

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH  
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The Position, Posture and Power of a Peacemaker  
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Would you turn with me to John chapter 20 we're going to just dive right in? Is that okay with you? We're just... the sense of my spirit where an advent is just kind of slimming things down and so we're just going to study Jesus today as we're closing out our 'Peacemaking' series. And so the context is Mary has just gone to the tomb and Jesus is not there and she goes to this next scene in John chapter 20 verse 19 it says this

*<sup>19</sup> "On the eve of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and he said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> And when he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

Now, today what I want to actually do is I want to unpack and I want us to receive the commissioning that Jesus has for us. Now, a very plain text reading of this passage is pretty simple, actually. It's pretty clear. Jesus has been crucified and in his life he's controversial enough, but in his death now his body has gone missing. And so it's even more controversial. And so who are they going to look for if his body's gone missing? They're going to look for the disciples and so clearly they're understandably, they're afraid. And so they're locked and then all of a sudden Jesus shows up. We don't know the science behind it, even though we like to think we understand the science behind it, he shows up and he says this. "Peace be with you". And then he shows them the hands and side and then he says it again, "peace be with you". And then he gives this what we believe is the commissioning "as the father sent me, he has sent you", which is kind of a connection to Matthew 28 "therefore go and" what "make disciples of all nations". And then he says, and then he breathes on them and he says, "Receive the Holy Spirit", which is kind of a connection to what? Maybe Acts chapter two, which is kind of what we describe as the birth of the church, Pentecost.

But the reality is John, which we think is the author is incredibly complex as a writer. He's a literary genius. And we know this because we think he's a disciple of Jesus. He's in his later years in life and he's writing from Turkey and he is communicating to both a Greek and a Jewish audience, extremely different communities and cultures.

And so listen to this in John chapter one he starts with this; "In the beginning was the, was the word". Right? Now, here's what's amazing in the beginning, which is a connection to 'bereshit bara elohim' in the beginning was this is a Jewish interpretation of creation. And then in Greek philosophy it's believed that the world was held together by the logos, by the word, by the divine word. And so in six words, the writer John has just combined two entirely different cultures into one single community. It's brilliant. He's a master at it. Not only that, but we also understand that

Jewish people in the first century have a deep historical consciousness, and let me show you an exercise just to show this. Okay?

Now, everybody's going to do this. Think for a moment on somebody in your life, the oldest person that was in your life when you were a baby that held you, maybe a family member, maybe a grandfather, grandmother, great, whatever. Yet everybody got it? Now think of their birth year, when were they born? Now what you're going to do for me and my grandfather, 1910 now think of the youngest member of your family right now could be two months, could be two years old. Now think of them living to a ripe old age and think of the year in which they would pass. Got the year? And the idea is that you were held and you hold over 200 years of history. Isn't that interesting? It's called the 200 year present. Now we live in kind of 15 second increments, right? But in actuality we hold this.

Now I say that because Jewish people actually have a 2000 year historical consciousness. It is so embedded in them. They've studied, they've memorized the Torah, and so when they're going to talk and write in the New Testament about it, there is a rich layering that goes on that oftentimes we Westerners have a very flat understanding of the scriptures and we've done a lot of disservice to it. And so the writer John and a rabbi is going to teach, they're going to train people and they're going to walk people in. And what this idea is in the process of learning and the method of learning called discovery. The idea is that we want you to discover the text and the way that you do that is through wrestling. You do that through discussion and debate, and if you actually go to Yeshiva today studying the scriptures, it's loud. It's like shouting and debating and arguing. It's engaging the text and so it's this idea that a rabbi is going to bury deeper truth in layers of scripture.

So in Jewish hermeneutics, which is just the study of interpretation, you have these kind of four layers. Can I give them to you right now? You're learning Jewish hermeneutics today, can you imagine? In Jewish hermeneutics there are these layers and so I want to just show them they're really simple and incredibly complicated at the same time.

- Then the first layer is what's known as the Peshat. Which is the basically the plain text reading of the scripture. And you can gain a lot of truth from the reading of the Peshat. In this particular instance, peace be with you Jesus, the very first thing after the resurrection, after new life, I am beginning new life, the very first thing he does is I want you to have Shalom. I want you as a person to receive the fullness and the peace of God. And we believe and hope that you can live into that space.
- But the second is what's known as the Remez. Now the Remez just translates by the word hint. And what it means is there's almost always a pointing back into some layering within the Old Testament. Jesus and the writers are almost always in the New Testament writing layers in to connect people because of their 2000 years of consciousness. And so there is the Remez
- And then the third is what's known as the Derash. Say Derash with me. It's known as the interpretation of the Remez. Now this is meant to be interpretive and so there's lots of different interpretations and we see this.
- And then finally what's known as the Sod. Say Sod. The Sod means the mystery. It means the secret. And it's not some kind of weird thing. What it is, is it's only revealed to us by

the heavenly Father or by Holy Spirit. And we see this in the New Testament. When Jesus says to Peter, who do you say that I am? He says, you are the Messiah, and what does Jesus say? Only the Father in heaven could have revealed this to you. Paul says, Jesus is the what? Mystery revealed. He's the Son, right? That is revealed by the Holy Spirit.

So we have these four different layers. So if we're going to do this and Jesus out of the resurrection is going to be teaching in layers, what do we think? We're just going to have like classroom today, alright. What do we think is the Remez of peace be with you? And I'll let you just, I'll let us just think for a second. You can shout it out if you're at this location or another campus. Anything? Any Remez? In Jesus, the Jewish theologian, Brad Young actually believes and points "peace be with you" back to Numbers chapter six which is the priestly blessing. Where it says, 'May God bless you and may he keep you and may he make his face to shine before you and be gracious unto you'. And what? 'And give you peace'. Now, in Jewish history, the priests were known as the peacemakers where they were mediating between God and man and woman and between brother and sister, they were known as the peacemakers. And so what Jesus has done in a single phrase, in four words is not only has he said, peace is available to us, but at the exact same moment he's saying, peace is our responsibility to be made with others. Are you with me?

That means all of us, every single one of us is called to be the priesthood of believers and Pastor Mark talked about this a while ago. This is some of the air that we breathe, that you're not just a lawyer, you're not just a teacher, you're not just a business man or woman. You are a business-priest. You are a lawyer-priest; you are a teacher-priest. You are in politics and you're a priest. Are you with me? This is why when we say on mission every day, that's a deeply theological statement.

Now, let me talk a little bit about missions because this is a little bit of the air that we breathe around here. We talk about missions a lot. We're in our mission series; we're closing it out right now and just a little bit of background to it. Sometimes we can become kind of a inoculated related to even the term itself. And missions as a word really did not emerge and become popularized until the 1950s. Prior to that, the word itself was kind of used obscurely in connection to the Trinity. But the word itself did not begin to be thrust into our imaginations and in greater awareness until the 1950's. And this happened in this great move primarily out of the US and the UK and it was primarily in evangelical movement. And I'm just going to be honest with you, a primarily white evangelical movement. And it exploded Christianity all around the world. And that's a good thing. There were missionaries that were sent around the world, but we know that there are also have been unintended consequences have they're not. We understand that there has been a result of colonialism that we've seen in Africa. And we've seen sort of unintended consequences and as white majority evangelicals were being sent abroad, which is a good thing, again, minority communities in the States were not being sent abroad because they just trying to take care of their own communities. And so we see some of this tension emerge. And again, these are good things that we're being sent, but what ends up happening is missionary becomes limited to a very little sliver of people. One to 2% of Christians are sent around the world because we've labeled it to this and what Jesus is doing and what we're being reminded of

is the kingdom of priest. Every single one of us, every single one of us is a missionary. Now, I know some of us don't want to be called that, but we're missionaries.

Now, here's what's even more amazing. We're seeing dramatic changes in missions' movements. Guess what the largest per capita sending country in the world is? Just guess. You're never going to guess, Palestine. According to Gordon Conwell's research, Palestine is the largest mission sending country in the world. Isn't that amazing? And according to the economists, an article I just read not too long ago, there are actually now more missionaries being sent to the U S than anywhere else in the world. Because we're seeing this explosion of Christianity all around the world in the global South and they're recognizing that it's the West that needs Jesus maybe more than ever. And so we're seeing this massive shifting going on and so here, this is really beautiful as we're thinking about on mission every day and sending teams.

We've got two mission teams coming to NCC next year. How great is that? Our team from Guatemala is going to be coming to us and they're going to be praying over us and they're going to be speaking into us. Our team from DR Congo, who we've been going to and been relationship for nine years are coming to us because Pastor Jeremiah is so full of the Spirit. I can't wait to just sit with him and say, speak to us. We need help. We need the Holy Spirit in a way that you have. And we're seeing this beautiful shift and he's called us into this beautiful peacemaking space because we're a priesthood of believers.

The second thing he does is, as the Father is sending me, so I am sending you. Now, I think there are two different levels to being sent. The first one is kind of the obvious, like I'm sent somewhere. God has called me perhaps that's you, you've been sent to DC called and felt like you've been assigned to be here. You've been sent overseas in different places. Pastor Joshua is sent to Baltimore. We have Brian MacArthur sent, we have a hundred plus missionaries that are sent, but there's the second layer that I think is even more important that Jesus is actually, I think more importantly alluding to. How many have been on a mission team? That's actually a really good number. And I'm assuming at all of our other campuses, tons of hands have gone up. I want to invite you to consider being a part of mission team. We don't call it a mission trip and that's intentional. It might be semantics, but it's a team and it's because we think long. Because the idea is we go into communities and the first thing that we do is we listen and we see the good and the beauty in communities. Because oftentimes what happens is when we go and we try to be Jesus in communities, sometimes what we end up doing is we define them based on their marginalization or their brokenness first. And so what we do is we go into communities and in partnership with those on the ground, we listen and we say, where's the good news present here already? God's presence and kingdom is already at hand. And so we go and we partner and it's so beautiful. I encourage you to consider to be a part of a mission team.

And so what we've been trying to do is give you kind of pictures of what it looks like to be a peacemaker and be sent. And we've tried to show you videos and stories. And for such a time as this a few weeks ago on politics and peacemaking, was that not powerful? If you haven't seen that, would you please watch it? It's the week of Pastor Mark's sermon.

And today we wanted to show you another one, show you a film of another divisive space because as peacemakers we go straight to hard conversations because we're family. And we've

tried to teach in this space through our practices that we want to ask questions and listen well and disagree freely and love regardless. And so what we wanted to do is just give you an image and a picture of what peacemaking looks like at the Mexico border. Check it out.

{Video}

**Mark Adams, Coordinator, Frontera de Cristo:** Borders mean lots of things. People will talk about borders as places of exclusion, or hatred even in death. But borders don't have to be places of division. God calls us to live into the reality that borders are also places of encounter, opportunity and hope. Not just here on the US/Mexico border, but wherever we live, and whatever borders that exist that divide us from other places.

The ministry of Frontera de Cristo is centered in the community of "Douglas-Prieta", Douglas and Agua Prieta. They grew up together, they're both about 120 years old. Frontera de Cristo seeks to work in partnership with people and organizations on both sides of the border, and listen to what are the visions of the community and how can we support making those gospel visions realities.

**Joca Gallegos Viesca, Coodinator, Frontera de Cristo:** When we start doing partnership, it was like, not Frontera de Cristo doing things, but supporting organizations that need it. We were just thinking how can we report directly to the migrants. People that are waiting to ask for asylum to the States. They are living in a tent, in the line, on the border, and they are very vulnerable to the organized crime. Our volunteers go, pick them up, walk with them, because they need to be safe. So the Migrant Resource Center is a place where the people that are seeking asylum can come and use the restrooms, take showers, and we provide clothing, shoes, and water, coffee, some food, we also provide medicine. The goal of the Migrant Resource Center is supporting our migrant brothers and sisters, whatever their legal status is, to be welcome ,and to feel safety in Auga Prieta. And with the children you can see the smiles, of, finally, we found a place where we're going to be safe.

**Daniel Cifuentes Perez, Facilities Manager, Cafe Justo:** When I arrived in this city, Agua Prieta I met Pastor Mark Adams. He and I sat down to try to think of something that would help address this migrant situation. And the most feasible plan was the idea of a farmer's co-op, that would give us the opportunity to add value to our product. And so Cafe Justo began, almost 18 years ago.

**Mark Adams:** We want gospel values to be represented in how we treat those who are migrating, those who are seeking refuge, those who are fleeing extreme poverty or extreme violence. And move beyond just the humanitarian piece. Sometimes it's easier to just pick people up off the side of the road. But, if we keep finding people on the side of the road in the same place, sooner or later we have to figure out how do we fix the road.

The farmers from Cafe Just gave us one way of people being able to stay on their land, and not even have to go over that dangerous road.

**Adrian Gonzalez, Director of Customer Service, Cafe Justo:** The idea behind Cafe Justo is to address one of the root causes of migration, which are economics. Many families were pushed to

migrate because of the low prices on coffee. When instead of \$1.50 for every pound of coffee. They start receiving between 20 to 30 cents instead; a lot of people didn't see any other choice, but to migrate. So Cafe Justo is giving them the opportunity to control every aspect of the business. Farmers, they don't just receive a fair price, but they control the processing of the coffee, the exporting of the coffee, the marketing, and in the coffee business that's where the money really is. So, one of the positive impacts that we've been witnessing lately is migration in reverse. People had left, they're returning back, because what they have now that they didn't have before, is options. And migrate if they want to, but don't migrate because they have no other choice.

**Male Speaker:** We believe we have proven that this is the best way to convince many families to stay in their communities.

**Male Speaker:** Our relationship with Frontera de Cristo has been really great since the beginning. We just see each other like family. Even though they're doing their piece, and we're doing our piece, at the end we're working together, for peacemaking.

**Male Speaker:** The church here has such an incredible role, because the church extends beyond all borders.

**Male Speaker:** We don't see each other as different towns, or as strangers, we see ourselves as a whole community that just happens to be divided by this wall.

**Daniel Cifuentes Perez:** There are 2 sister cities here, Douglas and Agua Prieta, that's what they have become. Douglas can share this experience of brotherhood with other states in the US. And Agua Prieta can share with the rest of Mexico. I think we can accomplish this.

**Male Speaker:** As Christians we are commanded to go out, we are not commanded to stay put and just pray. We need to go out and engage and see what we can do in our own communities.

**Mark Adams:** Peacemaking, I think is the responsibility for all those who follow Christ, the Prince of Peace. Here on the border, and in different places where we enter more fully into suffering, we can experience joy more fully. And I think when we don't enter into the suffering of the world, joy is muted. When we see the 18 foot steel barrier that separates our communities from one another, it's a reminder of the work that we have, as people of faith, to work for a world where Jesus has broken down the dividing walls of hostility, and we can cultivate community across borders.

To learn more, contact [mexico@aoneeight.org](mailto:mexico@aoneeight.org).

It's a beautiful story, isn't it? We had Republicans and Democrats go on mission there and we had Republicans and Democrats evaluate the film and both of them were equally challenged, which is the whole point.

The last thing Jesus does is he breathes on the disciples and he says, receive the Holy Spirit. It's been a tough year for some of us, hasn't it? We're kind of exhausted of being exhausted. It's like

another layer of its exhausted and we're kind of tired, almost like ad nauseam talking about this cultural moment. Like how many more times can we just evaluate what's going on and I think we can all admit that it's been a heavy year.

Howard Thurman, who is a African American theologian said it like this. I wonder if you could just resonate with this. It says this; "Everybody knows that something has happened. Just when it happened, no one knows. But there is a complete agreement that somewhere, something very important has given way and all sorts of things are pulled out of shape, or are sagging or are falling apart. The result? Nerves! The result is deep strains and stresses in the soul of the people, for which they had no preparation and from which there seems to be no sure basis of recovery. There seems to be an increasing restlessness among people. The restlessness takes many forms. Sometimes it appears in easy irritation over matters of little or no consequence. Sometimes a rupturing of old ties of family or friends or faith. We seem to be always roaming with the hungry heart."

Howard Thurman wrote that in 1947. Isn't that interesting? Parallels so much to today, but in so many ways our cultural moment is unique, but the themes really aren't. Jesus warned us and assures us at the same moment that we'll go through cycles. And as I've looked and studied at cycles, we are in an incredible position to see a renewal happen in the spirit. And I'm absolutely believing for that.

So we have absolutely nothing to fear. We live in the already. Christ has come in the not yet. I am coming soon world. And Jesus says it to us; he says in this world, you will have trouble. But what? Take heart, I have overcome the world. And so what we need more than anything else right now is we need the breath of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And so we're just going to close with that.

I'm going to actually invite our campus pastors come up afterwards and we're going to do something a little different. Here's how we're going to commission you to end this service. We're actually gonna end in silence. I think that's the most appropriate thing that we can do. Silence has become my friend. I love silence.

And so after the silence, we're going to have our campus pastors come up and, and they're going to read us in a Franciscan blessing as we're commissioned out and we go. But I end with this story. I've had the opportunity just as a missions pastor to be able to travel a lot this past year. Went to a number of sensitive countries and I had the opportunity to spend some time with the underground church and memories that I'll never forget and relationships that we maintain. But I remember just sitting with a family who their lives are at stake every single day. Just meeting together and praying together is something that they could go to jail for. And just being present to that, not just hearing about it being present to these communities and to describe the level of peace that they had was so powerful. But I remember this moment as we sat there and they just said all we need; all we need is one another, a meal, prayer in the scriptures, and the Holy Spirit. And with everything that we have, you see the beauty and the power and the wonder of just these really simple moments.

And they told me this story that their friend had just been convicted because of his faith and he was about to receive a life sentence and likely severe beatings. And they told this story that when he was at his trial and he had been convicted of a life sentence, as he was sent away, he just began to sing a song and they started to sing it and in their language, and I translate it to you and this is what it was.

**Pastor Dave singing:**

I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;

Every hour I need Thee;

Oh, bless me now, my Savior!

I come to Thee.

Can we just sing it one more time?

**Congregation singing:**

I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;

Every hour I need Thee;

Oh, bless me now, my Savior!

I come to Thee.

Would you take a deep breath and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Just say, come Holy Spirit.

{Silence}

Jesus said, my peace I give you as the Father is sending me so I am sending you. And he breathed on them and he said, receive the Holy Spirit. Amen.