

## 95-04-16Mark

The crucifixion, indeed, on this very day, on the Sunday following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, starting in verse 19, then the same day, this was the day that the ladies had found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty and had talked with the two angels. This is the same day that Peter and John had run and verified for themselves that there was, in fact, an empty tomb. The same day that Jesus had appeared to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

On this 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, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be with you. When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.

So Jesus said to them again, Peace to you. As the Father has sent me, I also send you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them. If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. This is the first appearance of Jesus Christ to the collected assembly of disciples after his resurrection.

And it's very significant what is recorded about this reunion and about this meeting. We notice three things in verse 19, don't we? First of all, the disciples were assembled. The disciples had come together.

And this is understandable if we think about it. Jesus has been arrested and crucified at the instigation of the Jewish religious leadership. Supported by popular opinion, the great crowds who had been incited to say, Release unto us Barabbas.

Crucify him. Crucify him. The entire tide of public opinion, all of those crowds that had assembled to see Jesus heal and to hear him teach had largely turned against him and had fueled that great movement that resulted in his execution by the Roman army.

He had been buried and had spent the Sabbath day in the tomb. Jesus said, As Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will spend three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. And after that time, he would rise again.

He told his disciples this many times. But on this day, in spite of these rumors, in spite of the empty tomb, the disciples were confused. The disciples were fearful.

They were uncertain. They gathered together. And you can imagine the conversation that must have gone on.

Simon, did you really see the Lord? John, did you really go in and the tomb was empty? What does it all mean? Some of us have claimed to see the Lord, but others have not. Can it be? Is it

just wishful thinking? Is it imagination? Is it just a vision from God to comfort us? Or has he actually risen? And I'm sure that there was a great deal of conversation and consternation. What shall we do? The people are against us.

The Jewish leadership. If they find us, they'll kill us just like they killed him. What shall we do? They had gathered in this room and they had closed the door for fear of the Jews.

What if they find us? They could round us all up in one arrest. We're all here together. Let's close the doors.

Let's hide. What shall we do? What's to become of us? Didn't we tell the Lord time and time again, if he kept teaching that way, he would get in trouble? Didn't we warn him that if he made the religious leaders angry, there would be consequences? Didn't we tell him time and time again, don't go to Jerusalem? Didn't we tell him, stay away, stay in Galilee? Don't come down at this most important of feasts, the Passover, when all the Jews are assembled and the religious leaders are in their full power, in their full glory? It's a mistake. Lord, don't go.

We told him. And look what happened. He's been crucified.

Now we're confused. Some of us think that we've seen him, but we don't really know. It would have been interesting to have been able to be present in that room during those hours and hear the conversation of the disciples and feel the fear and the confusion and the frustration in that room.

And yet, Jesus came and stood in the midst of them. This wasn't a high point of faith for the disciples, was it? It wasn't a time when they said, remember, He said He would rise the third day. Remember that He made the promises that He would bring in the Kingdom of God, that He will fulfill the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament, fulfill the covenant to David, the covenant to Moses, the covenant to Noah, the covenant about Palestine, the promises to Abraham.

All of our Old Testament Scriptures would be fulfilled in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. It wasn't a high point of faith. It wasn't a time that they were remembering the promises and claiming them and saying He must return, He must come back, He must live again.

It was a time of confusion, a time of fear. But Jesus came anyway. Jesus didn't say, well, you've lost faith, you haven't remembered what I taught you, you didn't pay attention when I told you about these things, and now you're on your own.

Jesus came at that time of fear, at that time of confusion, that time of failure, that time of great consternation. He came and stood in the midst, and He said to them, Peace be with you. In Greek, the word for peace is Irene.

We talk about this in poetry. We talk about there being an Irenic scene, a pastoral scene where

there's pastures and sheep grazing and a gentle breeze blowing, and we call that Irenic. The name Irene in English comes from this Greek word Irene, which means peace.

We know that the Lord and the disciples amongst themselves did not speak Greek, they spoke Aramaic. And any of you that have even a glancing familiarity with Hebrew and with Israel, you know the standard greeting that is given between people who speak Hebrew and who speak Aramaic. When they greet one another, what do they say? Shalom, shalom.

I am sure that this is the word that Jesus used. Throughout the Old Testament, when we find the word shalom in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, which was the Bible that the disciples had in this day, when we find the word shalom, it's translated by two words. It's translated by Irene, which means peace to you.

And interestingly, it is also translated by the word Soteria, Soteria, salvation. The word that we translate saved, to be saved. What an interesting fullness there is in that word shalom.

The root of that word, the history and the background and the flavor of that word is essentially wholeness, completeness, being fulfilled. When you came to someone and wished them shalom and wished their household shalom, you wished them peace, but it was beyond peace. It was completeness, wholeness, a lack for nothing.

And that's why this word is often translated in the Old Testament, Soteria, deliverance, salvation. Completeness, wholeness, fulfillment is all caught up in that great word that Jesus spoke to the assembly of these frightened disciples in the closed room, shalom, peace to you. And of course, this is exactly what they needed at this great time of crisis and this great time of fear is stabilizing, peace, comfort.

Jesus doesn't upbraid them for their hardness of heart. He doesn't say, I told you so, why weren't you paying attention? He comes to them and blesses them with peace. You may recall just a few pages back in John, in chapter 14, verse 27, before the events of the arrest and the trial and the crucifixion, Jesus said this same thing.

He said in 14.27, peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you.

Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. And Jesus gave them those great promises that He would be with them, that He would return, that He would send to them another comforter when He went away. This is Jesus' first and foremost priority is to calm the disciples, to reassure them, to bless them with peace.

And just as He uses peace twice in verse 27 of chapter 14, He's going to say it twice here. He will say, shalom. And He will show them in verse 20 of chapter 20 when He had said this, when He had said shalom, what did He do? Obviously, His initial appearance and His initial greeting did

not produce the desired effect.

When He appeared in their midst and said shalom, in some ways it's like turning on the light in a dark room and someone saying, surprise! It doesn't immediately instill peace in our heart even though people have assembled to give us a blessing and to give us a surprise party. The initial shock isn't always pleasant. And the shock of Jesus appearing in their midst, even though He said shalom, it did not immediately reassure them.

And I think that they did not immediately recognize Him. Now this is an interesting thing that we see in Scripture. Have you thought about this? Think about the appearances of Jesus after His resurrection.

Who's the first person that He sees in the garden? The Lady, Mary. What does she think when she sees Him? She thinks He's the gardener. And even after He speaks and He says, Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek? And she tells this story.

Even the sound of His voice does not immediately cause her to recognize Him. And that's curious. Why is that detail recorded? Why does it tell us that Mary did not immediately recognize Him? She thought He was a gardener until He spoke her name.

And at the speaking of her name, there was that recognition that went beyond sight and went beyond sound to that level of fellowship and intimacy that they had enjoyed for these many years. And when she heard Him speak her name, it didn't matter what He looked like and it didn't matter what He sounded like. She knew that He was the Lord.

You recall, that by the way is in earlier in this chapter, John 20, verse 15. We know that the disciples on the road to Emmaus were men who had followed the Lord and who knew Him well. And these two, as they walked to this village some seven or eight miles away from Jerusalem, talked together on the road about the events of the arrest and the trials and the crucifixion.

And Jesus appeared on the road and began to walk with them and they did not recognize Him. And He said, What is troubling you? And they began to explain and then He began to expound from the Old Testament Scriptures that it was necessary for the Messiah to come and to die and to be the sacrifice for our sins. And they walked at walking pace seven miles.

You can figure that this had to have taken probably a couple of hours that they spent conversing. And their hearts burned within them as they heard this opening of the Scriptures. And yet, they did not recognize Him until when.

They went inside and they sat down at the table. And in the familiar way that He had always done, He took the bread and broke it and gave thanks. And at that moment, they recognized Him and they knew Him.

But they didn't immediately recognize Him. Why does Scripture record that? That's an interesting

detail. That's in Luke 24.

Verse 16 is where He first meets them. Verse 31 is where He is known to them and is recognized by them. In the next chapter of John, in chapter 21, the disciples are at the seaside.

They've gone up to Galilee and they've gone back to their trade of fishing. And in a deja vu type of situation, they have fished all night and have caught nothing. This was an episode that we studied just this past Wednesday.

The miraculous catch of fish on that same sea. Here at the close of Jesus' time with the disciples, they have that same experience. And early in the morning, the Lord appears on the seaside.

And He says, cast your net on the other side of the boat. And when they do so, this incredibly huge catch of fish. And at the point that the net comes up full of fish, John is the first one to say, I have seen this happen before.

I know who it is that says, cast the net down. And we come up and can't even lift it into the boat. And John says, it is the Lord.

Peter at that point grabs his robe and dives into the sea and swims for the shore. But they did not immediately recognize Him. And why is that? He spoke to them.

He appeared to them. And they did not immediately recognize Him. Even later on, when they assembled at the Mount in Galilee, it says in Matthew 28, verse 17, right before the giving of the Great Commission, right before the final words of Jesus to the disciples, it says that they assembled there with the Lord, but some doubted.

Now, what is it that they could have doubted? If the Lord was there, and if He appeared the same way, if He spoke the same way, what is it that they could possibly have doubted when He was right there before them? But it appears that Jesus was not recognizable to them simply by sight, and not simply by sound. It was when He spoke the words that they were used to hearing, when He did the things that they were used to seeing, that their eyes were opened and they could recognize the Lord. Why does Scripture record these incidents and each time tell us that there wasn't an immediate recognition by sight? Doesn't it speak of this day and this age where we don't see the Lord? We believe in Him and we trust in Him by what we hear, what He has said and what He has done.

He becomes revealed in our souls the way that He's revealed here to the disciples by what He does and by what He says. And that's the mark for this age and this time in history. Jesus made this clear when He said here later on in this same chapter when He comes back and appears to the disciples again in John 20, verse 29, Thomas wasn't there the first time.

And Thomas said, unless I can put my fingers on the nail holes, I will not believe. So Jesus came

back and it wasn't enough for Thomas even when he saw Him. He put His hand on those scars, into those holes.

And in verse 29, Jesus said to him, Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. That's our case, isn't it? We have never seen the resurrected Lord.

He hasn't appeared to us on the road. He hasn't appeared to us in the room. He hasn't appeared to us on the mountain or by the sea in all of these different locales.

Why is He real to us? Why do we know Him and why do we trust Him? Because His words and His deeds identify Him as the Son of God. John says here in the very next verse, verse 30 of chapter 20, truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written. Why? It doesn't say Jesus appears so that you might believe.

It doesn't say Jesus will come and perform great and mighty miracles in our lives. It says these are written in order that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing we might have life through His name. So, Jesus appears to the disciples and when He speaks and when He identifies Himself by the marks of His crucifixion, they know that it is the Lord.

Notice in verse 20, after He had said shalom, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Not until they saw the marks in His hands and in His feet and in His side were they convinced.

Thomas, a few days later, will be convinced by the marks, by the identifying features that prove that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, crucified, risen, and coming again. And that's the object of our faith as well. So now in verse 21, Jesus said to them again, shalom, peace to you.

And then He says a curious thing hard on the heels of that. He says, as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. And we see in this the great call to missionary endeavor.

We see in this sending of Jesus Christ the same mission that the Father gave to Jesus, which is to reveal the Father. To reveal the Father's plan and the Father's purpose as it is summed up and expressed in the person of Jesus Christ. What does this mean when it says, as the Father has sent Me, I also send you? It's an interesting thing to go back and see how many times Jesus refers to Himself as the One sent from the Father.

That was the authority of His message. That was the purpose for His coming. Turn with me to Matthew 10, verse 40.

In Matthew 10, toward the close of a teaching section here in this Gospel, Jesus has just said, He who loves Father or Mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He who does not take His cross and follow after Me is not

worthy of Me.

And he who finds his life will lose it. And he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me.

And he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. There is an idea here of representation, of communication. Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to represent the Father.

So that's the first principle that we see when Jesus says, As the Father sent Me, the Father sent Jesus to represent Himself, to express His presence, His person, His character, His plan. Jesus understood that and He refers to Himself time and time again as the One sent from the Father. If we are sent in the same way by Jesus Christ that the Father sent Him, then we must see in our lives and in our purpose as believers an idea of representation.

We represent the One who sent us. Our lives should reflect Him in the same way that Jesus Christ, in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in bodily form. That's a high calling, isn't it? Jesus Christ was the full expression of God the Father in human form.

God sent Him for that purpose. Now, Jesus has sent us in the same way. It's our goal.

It's our calling to be holy for our lives to reflect Jesus Christ. And that isn't something that we can put on like a garment, is it? It's something that has to be planted in our innermost being. It's something that takes preparation.

It takes asking and seeking and knocking. It takes the transforming power of God Himself so that we can reflect Jesus Christ in the same way that Jesus Christ reflected the Father. So as we think about this idea of being sent, the first principle is representation.

We are to be the image of Jesus Christ even as He was the image of the Father. If we turn a few pages in Matthew to chapter 15, Jesus knew the purpose of His calling, the purpose of His sending. In Matthew 15, verse 24, He's talking to the lady who is asking Him for healing on behalf of her daughter.

And He says, I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. This is in a phase of Jesus' ministry when He is specifically presenting Himself to Israel as their Messiah. At this particular time, Jesus knows where He is in the Father's plan.

Jesus knows that He will one day be the Savior of all men, that the Gospel will be preached to the Gentiles. He knows from the Old Testament Scriptures that that light will shine to all men. But in this phase of His ministry, God has sent Him only to Israel.

He doesn't go to the Gentiles. He doesn't travel to Joppa and to Greece and to Rome. He doesn't travel to Egypt or to any of the places where the Gospel will eventually spread through His disciples.

Jesus knows where He is not only in the Father's purpose in representing the Father, but in the time of God's plan. There is a time for presenting the Gospel of the Kingdom to Israel. And there is a time for presenting it to the Gentiles.

And that time is not yet. Yet because of this great faith that this Gentile woman expresses, she is going to receive a great blessing from Jesus Christ. But Jesus knows where He is in the Father's plan.

He knows that things that come after don't precede those things that come first. It is necessary because of the Old Testament Scriptures that the Gospel come first to Israel. It's necessary.

It's part of God's plan. And Jesus has first things first. And the principle we see, in the same way that God sent Jesus first to the house of Israel, He knew where He was in God's plan and He kept first things first.

We have been sent by Jesus Christ. As the Father has sent Me, so send I You. We have to know where we are in God's plan.

We have to know which things come first. What are the priorities? What is it that must take place before we can represent God fully? Before we can be that one sent in the broadest sense? So we've seen two principles. Representation.

To be one sent, we must represent the person who sent us. If we're not a good representative, if we're not a good reflection of the person who sent us, there's no point in going. We have seen this in the recent history of the United States.

Back during World War II, we had an ambassador that did not reflect the thinking of the United States and espoused policies and priorities in staying out of the war and being an isolationist that did not reflect our country. He wasn't a good representative and he was returned to the United States in disgrace. Of course, his family survived.

His son went on to become President of the United States. But he was representing our country, but he didn't represent it well. He didn't reflect what the administration wanted to convey.

He didn't reflect the thinking and the spirit of America in that time of crisis. He had a different idea. He wasn't a good representative.

We have to be good representatives when we are sent forth. So, the idea of representation and we have to know where we are in God's plan. We have to be sure that we know what God's purpose is and keep first things first.

A third principle comes to us in chapter 21 of Matthew. As we investigate this idea of being sent by Jesus Christ just as He was sent by the Father, in Matthew chapter 21, verse 37, Jesus is finishing up a parable about the landowner. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard and

set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a tower.

He leased it to vinedressers and he went to a far country. What a wonderful picture here of the stewardship of the Gospel that has been left behind. The stewardship of the truth of God that was given and is to be communicated.

But in verse 34, when vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit. The vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

This is a picture of Israel as stewards of the mysteries of God, as stewards of the truth of God, as the people of God that were to shine like a light throughout the world. They were given this responsibility and God sent the prophets to come and to reap the rewards and reap the fruit of that. And yet, when God sent the prophets to Israel, the prophets were rejected.

They were stoned. Their representation of the landowner was rejected. And they were stoned and killed and abused.

He sent other servants, in verse 36, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then in verse 37, last of all, he sent his son to them saying, they will surely respect my son. Representation from the landowner to these stewards of the vineyard.

But, in verse 38, when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, this is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? And this is an ominous warning to the nation of Israel, the discipline that is coming on them for rejecting the prophets and rejecting the Son of God himself, Jesus Christ. But we see this idea of being sent in verse 37. Last of all, he sent his son.

We know from the words of Peter and the words of Paul that this was done according to the express purpose and foreknowledge of God. God knew when he sent the prophets that they would be rejected. We have a roster in Hebrews 11 of all of the different afflictions that befell the prophets.

They were run off into the deserts. They lived in caves and holes. They were sawed asunder.

They were stoned. They were brutalized. God knew that when he sent them.

There's a profound lesson there for us because those men were sent to be rejected. Jesus Christ was sent to be rejected. He didn't come and ask to be rejected.

He came presenting the truth. But He came and was rejected. And God knew it when He sent

Him.

As the Father has sent Me, so I send you. We have to recognize that the testimony that we bear isn't popular with everyone. It isn't received by everyone.

And there are times when we stand up for the truth and we stand up for the Gospel and it is rejected and we are rejected along with it. It's a part of the commission. It's a part of the mission.

It's a part of the purpose. And there are times when we are rejected. We are criticized.

We are shunned. We are turned aside and thought little of by others because we represent Jesus Christ. As the Father sent Me, the Son, to the vineyard to be killed and to stand as a means of judgment on a generation, we as believers may represent the truth in our day and in our society and be rejected.

There may not be a great harvest. There may not be a great response. It may be a response of rejection.

And yet it's according to the purpose of God and God will use that rejection as a judgment on our generation. God used those prophets. God used His own Son.

Can we expect any less in our own lives? So we should not be discouraged and we should not be disheartened and we shouldn't decide that we're a failure and that we should do something different if our message is rejected. It's a part of the commission. It's a part of being sent just as Jesus Christ was sent.

Look in Luke 10, verse 16. Luke 10, verse 16. Another concluding portion of a teaching passage here.

Jesus is denouncing those who have been apathetic and been indifferent to His message, His preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. He mourns and He pronounces woe over Chorazin and Bethsaida, for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.

And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven will be brought down to Hades. He who hears you... This is Jesus speaking to His disciples. He who hears you hears Me.

He who rejects you rejects Me. And he who rejects Me rejects him who sent Me. We can see this chain of custody taking place in the stewardship of the truth of God, the stewardship of the gospel of the good news of God's grace.

God committed it to the care of the Son knowing that it would be rejected widely and completely in many ways. Jesus Christ is sending us with that same commission, with that same truth and

that same trust knowing that we will be rejected. But when we are rejected, He says, those who reject you reject Me.

And those who reject Me, He says, reject him who sent Me. Jesus has told us ahead of time not to expect a huge success, not to expect an abundant harvest every time we present the gospel. There are times when that harvest comes and thank God for it.

But look at the pattern of the prophets. Look at the pattern of John the Baptist. Look at the pattern of Jesus Christ.

Look at the pattern of the apostles and their disciples who followed after. We do not bear a popular message. We do not represent a popular God in this day and age.

It's more popular to have our needs filled. It's more popular to have our interests catered to. It's more popular for people to focus on us and on what we require and what we desire than it is to represent the God of heaven in His righteousness and in His justice.

But Jesus told us ahead of time, those who hear you hear Me. Those who reject you reject Me. And this gives us a helpful insight into the last part of our passage here in John chapter 20.

What does Jesus say? When He had said this, when He had said, as the Father sent Me, I send you, He breathed on them and said to them, receive the Holy Spirit. We have studied in some detail the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, and what is it? It is to communicate the truth of God. When the Comforter comes, He will lead you into all truth.

He will bring to your mind the things that I have taught you. He will convict of sin and righteousness and judgment. All of those are things which are revealed in the Word of God.

The standard of righteousness, the standard of justice, the standard of judgment. God gave the ministry of the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ from birth, just as He gave it to John the Baptist from birth. And we as believers have been given the ministry of God, the Holy Spirit, to enable us to communicate this truth.

Whether it is accepted or it is rejected, it is delivered in the power of the Holy Spirit. Not in our human strength, not in our human techniques, our human ways of coercing, our human ways of advertising. It is delivered in the power of the Spirit.

And when Jesus gives this commission, sending us forth, He immediately provides the means and it is the Holy Spirit. It is the power of God that communicates the truth of God. And then in the final verse, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.

If you retain the sins of any, they are retained. We have seen a principle in our recent studies that when the light is put up on a lampstand, there are two things that it reveals. It can reveal the truth of God.

It can reveal the mind of Christ. It can reveal the character and the plan of God. Or, if it shines on those of us who are hard of heart and hard of hearing, it reveals that very fact.

It reveals our rejection. When Jesus taught in parables, it was not to obscure the truth, it was to reveal. It either revealed the truth of God or it revealed the hardness and the blindness that people had chosen for themselves.

When this message that we send forth, that we proclaim, that we reflect in our daily lives, is evident, when people perceive it in what we say and in how we live, two things are going to happen. It is either going to bring them to the point of accepting the One who sent us, Jesus Christ, or it's going to cause them to reject Him. He who hears you, hears me.

He who rejects you, rejects me. And that message, that truth that we bring, the gospel and the truth of the Word of God, will either be accepted or rejected. When it is accepted, we can pronounce and proclaim the forgiveness of sins.

When people say, I trust in the Savior that you tell me of. I trust in that God who empowers your life and who gives you the joy that I see and the hope that I see in your daily life. We can say, because you trust in Him, your sins are forgiven.

We can proclaim that. We can pronounce it because it's a promise of God based on the work of Christ. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven.

We don't personally have the power to forgive sins, do we? But we can proclaim forgiveness. On this day, the day that Jesus Christ rose and proclaimed victory over death and victory over sin, we can carry that message because we have been sent by Him. And when people accept that message and accept us as ambassadors of Christ, we can proclaim the forgiveness of their sins based on the work of Christ.

But if they reject that message, if they reject us and what we stand for and how we live, their sins are retained. And we can also pronounce that. Remember when Jesus sent the 74th and He said, when those cities receive you, stay there and teach.

If they reject you, go outside and shake the dust off your feet outside their city limits as a testimony against them. We are authorized by our sender to pronounce what will happen when people reject Jesus Christ. And it's an important part of the truth of the Gospel.

He who hears you, hears me. He who rejects you, rejects me. And rejection of the Gospel is a fact of our existence.

It's an unhappy thing. But we have to be prepared for it and we have to recognize that it will take place and not be discouraged. Jesus Christ has achieved the victory.

The victory over sin. The victory over death. It's a wonderful message.

The fact that we proclaim it and it isn't accepted should not change our joy and our peace. Jesus pronounces on us Shalom. It's our heritage.

It's our gift. Jesus says, My peace I give to you. My peace I leave with you.

Whatever the course of our lives, whatever trials we face, whatever circumstances God places us in that will cause that light and that hope to shine forth from our lives. It might be physical disability. It might be difficult circumstances that we face every day.

It is the means of broadcasting the light and the hope that should be inside us as believers. If we do represent the One that sent us, if we know the Word that we claim to be ambassadors of, and if we proclaim it cheerfully and in the hope of the return of Jesus Christ and the eternal life that comes, there is no circumstance to beset us that will take away our peace. There's no rejection that will take place that will dampen our enthusiasm or dim our vision and our voice in proclaiming that great and wonderful truth.

This is a day of victory, and we live a life of victory. Regardless of what people think, regardless of what people say, we have been sent by the victor to proclaim victory. What a wonderful and exciting message that is.

What a wonderful and exciting life we can lead regardless of our circumstances. Shall we close now in a word of prayer? Father, we come to You this morning recognizing that we have no other confidence. We have no other plea except that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed on our behalf.

We know that in and of ourselves we have nothing to recommend us. We have nothing to justify us in Your sight or to qualify us to stand in Your presence or to address You or to approach You. We are born in iniquity.

We are sinful from the outset. We choose our own way. We are rebellious.

We make mistakes. We fall far short of Your glory. We are hopeless and helpless and useless.

And yet because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, because of His love while we were His enemies, and when we had no redeeming features at all, He loved us and He came and gave Himself for us. And because of that, we can claim relationship with You by trusting in Him. We can accept His work on our behalf and be cleansed and be renewed and be transformed into His image.

And in the same way that You sent Him with a purpose and with a mission, we can be those ones who are sent by Him. Our lives can have purpose and definition. We pray, Father, that as we look at these things, that if there are any of us here this morning that have never trusted in Jesus Christ and never claimed that great and wonderful gift that He offers us, that that will take place this morning.

That the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit will make these things real. And that as each of us

who have accepted that gift pray on their behalf that those who have never faced the issue of Jesus Christ squarely and have trusted in Him will place their trust in Him this morning. And Father, we thank You that once we do that, we have Your promise of eternal life.

We have Your promise of blessing. We have Your promise of shalom, of peace, of wholeness, and of deliverance. Not only from the mouth of the lake of fire, but also from the circumstances of our daily life.

Because as we look at the truth of Your Word, as we see the wonderful content of the message that we proclaim, the wonderful person that we proclaim, and the great victory that is the content of our message, we know that You sustain us, You bless us, You measure us by Your standard and not by the standard of the world. Father, we pray that that joy will be renewed within us. We pray that as we go forth in the coming days, we will be those who are sent and who represent You, represent the Lord Jesus Christ, and faithfully administer this wonderful stewardship that You have given to us.

We ask You all these things now in Jesus' name, Amen.