with others.