

Hanging Out with Jesus

First Things First: Restoring Confidence

Unedited Transcript

Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-25, Mark 16:14

Good morning, men. We are in a series called Hanging Out with Jesus and we'll get to that momentarily but first, as we do each week, let's give a shout out to a group I'm very excited to shout out this morning because it's a group of 30 men who are meeting over at the Tomoka Correctional Institute in Ormond Beach which is near Daytona. These men have been meeting for many years twice a month.

About 9 months ago, they began using the Man in the Mirror format. They have joined us for that period of time and they have 3 leaders, Mark, Dwyer and Fred. Fred, if I get this wrong, I apologize but I would guess Ziemes, Z-I-E-M-E-S, Mark Dwyer, Fred Ziemes and David Jenkins are the leaders. John Williams is your area director over there. Hope you've been able to connect with him. Guys, why don't you join me in giving a very warm welcome to the men at Tomoka Correctional Institute? 1, 2, 3, Hoorah. Welcome, guys. We're glad to have you here.

The title of today's message is First Things First, Restoring Confidence. Turn in your Bibles, open your Bibles, if you will, to Luke chapter 24, verse 36. Jesus has been resurrected from the dead and He is now on a 40-day post resurrection tour. He's going to make 10 appearances. He's already made 3 of them and today, we come to the fourth appearance while Jesus is out on tour. It is the first time, however, that He has been around His disciples, the close associate disciples, the 12 which are now 11, only going to be 10 here today but anyway, and this is the first time He's been around these disciples around whom He had designed His business plan or His ministry model.

These are the men upon which He has staked His entire business plan. Everything is going to depend on the response of these disciples. It's the first day of the resurrection. It's night. Let's look at the situation. Now, you will be going to hear eventually but just let me read to you from John chapter 20, "On the evening of that first day of the week when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews." The disciples had locked themselves in a room. They're hiding out like outlaws. They're filled with confusion. They're filled with fear. They're filled with doubts and this is the group upon which Jesus has based His plan for total global conquest.

We want to answer this question, what went wrong? What went wrong? What went wrong is obvious. You've heard me say that a bad message will take the obvious and make it obscure and a good message will take the obscure and make it obvious but a great message will take the obvious and make it obvious. What's obvious here is that Jesus died. There's this great plan that Jesus had invested in these men's lives and He died. His followers were naturally confused. They were naturally filled with doubts. Naturally, they did not know how to respond. They had a crisis of confidence. Their faith had been shaken right down to the roots.

You've had this happen to you. You have put your faith in Jesus before and then things go awry and He is nowhere to be found. It looks to you like Jesus has left the building and you become confused. You are filled with fears. You are filled with doubt. That's exactly what's happening to these disciples. Their confidence has been shaken. Sigmund Freud, not exactly a great reference for a Bible study but I'll mention him anyway. Sigmund Freud said that the loss of the leader in some sense or another, the birth of misgivings about him leads to an outbreak of panic. That's exactly what we see here. The loss of the leader leads to an outbreak of panic on the part of these disciples.

Now, this is not so uncommon. We see this when there's a problem with the university president. You see the chaos that will go through the school or an elected official leaves the scene for whatever reason. Maybe it's corruption or maybe it's some other reason or maybe it's an affair or what happens when a football coach is removed from a team and the way that the team begins to fall apart or maybe it's a NASCAR crew chief that leaves and the NASCAR team takes a couple years to get back on its feet again or it may be in your business. Maybe it's, you had a really good boss and for whatever reason, he got removed from his position and all of a sudden, chaos is in the team and the team begins to fall apart because people lose confidence.

There's a crisis of confidence. That's what happened to these disciples. That's what went wrong. Jesus died. The conclusion that you will come to if you didn't know the rest of the story is that the mission had failed. The mission had failed, that God is not after all in control. God must not be in control because Jesus died and the mission has failed. This is the task of Jesus, you see, in this 40-day post resurrection tour. It's to restore confidence in His disciples then and also now. He is going to show them that, even though He did die and died at the hands of evil men, that God is still in control. That's what Jesus' task is here.

He's made some promises at John chapter 11. You don't need to turn there but just let me read to you from John chapter 11, verse 25. This is the woman at the well He's speaking to and He says ... Excuse me. This is Martha at the death of Lazarus and He says to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live even though he dies and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Do you believe this?"

First Corinthians chapter 15, verse 55, "O death, where is your victory now? O death, where is your sting?" What He wanted them to see then and what He wants us to see now is yes, He did die but even though He died, God is still in control. We can't appropriate that thus, we have a takeaway for us. Here it is, here it is, here it is. Even if you die, God is still in control. It's the sovereignty of God. Are not two sparrows bought for a penny and yet, not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the Father.

Ephesians 1:11, God is working out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will. Jeremiah 1:12, He's watching over His word to perform it. Psalm 139:16, "All the days ordained for me were written in His book before one of them came to pass. Precious in His sight is the death of His saints." Even if you die, you see, God is still in control. Jesus died but God was still in control. This is a big idea worth drilling into the front lobe of your brain. Even if I die, no matter what happens to me, even if I die, God is still in control. If Jesus can die with God being in control, cannot the rest of us also die with God remaining in control?

Jesus took on the task that He needed to restore their confidence in Him as their leader and as their Lord and as their savior. How did Jesus do this? How did He restore their confidence? Luke chapter 24, verse 36. Now, in the few verses before, there's some reference to conversations been taking place but in verse 36, we read this, "While they were still talking about this," I guess it's Jesus appearing ... What is it? I don't even remember what it was now.

The Lord, in a vision, had appeared to Simon. It was the 2 disciples. The 2 disciples that had met with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, they were not part of the 11. These were 2 of His disciples, not part of the 11. They had met with Jesus and Jesus said open their minds to the Scriptures and showed from Moses and from the law and the prophets and so forth how he, Jesus, was the Christ. Then, they came and they told the other disciples about this behind these locked doors where they were in hiding as outlaws. "While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

Now, in the passage in John about this, it says that they were behind closed doors and Jesus appeared. Now, much is made about how Jesus mysteriously walked through the doors like a ghost or something. I realized that that's the common prevailing thing but there's nothing in the text that demands you interpret that somebody didn't unlock the door and let Him in. That could easily happen. That's what would happen at my house. Somebody would appear and then we would open the door and let them in. Maybe that's just what happened.

They were startled though and frightened thinking they had seen a what? A ghost. They thought he was like a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled and why do doubts rise in your mind?" They were startled, they were frightened, they were troubled, they had doubts and Jesus is going to restore their confidence by what? Listen. He said to them, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I, myself. Touch me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see I have." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and feet and while they still did not believe it, because of joy and amazement, He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of broiled fish and He took it and He ate it in their presence.

Is there anything we learn from this text that we would otherwise never know? As far as I can remember, I haven't really read ahead enough and studied this enough so somebody might be able to correct me, but as far as I know, this is the only time in the post resurrection era where Jesus did things that would prove or demonstrate, give a convincing proof that He had a human body to the extent that He would actually eat a piece of fish. The first thing that Jesus is doing to restore their confidence is He's showing them, "I'm alive. I'm alive."

He's showing them that He is alive. He's doing it not just for them. There are many reasons for this. It wasn't just for the troubled disciples. It's for us today here as well. He wanted to show them and us that He is alive. He said, "Look at me. Touch me." Can you imagine touching Jesus, putting your finger in the nail prints? He had a physical body. He had a material body. He was recognizable. It was not His spiritual body.

I don't know. There's nothing in the Scriptures that says what was going on with Jesus is exactly what's going on with our bodies, our spiritual bodies and our physical bodies. You just can't draw all these conclusions but whatever was going on, they recognized Him. It was a physical body. He wanted them to know it was a physical bodily resurrection. He didn't rise up as a spirit. He was raised from the dead. He was resurrected from the dead. That's one way to do to show them He is alive. It's just to let them touch Him. Now, their starting point, you see, you got to remember, their starting point is they're terrified. They're frightened. They think He's a ghost. He wants to show them, "No, I am not. This fulfills the Scriptures."

My professional training is in organizational change. Jesus is in the process of bringing about some kind of a change in His mission's organization. Because the leader has died, confidence has been shaken, if not shattered and He is trying to bring about a change in the way that it's going to go in the future. Did you know that two-thirds is a generalization but we use generalizations because it's generally true, two-thirds of all organizational change initiatives fail outright. It doesn't make any difference if it's a private or a public, a profit or a nonprofit. It's almost an iron law that two-thirds of all organizational change initiatives, they fail.

The question becomes what are the organizations, the one-third of organizations that have change initiatives that succeed doing differently than the two-thirds of the organizations that have changed that don't succeed? One of the main factors is giving the people that you're asking the change and opportunity to voice their concerns. Jesus is restoring confidence by showing them that He is alive but then giving them the opportunity.

He's not trying to shut them down. He's not trying to cram Himself down their throats. We shouldn't be trying to cram Jesus down people's throats. We should be giving people an opportunity to voice their concerns. Jesus was giving them an opportunity to voice their concerns, their doubts. He didn't chastise them for it. Instead, he allowed them to address their concerns. "Look at me. Touch me. Watch me eat a piece of fish. It's me. It's Jesus."

Turn to John chapter 20, verse 19. When you're sitting around and you're worried and you're wringing your hands and then you sit there awhile longer and wring your hands some more, it really makes you feel better to wring your hands more and more, doesn't it? The longer you sit there, the better you feel. "Oh, I just can't believe all the things that had gone wrong today. I think I'm going to sit here and think about that some more."

The antidote for anxiety is action. It doesn't make any difference really what it is, what Jesus understood is ... Actually Jesus came up with the idea that the antidote for anxiety is action, this medicine around the field with anxiety, and let's read in chapter 20, verse 19. This is another account of the same story. "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." After He said this, He showed them His hands and side and the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord."

That's exactly what we read before from a different angle. Now, what's new? Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Have we heard this before? In John chapter 17, verse 17 in the high priestly prayer, the last prayer of Jesus for the disciples, He said these exact same words. He said, "My mission is total global conquest. I have died for the sins of the whole world. If any man is in me, he is a new creation. My Father has so loved the world that He sent me into the world that whoever would believe in me will not perish but have everlasting life."

The gospel must be preached to the whole world and then the end will come. Total global conquest, that's His mission. That's what Jesus is after. He has developed the strategy of investing His life into men who will reach men, men reaching men is the strategy of Jesus. Pretty effective, about a billion and a half of us today worldwide, men reaching men is the strategy. He sends them on their mission. He says, "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you because I know," he's thinking, "that the antidote for your anxiety is to put you into motion, to put you into action."

If you, men, are sitting around wringing your hands and worried about, "I don't know if my marriage is going to work or I don't know if this deal's going to close. I don't know if this sale is going to through. I don't know this," and you sit around and you sit around, I think Jesus would say, "Get off your butt." He wouldn't say that. I would say that on His behalf. "Get off your butt and go do something. The antidote for your anxiety is to do something. It's action."

He has a mission for you. I'm assuming that part of your mission you understand is men reaching men but it's also your marriage, fight for your marriage. It's also your children, fight for your kids. Fight for them. Don't sit around just all the time, "Well, oh, I hope it works out." It's not going to just work out. Nothing will restore your confidence like going out and working on getting the sale. How many of you have ever had "call reluctance"? You know what "call reluctance" is? Those of us in sales are very familiar with the concept of "call reluctance". You would think that it would go away after 20 to 30 or 40 years of working at it but guess what? It really never goes away. Now, does it diminish with experience? Absolutely, but it's always there. It's really quite simple.

My son called me on the phone one day. He was just getting started as a copy machine salesman just out of college and he said, "Dad, I don't understand what's going on." I said, "Well, tell me about it." He said, "Well, I'm supposed to go into this office park and knock on doors and see if anybody wants to talk to me about a copy machine but dad, I've driven by the entrance to the office park 3 times and I can't get my car to turn into the driveway."

I was respectful and I said, "John, this is a very common ..." I wanted to laugh but I was respectful. "John, this is a very common experience. It's called "call reluctance". The antidote for anxiety is action. The antidote for call reluctance is action." Whatever it is that is holding you back, sometimes, not sometimes, almost every day, I'll be sitting in our living room talking with my wife and I'll say something like, "Well, I guess I'll get up now and go to bed," and I just sit there. We laugh about it because saying something doesn't necessarily make it happen. We joke. You say, "Well, I guess I better engage my will as well and will myself to get up and go take out the dog or go to bed or whatever it is I'm going to do." You have to actually engage the will to do the action that is the antidote for the anxiety.

In the case of Jesus, He wanted to send them on their mission because He knew this would happen. He wanted them to see through the work that they would do that God is still in control, that God would change lives, that God would use them, that God would provide for them, and that things would work out because God is in control, the Big Idea today. **Even if I die, God is still in control.** God is in control. God is sovereign. God is sovereignly orchestrating all of the seemingly random circumstances of our lives, all of them. God doesn't do random.

Now, He allows people to use their free will to do bad things but He is ... Final thing, what will restore and maintain confidence in Jesus? I guess this is another talk someday. I was talking to a professional Christian counselor who has been at it for several decades and we were talking about prodigal children. This counselor said, in their experience, that having worked with countless Christian parents who had prodigals, that sometimes they come back and sometimes they don't. Sometimes, they come back and sometimes, they don't.

I want you to know I was so troubled by this. I couldn't sleep for a couple of weeks, not right anyway. Finally, after 2 weeks, I couldn't put my finger on what was it about that statement that was so troubling. I realized after 2 weeks what troubled me so much about that statement. I'm not even saying that this is what the meaning that was intended by this statement but this is what I understood, that the counselor was saying that it must be random. Some come back and some don't.

I'm not saying the counselor was saying that they believed it was random but it sounded to me like, "Okay, some come back. Some prodigals come back. Some prodigals don't come back and we just don't know." What? God doesn't do random. Then, the next thought process is if some come back and some don't, what are the parents and families of those prodigals that do come back, what are they doing differently than the parents and families of the prodigals who do not come back? Think about this.

A family of cultural, nominal Christians who have a tepid lukewarm faith that doesn't really say anything about the reality of the resurrection that Jesus is alive because they don't do anything, they don't go anywhere, they just sit around and worry about everything, they don't apply the antidote, they don't do any action, they don't have any mission and their kids grow up and they walk away and they lose faith that God has the power to even bring them back and they stop praying that God will bring them back, they don't trust in the sovereignty of God, do you expect those children to ever come back?

Some will but, "Ah, it don't look very good humanly speaking." Then, you take the parents and family of a prodigal who they put their confidence in Jesus Christ. They do 4 things. You do 4 things. You tell the parents of prodigals to do these 4 things and the families of prodigals to do 4 things. You continue to love. This is obvious. You continue to love but it is amazing to me the number of parents that I have ran across over the years who have disowned their prodigals because of the sinful behaviors. They then disown them. They have abandoned their children or their brothers and sisters or whatever it is.

Love, love that is unconditional, just exactly like the Father's love in the prodigal son parable. Number 2, faith, faith that God is able, to maintain faith that God is able. The parents of prodigals who lose faith must certainly have a different way of looking at things than the parents of prodigals who keep the faith, who don't lose faith. What kind of faith? It's faith that no matter what happens, God is still in control. Even if I die, even if my prodigal dies, God is still in control.

Love, faith, trust, a trust in the sovereignty of God as revealed in the Scriptures that we talked about earlier, that He's working out everything in conformity with the purpose and His will and then, finally, prayer. It just dawns on me that when the parents and families of prodigals who lose faith, when they lose faith, they would not be able to pray then in faith. Prayer, God advises us to prayer. If you pray for a loaf of bread, will God give you a scorpion or a stone? The Bible says, of course not.

What will restore and maintain our confidence in Jesus are the same things that will work for prodigals but they'll work for us too. They'll work for any of us, love, faith, trust, prayer. Final thing here ... We're out of time. I'll just roll it into some other message sometime. The big idea today is this. I hope that you would be able to say this already but if you can't, I hope that you would want to be able to say this. If you don't want to be able to say this, I hope that you would at least be able to want to want to be able to say this but whether you believe it or not, just to start implementing the antidote for anxiety being action, I'm going to ask you all to say this out loud with me and see if it can move us or nudge us a little further down the road. Say it with me. **Even if I die, God is still in control.** Let us pray.

My dearest Father, thank you for your word. Thank you for this post resurrection tour that you're on and just all the different things that you're trying to do restoring confidence today into these frightened disciples. Lord, we can certainly relate. We pray that you'll restore our confidence too, Lord, that you would give us this desire to see you and then to show you and then to go and do the things that you want us to do, to take the actions you want us to take.

Father, I just pray for every man here, every man online, Lord, that whatever their situation, whatever their need is today, to have their confidence restored, whatever is shaking them, Lord, that you would appear to them. You would appear to them and you would inspire them to take the action that can overcome their anxiety. We ask this in your loving name, Jesus, because even though you did die, God is still in control. Amen