

# OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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## SERMON TITLE

Close Encounters of the God Kind – After the Resurrection

## SERIES

## DATE

4/16/2023

## KEY SCRIPTURE

John 20:19-31

## SYNOPSIS

Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection and it changed their lives.

## HIGHLIGHTS



## ☞ Close Encounters of the God Kind – After the Resurrection

We have been taking a look at various people in the bible who had a personal encounter with the Lord. We want to see how that took place and how it affected those people. Jacob encountered God in a dream which led him to make a personal commitment to the Lord. You can't just ride the shirrtails of your parents or your spouse. You have to choose for yourself to follow Christ. Moses' burning bush encounter led him to partner with God to deliver the nation from slavery. God did many supernatural exploits with Moses and a stick. When you partner with God, the impossible becomes possible. Isaiah's God-encounter brought personal conviction and a calling from the Lord. A personal encounter is not just for your own benefit, but for helping others. Then, Gideon's God-encounter turned an insecure, insignificant man into a victorious leader. You might feel inadequate for God's calling, but he empowers those he enlists. Last Sunday was Easter and we celebrated the resurrection of our Lord, so today I want to explore the personal encounters of those first disciples when Jesus had just been raised from the dead.

### **John 20:19-31**

**19 On 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!"**

You have to remember that just a few days ago these disciples had gone on the run when Jesus was arrested, tortured and crucified. Not only that, but earlier this morning, they discovered the tomb was empty. Not realizing the Lord rose from the dead, they likely thought some conspiracy was going on and they would be targeted next. So, they have understandable reason to be hiding out behind locked doors.

But even our fears and personal defenses are no match for the Lord. He can meet us in any situation. And, it's good to see that the disciples had gathered together. This was partly for their own safety and security, but they also had come to love each other over the years. So, they were not alone, but together.

There's a modern trend to downplay the importance of gathering together, but those early disciples gathered often. They understood the importance of unity and community.

☞ And, **it was when they were together that Jesus appeared.** He could have gone anywhere after his resurrection, but he chose to seek out his people. And, Jesus didn't come with a rebuke, but instead spoke peace to them.

You may feel like you've let the Lord down in some way, but he wants to encourage you today. This is the nature of the Lord; he inspires peace. To be sure, his presence can be formidable and frightening, but **ultimately, he brings peace to people.** He is called the "God of peace" numerous times in the Bible. And, Jesus enables definitive peace between God and sinful humanity. The Lord says, "Peace be with you."



**20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."**

The disciples were elated when they realized it was really the Lord. They had spent the weekend afraid because of all that had gone on. Then, they had spent the day wondering about that empty tomb. Plus, Mary had reported her interaction with Jesus in the garden. So, I'm sure they were in a lot of turmoil, that is, until the moment they realized it was really him. When you have a genuine God-encounter, it will rev you up as well. There's nothing quite like it.

☞ **Whatever fear, doubt and turmoil you may be experiencing can be suddenly transformed into joy with a personal God-encounter.**

Then, much like the other encounters we've been discussing, we see Jesus commissions the disciples to go. He sends them out. This must have been hard for the disciples at first. After all, they were avoiding the public eye. But, over and over again we see that a God-encounter is much more than just a personal pick-me-up.

☞ **It's meant to strengthen and affirm you, but then it's to overflow and bless others.** We are sent with the same basic mission that Jesus had...

Luke 4:18

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free"

When's the last time you shared the Good News with someone? When's the last time you led someone to salvation in Christ? That's part of your calling as a believer. How about this... When's the last time you prayed with someone to "see the light" and be delivered from their addiction? To be set free from their sinful tendencies? That's what Jesus did, and he tells us to do likewise.

**22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."**

Here's another instance of partnering with God. Jesus commissions the disciples and then immediately gives them the Holy Spirit. The calling of the Lord is impossible to do in your own strength. But, **He empowers us to do what he calls us to do.**

Luke 12:11-12

11 "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

**24 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless**



**I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."**

Maybe you can relate to Thomas – you're a skeptic... "Show me the money."

Thomas gets a bad rap for being a doubter, but I think a lot of people are just like that. "Where's the proof?" At least Thomas was honest about his feelings – he didn't just pretend to believe. The Lord wants us to be honest and sincere. He doesn't want us to just go through the motions, pretending that we believe. He wants us to really believe.

Mark 7:6 "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.'

If you've been struggling with doubts about the Lord and his promises, then dig in and dive deeper into his Word. Pursue him in your prayers. Go after him. Don't just play along, pretending to believe, and don't you dare just give up either. Ask him the hard questions; look for the answers and pursue him wholeheartedly.

I've been there. There have been times that even I, a pastor, has struggled with doubts. Just don't ☞ let your doubts become unbelief. **Keep pressing in until your doubts turn into assurance.**

**26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." 28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" 29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

Here again, Jesus appears even though the doors were locked. There are no situations in which the Lord cannot intervene. **He can make an entrance anywhere, anytime.** Then note: Jesus did not come down on Thomas – he granted him the evidence he needed. There was a mild rebuke before it was all over – It would have been better if Thomas believed without needing the proof, but in his great mercy and kindness, Jesus gave the answer he needed.

On a side note, it was the wounds of Jesus that proved it was him.

☞ **Whenever you may be in doubt about the Lord's heart for you, remember the cross. He proved his love by suffering and dying in your place.**

Then, once Thomas understood, he immediately glorified the Lord. "My Lord and my God!" He had directly announced his doubts, but now he boldly announced his belief. Not only was he saying, "I believe Jesus is alive." He is saying, "Jesus is God!" He had a complete change of heart and mind, and it was very personal. "My Lord." "My God."



You also need to come to the place of knowing Jesus personally as Lord and God. He's not just a good man or teacher or prophet. He is the Lord! He is living today. And, to know him personally ☞ as Lord means you will **allow him to be the boss in your life**. No more arguing about what's right and what's wrong. If the Lord said it, that settles it.

Sometimes people ask me what I think about various subjects. My preferred answer is this: "let's see what the Bible says." My opinion is only that – an opinion. But the Bible is God's Word. He is the Lord – the boss. What he says is the truth of the matter. And Jesus proved his authority by ☞ overcoming death, itself. If he has authority over death, **he has authority to speak into your life, and he deserves your allegiance**.

**30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

Our God has been and still is a miracle-working God. I love what he has been doing in our meetings – bringing personal renewal, relational healing, and more. And, I'm still looking for his miracles as we continue to press in to his presence. Let's not give up. Let's pursue him.

☞ **Jesus is calling. (music will start)**

The altar is open.

Do you need a miracle? The Lord is a miracle worker.

What about some assurance from the Lord? He did it for Thomas; he can do it for you.

Have your doubts been gaining ground? It's time to seek the Lord.

Need some encouragement to step out and share your faith? God will empower you.

Ready to really give him control of your life? Turn to him in full surrender.

Let's take some time to meet with God.