

COMMUNICATION STARTS WITH OPENNESS.

Text: John 20: 19-31.

Theme:

Prayer and prophecy – The art of communication – Jesus' way.

Grace, peace, and mercy, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

The opening statement '**Communication starts with openness**', doesn't seem like much of a statement, but when you add Jesus to the mix, then it certainly takes on a new meaning! And how does Jesus come into our lives?

If we were to look at today's gospel reading, we find that Jesus comes to the disciples by *breaking into* their world; in that closed room. He comes in defying logic and

reason, but he makes sense by coming into our worlds because we need him.

Jesus can also break into our world in our time of need and meets us where we're at, just like he did with the disciples, in their time of hopelessness and futility.

The disciples were inside a locked room; very fearful of the Jews, with seemingly all hope gone from them, and then all of a sudden, in an instance, **Jesus appears in their midst, albeit, at the same time**, frightening the living daylights out of them.

In the overall scheme of things and for the want of a reason in providing an answer for his sudden appearance, Jesus doesn't leave anyone in a state of despondency and despair; because no one needs to face the future alone! If anyone is in a despondent state, and they spend time in prayer to the heavenly Father, they don't stay in that

situation for too long; they start to feel better, because God listens and provides solutions for them.

But in reality, how many people at this very instance [if a snapshot was taken of the world right now] have left Jesus completely out of their lives; how many people are pressing on without him in their lives? Where do they go for answers to life's problems? What happens when they don't find answers?

What is the end result of hopelessness and self effort? If they fall short in their own efforts, then all they do is suffer depression and a lot give up on life and some commit suicide because life has dealt them a bad hand; it's not a very nice end indeed, is it; but it is occurring every day?

How many people know better than to live their lives in their own strength? Especially if those persons have

given themselves over to the Lord and into his care and trust, and then they walk away from his grace and mercy.

God's grace, mercy and love is so enormous, in that he cares for all his believers and followers, that we can all be assured that he hears those who call out to him and he responds accordingly.

In today's gospel lesson, Jesus sees his disciple's anxiety and consternation, even though they thought they could keep it to themselves. So he breaks in on them; in order to complete a good work that he began in them while he still walked upon the earth with them.

And on this occasion, appearing to them in his resurrected state, we find that Jesus still wants to impart his will to them, even though they are frightened of the Jews. Jesus shows that not even death is a barrier to doing his Father's will. He still wants them to be his witness in the world, so that many can come into a loving

relationship with his Father. Death shouldn't be a barrier to any of us either; because we can still go on and achieve fulfillment in the heavenly realm of what wasn't achieved in this world!

Then again, to contrast the positive aspect of walking with Jesus; people have it in their power to walk away from all of this. We humans can cut off all communication to him and to the heavenly Father if we want to, but, WARNING, we do so at our own peril.

Who amongst us would want to deliberately cut off communication with a certain lifeline to eternal life? The 'Royal Telephone to Glory', as the singer Jimmy Little sang so many years ago, is still in operation now as it was even before the song was a hit. It would be mad and ludicrous for anyone not to use this lifeline of prayer to God; but a lot of people are doing so right now, either by choice and design or out of sheer ignorance of not knowing who God is, in the first place!

It is always good to keep the communication lines open and clear between us and God, even though God is at the receiving end of our prayers at any given time day or night; for as scripture tells us; he never sleeps.

It seems that in today's gospel reading, the disciples had forgotten about communicating to God through the means of prayer, because they were in a state of distress and morbid fear. They were fearing and believing that they would be the next people to die and be crucified, because they were disciples of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

It seems as though they didn't have any time to pray at all, but rather to worry constantly about what is going to take place when they were found out in their hiding place. Do any of us worry and fret profoundly when we're faced with life-threatening circumstances like this? We certainly do, and the best thing we can do is hand it

over to the Lord to take care of it for us; he knows what will happen because he knows what's best for us anyway!

So, why didn't the disciples communicate through prayer in any case; isn't it in every single human beings nature and personality to pray when their lives are in mortal danger? Even non-Christians and non-believers will start praying knowing that anything is worth giving a try if it will bring help and relief into their lives and save them from death! A lot of times our own human nature make us act like the disciples do, so let's take it easy on them.

Now, I just stressed that God hears our prayers any time of the day or night; Jesus is also there as our intercessor, interceding to the Father for us, on our behalf. So, it is also up to each and every single one of us to be receptive to God in return.

So, how should we act or react when we send our prayers through to the heavenly incense bowl above, waiting for our prayers to be answered? Blasé', proud, arrogant, frightened?

In the first instance, we should all have complete confidence that our prayers will be answered when we pray; otherwise why pray *hoping* that God hears you and that *maybe* he will answer you somehow, in someway, or maybe someday? Perhaps the Second Coming may occur first, if that's the way we are praying at present.

And also that; if he doesn't hear me, then perhaps I didn't pray long enough, with enough conviction, or with enough authority stating and demanding what I want; or have belief in my voice when I prayed! Perhaps that's why he doesn't hear me whenever I pray. Or is it in reality; that my requests were plain right outrageous and not in his best interests to provide for me.

I guess we all know that God answers prayer in three ways; there are three possible responses! Yes, No, or later on. Remember, his answer to us is always perfect, he knows what is best for us, not what we think is best for us! He doesn't get it wrong in disapproving my requests for what I want, desire or need.

In fact he knows what I need before I pray in any case. What I pray for might be what I think I need [a lazy \$1m]; but to him it may be very selfish. What God is listening for is how our prayers benefit ourselves and others so that his kingdom grows. Remember all our prayers need to be for the benefit of growing his kingdom.

And if we do get our prayer life in the right direction, then, where will good communing with Jesus lead to? What are the benefits of a good prayer life? I guess that spiritually, you will be a lot stronger and closer to God because of the communicating between you and him.

You will be more open and aware to people's spiritual needs and state of mind. Your prayer life takes on more meaning, and you grasp the scriptures with more discernment. You are able to speak out and be bolder for the Lord through his strength and not yours.

And if this is not the case, then, would you like Jesus to be communicating with you. Have you allowed him to come into your world? Communication is a two way street, and it goes both ways. If the connection is broken at one end then it needs to be fixed; so that communication is restored to its fullest capacity once more.

Do you feel that your prayer life doesn't work, and God just doesn't hear you anyway? Or was there a time when you prayed seriously for God's help and intervention when *you really needed him* to be there for you and he let you down, or you felt he let you down. He may have taken a family member or someone you loved so dearly,

but he didn't come to your aid and now you feel like you can never pray to him again. Not so deeply as before because your words feel on deaf ears. Nowadays you don't bother to pray much because of your needs at that time wasn't met.

These things do happen but remember, he may have answered your prayer by taking the one whom you loved so much! If they had lived, and their quality of life was filled with pain; surely to goodness, you didn't want them to live on suffering in agony and pain, that every waking moment is pure hell for them. Maybe now is the time to reconsider your prayer life and to get that communication going with him again? You never know it may take off in leaps and bounds and be better than it ever was before.

What barriers can keep Jesus locked out of your lives and worlds. The doors, locks and bolts inside the room that the disciples were in, weren't enough to keep Jesus from

appearing in the midst. What ever barriers we construct to keep him out of our lives will never work unless we deliberately walk away from him altogether. But if you want good communication with Jesus in your life, then keep plugging away at it, because you can only get better, if not more fluent in your talk and walk with him.

Jesus is constantly breaking into our worlds. And he knows what our needs are before we ask him. Why he really wants us praying and communicating with him is because he wants us to talk to him. How many people in your family don't talk to each other? How many go through the motions? You naturally communicate and speak and express yourselves to each other.

He wants nothing better than to hear us all individually speak to him as our Father in heaven. He wants us having conversations with him, plenty of chit chat. He wants a relationship with you that we all have with each other. That's the difference with the Living God we serve

compared to the inanimate objects and idols other people serve and worship around their homes and gardens.

Just in closing, let's remember that having open communication through Jesus with God, whilst being motivated by the Holy Spirit to do so, is an ideal that we like to achieve in our prayer life. So that spiritually we grow deeper in love with the Triune God. Not only will our love grow for them but it will also grow for our fellow believers with whom we worship while we are on the earth. May God grant that we all continue to grow in our prayer lives, communicating with him and him with us. Amen.

**The peace of God which passes all understanding,
keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**