

"The Keys to Unlock Easter Happiness" Easter 2

1)

John 20:19-31

2)

April 19, 2020

May the Lord direct your hearts into God's love and Christ's perseverance. (2 Thess. 3:5)

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

How many 16 year olds do we have watching with us today? I'm sure we have a few. If you're not 16 anymore, do you remember when you were? Perhaps one of the greatest things any 16 year old could say to their parent is this – "Can I have the keys, please?" There is no greater feeling for a 16 year old than asking their parent for the keys to the car. What feelings do you get, or did you get, when your parents gave you the keys? Freedom? Power? A new outlook on life?

Spring sports, confirmation ceremonies, graduation parties, work, vacation, surgery ... All of us had plans. Everything was organized, arranged and put into our calendars. Then suddenly all our well-laid plans became disorganized, broken and scattered. During the Easter season we are starting a sermon series answering the question: "**What do we do when our plans fall through?**" Today we want to look at what happens – when we're locked in a room.

What was Easter like for you and your family? Wasn't it quite a bit different than what we've experienced in the past? We weren't able to worship here in the church. No Easter breakfast. We were locked up in our homes due to the continuing safer at home order.

When you're locked in or locked out of something, you need keys to get you out. Keys...like a teenager getting the keys to the car.

Key #1 – Forgiveness

In our gospel lesson we hear about the disciples being back in the upper room and it was locked. Their whole world had come crashing down around them. Their beloved friend and master Jesus had died. They thought he was the Messiah who would save their country. Now he was dead, and all their hopes died along with

him. Worst of all, was their guilt. They had blood on their hands. They had left the Lord to die on the cross. Peter cursed and swore that he didn't even know him. Judas betrayed him. The disciples were depressed and afraid. Then suddenly our risen Lord appeared among them and gave them what they needed the most.

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!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Jesus could have addressed them with extreme disappointment – "How could you?" But he didn't. He gave them an extremely friendly and warm greeting – "**Peace be with you.**"

Isn't that one of the keys for us to unlock Easter happiness for us too? Perhaps we feel we're like those disciples...except we're in locked houses. Jesus wants us to look to what he did for us to give us peace – his outstretched arms on the cross paying for your sins and mine and for the sins of the world. He cried out – "**It is finished**" – to declare God's plan of salvation complete. His resurrection from the grave was God's stamp of approval that he accepted Jesus' payment for all sins of all people of all time.

B/c Jesus lives we have peace.

Key #1 – Forgiveness

Key #2 - Power

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 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."

The second key we want to talk about today is the thought that comes in v 21-23 of our gospel lesson. We need Jesus' peace each and every day of our lives. Did you notice what Jesus said – "**As the Father sent me, I am sending you.**" God sent Jesus to bring peace to the world, and now Jesus is sending you and me.

How does that work? This is what we call in our confirmation classes the ministry of the keys. It is the special

power and right Jesus gives to us as his disciples, believers, the power and ability to offer and give forgiveness.

Facebook says that you need to post a minimum of 3x/week and a maximum of 2x/day to get your message across. What message does Jesus want us to get out to the world? The message of peace through Jesus.

That happens every time we use these keys – v 23 –

- **if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven...**
- **If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven...**

This is a powerful key. Every time you offer forgiveness or withhold forgiveness, it's as good as Jesus himself speaking forgiveness to that person. Think of the people you're watching church with today. How can you speak peace to them? How can you speak the peace of forgiveness to the world?

Key #2 - Power

Key #3 – Outlook

There's one more key to unlocking Easter happiness that Jesus shares with us in our lesson this morning. That comes from the story of doubting Thomas. Thomas could be considered the ultimate skeptic. Thomas wasn't with the disciples the first time Jesus appeared and we're told –

But he (Thomas) 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.”

We're like Thomas with our doubts and fears –

- We doubt that God could ever love us and forgive us.
- We worry and fear about things in life outside of our control – doubting that God will really take care of us.

Jesus said – **“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”** We haven't seen, and yet we believe that Jesus really did rise from the dead.

The Bible tells us that Jesus appeared to over 500 people after he rose from the dead. And those early Christians were able to go and talk to any one of those eye witnesses if they had any doubts.

So what can we do? Jesus has given us the Bible – His Word – as eyewitnesses wrote down all of these actual facts and historical accounts of what really did take place.

We say it when we gather in response to the Verse of the Day – Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.

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.

You and I weren't there to witness the risen Jesus 2000 years ago. But, we believe it as a historical fact. Jesus really did appear to the disciples. why we're here today. That's why we're gathering around God's Word today as we worship online. That's why we read our Bible's at home with our family. Everything we do is centered around these words of Jesus in the Bible – they give us new life. They give us a new outlook on life.

Live every week like it's Easter Sunday. Have you ever heard that before? God wants us to live it. To go into the empty tomb and see that the only thing remaining there is a few strips of cloths and all of our sins. Jesus unlocks the keys to Easter happiness like he unlocked and got rid of all the doubts and fears of the disciples.

Easter Happiness –

- The peace of forgiveness
- The power of forgiveness
- A new outlook on life

Let's pray – Thank you, Lord, for the confidence your resurrection gives me that in the end all wrongs will be made right. Thank you for allowing me to rest in the assurance of my future resurrection and of living with you forever. Knowing this heals all wounds. Amen.

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen. (Phil.4:7)