



## Time for Joy!

***"When He had said this He showed them His hands and His side.  
Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."***

**John 20:20**

John described the joy of the disciples upon recognizing Jesus somewhat differently than does Luke. Luke emphasizes how astounding the disciples were at the appearance of Jesus, and how even continued reflection left the dumbfounded as to what had taken place. But John accents the understanding that disciples came to in seeing Jesus. The word for "see" that he uses points out how they grasped what had taken place, and how this led to deep, heartfelt joy and gladness among the disciples.

What was the reason for their joy? Fear gives way to faith and understanding. Jesus had often revealed Himself as Lord of the elements, one who had power and authority over creation itself. Had He not fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish? Had He not walked on the water, and healed many? It is not entirely unusual that He suddenly appears to the disciples and stands in their midst, despite locked doors. The disciples could have expected this!

Joy deepens when the disciples recognize Jesus as the same person who lived and walked among them before the death on the cross. The dissimilarity between Jesus and His disciples was great. He stood on the other side of the grave, as one risen from the dead! But the similarity between Jesus and His disciples had not been erased. He remains man! He even has the marks of His passion in His hands and His side.

Coupled with His resurrection, these marks are signs of forgiveness and life! Here the disciples can begin to put the pieces together and recognize that reconciliation has come. The Lord of all is also Lord over Satan, sin, and death! The knowledge of the reconciliation with God as Christ had previously proclaimed it to them now takes shape in their hearts. In seeing the Lord, they come to understanding concerning what God has done for them in Him! Their sins have been taken away. Life triumphs over death!

It took the morning of the resurrection to usher in this understanding. Before this moment we never read of this kind of joy among the disciples. Easter is a prerequisite to this joy — the joy of understanding. For with the resurrection the disciples can finally put the pieces of the puzzle of God's council together. At last things begin to make sense for them. At last the spiritual categories of the cross — bearing God's wrath and defeating Satan's power — come into view. With the resurrection all the ingredients of lasting joy are present at last. Here the essential victory over sin and the grave has been realized! And even though there are more steps in the exaltation of Jesus Christ, the essential exaltation has taken place in the resurrection. The good news *"He is risen!"* is the essential message of joy to which all that follows represents a deepening addition.

For this reason the Lord Jesus can immediately commission His disciples. It may appear strange that Jesus breathes on His disciples and imparts to them the Holy Spirit before Pentecost has arrived, vs. 21, 22. But here the Lord puts a direct link between the gift granted to the disciples and the gift granted to the church. The disciples come to joy, the joy of understanding. But they may not keep this joy for themselves. This joyful knowledge must be proclaimed. The news of gladness must ring through the world: *"He is risen!"*

Through the apostolic message the joy of Easter may be ours! Resurrection — the breakthrough of life from the dead — that is the crowing and decisive piece in the puzzle of God's counsel that

evokes the breakthrough of newfound joy. And we can only break into this joy when we come to the same conclusion as the disciples did: the one who was raised is the same as the one who died, and in dying and rising He acts for us. Therefore in Him we die to sin, and may rise up to a new life.

So we may share Easter joy! In fact, the dawn of joy born at Easter now radiates over all the world, wherever God gathers His church. Easter is the dawn of the complete gospel, the hour when faith comes to understanding. With this message, resurrection power should also flow from the lives of the saints. Our faith is more than words! Easter brings to us a new calling: Spread the good news! And so: spread the joy! And live in the joy! For the God who brings life out of the dead has also let the light of the gospel shine in our hearts to grant us life immortal. We may be born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Christ from the dead! We may be convinced of the forgiveness of our sins, and be made partakers of the risen, ascended, and heavenly nature of the Son. So the joy of the resurrection may be manifested in our lives all the time, also in pain and suffering. Since the resurrection of Christ, we can even triumph in Him when He calls us to bodily death. For in giving ourselves to Him we may glorify the Son in our bodies. Whether we live or die, the time of joy has decidedly dawned for all the saints. With them we can sing:

*Jesus the Saviour reigns;  
To Him let praises ring.  
The Christ who once was slain  
Rose as victorious King.  
Lift up your hearts, lift up your voice;  
Again I say, Rejoice!, Rejoice!*

(Hymn 35:2)

J De Jong

© 2012  
[www.christianstudylibrary.org](http://www.christianstudylibrary.org)