

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Easter in Motion**  
John 20:19-23  
April 20, 2014

Have you ever been out to South Dakota to the Black Hills to see the Mount Rushmore four famous heads? What an astonishing sight! You can look at pictures of it and never grasp how enormous that place really is and the significant achievement that it was to carry that off.

You know, Mount Rushmore is all about four people; the four presidents whose famous heads are located there. But really it's also a monument to a fifth man and that's Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor who pulled it off. You know, rock climbing is kind of big today. He spent an awful lot of time dangling on the end of ropes, working with drills, nomadic hammers, dynamite blasting powder, and all kinds of other stuff to move hundreds of thousands of tons of rock off of that hillside and leave those famous emerging.

But you know what? When you go to Mount Rushmore, basically what you're doing is you're looking at what somebody else did. What Gutzon Borglum did does not really affect your own life all that much. You and I are going to have a look at one of the most spectacular achievements ever pulled off by a human being, our substitute, our Savior Jesus, with his suffering, death, and resurrection. And yet, here's the cool part – we're not just looking at Jesus to admire what he did but we're in there with him. This is our story, too! Let's go back and visit that amazing story together.

How many of you have ever had a chance to visit the Grand Canyon? Raise your hand. How about another one of America's great landmarks – how about Mount Rushmore – have you seen Mount Rushmore? Quite a few of you have. It is the thing of which South Dakotans are the most proud. Anybody here from South Dakota? Go ahead; raise your hand. Ah, two or three maybe. They are so proud of that and it didn't even exist before 1941 and so they're proud of it now it's on every one of their license plates. Every vehicle in the state carries around those big four heads.

And you know, when you go and visit it, it is basically something to look at. There's a museum right there. You can study how the sculptor – a Danish-American named Gutzon Borglum – how he managed that incredible feat to take what was a granite outcropping in the middle of nowhere in the Black Hills and couldn't really carve. He used thousands of pounds of dynamite basically to blast away the chunks that didn't look like Washington and Lincoln and the other two guys.

And then with an incredible system that he rigged up with a model on the top of the mountain and then a bunch of sticks and rods coming down to kind of trace where he was at, that's how he got his bearings. And it's incredible! So you go there basically to admire the skill of what this incredible man pulled off. He worked mostly by himself; had a few assistants. Do you realize that that entire massive project was done for less than a million dollars? Even for Depression times, that seems unbelievable! How could you do it for that low of an amount of money, considering that something like 450,000 tons of rock had to be blasted and air hammered off of

the face of Mount Rushmore? Just incredible. But basically, you go there to admire what Gutzon Borglum did and then also think, “Oh yeah, there’s George and Abe and Teddy and Thomas.” But it’s something to look at what someone did. It’s a work of art you go to admire.

That’s not why we’re here today. We could just come and admire what Jesus did and was it ever cool! What an astounding achievement. He, the only human being ever to walk the face of the earth, faced down Satan and won. His great battleground was in his mind and he wouldn’t yield; not even once. Not even a thought. He wouldn’t sin in the tiniest way. What an achievement! He allowed people to kill him in a cruel and tortured way. And he never got bitter, angry, or called down curses. He went silent to his doom. What an achievement.

He allowed himself to be placed in a grave, trusting that his Father would not allow his body to see decay. What confidence! What supreme faith and confidence; way beyond our ability. And then he walked out of his grave, under his own steam, really dead, really alive. No brain waves whatsoever to his thoughts, once again, working in his head. No respiration, once again, his lungs inflating in and out. No heartbeat to having a heartbeat. Really dead; really alive.

What an achievement! And yet, we’re not here today just to clap and cheer for Jesus, although that certainly is appropriate. But it’s, “What does this mean?” This is an interactive thing. This is an extraordinary event, a life-changing event, a world-changing, a history-changing, an earth-changing, a people-changing, event that changes our lives, changes our present, and it most certainly changes our future. And I’d like to invite you to be a little fly on the wall with me on an Easter Sunday evening, the first Easter, over two thousand Easter celebrations ago. Here’s how it all started and join me in the gospel of St. John and turn to chapter 20, if you would, and read with me a couple of paragraphs starting at verse nineteen.

This is the fifth time now that Jesus has revealed himself alive to some very sad people. His believers had been unbelievers. He was bitterly disappointed of course, but he patiently stayed with them, revealed himself to them, and then would teach them before moving on to speak to another group. He had no particular interest in going back on the preaching trail. He felt no particular obligation to reveal himself to the abuse of his enemies. Lazarus had been raised and Jesus’ enemies who hated that just wanted to kill Lazarus all over again and Jesus just knew, and from his Father’s plan, the suffering time is over. I’m only here now to show the believers and to build up their faith and to train, equip, and commission them for the next step in God’s plan, which is to turn condemned sinners into God’s dear children. To change people who were hopeless to give them the hope of heaven.

Now he’s going to change the lives of these people and he’s going to show himself to them now for the fifth time. He’s going to show them to change their lives – not just for them to look at and admire – but for them to believe and for them to share.

Another miracle that he did, though he had his body now, he’s going to walk through a locked door as though it didn’t exist. You know, that’s a pretty good stunt on Star Trek, but I kind of don’t think it’s ever really going to happen. You know, you always could beam people up and down – you know, Scotty would kind of beam you up. And if you wanted to get on the Enterprise, Mr. Worf would beam you aboard. The shields had to go down and then somehow

electronically, you could be disassembled and somehow wired through space they had like the ultimate Wi-Fi and then you be reassembled on the pad.

Well, that's a wonderful science fiction little dream but it isn't ever going to happen. But Jesus could do it! He moved through their locked doors effortlessly, for now there is no limitation to the way in which he is going to live and move. Now for the fifth time, he's going to let people see his physical presence, his real body that's alive. He had first let Mary Magdalene, and then some of her friends were the second. Simon Peter was allowed to see him and then those two disciples on the way to Emmaus – this was how he spent his afternoon – basically listening to where they were at and they were so overcome with grief they couldn't even recognize him.

Now for the fifth time, on this jubilant day, he's going to let his friends see him. Unfortunately, they are so wound up with fear, disappointment, bitterness, and crushed hopes that he first had to calm them down. And I guess you could imagine that; I guess I could imagine it because that's how I would have been. They had just gone through a hell of a day, if you'll pardon the expression. That Saturday – yesterday for you – was no big deal. You might have even liked it. You were full of joyful anticipation. Possibly there was some baking going on at your house, maybe some special cookies. Maybe you were hiding eggs, maybe you were buying chocolate. Maybe you were planning a great big meal when you and some people you love are going to get together. But the Saturday of Holy Week was no fun for any of Jesus' disciples, the men or the women. They were miserable.

Someone they loved had been tortured to death. Their faith had wilted, their confidence had disappeared. They had either denied him outright or fled. Every one of them, in one way or another, had failed him and they felt that he had failed them. That he had puffed himself up with a bunch of promises that he was not in a position to fulfill and that everything that they had been hoping for had gone down the drain. The significance of the very existence of the nation of Israel was going to turn out to be a fraud. Their hopes of a Messiah who would bring about the kingdom of God, just one more failed messianic hope down the drain. All they saw was loss and a horrible and a cruel thing. And on top of it they figure, "They got our leader; now they're coming after us," so they're hiding. I wonder if they're in the same room where they had first received the Lord's Supper? Who knows.

They're in a room with the, "Doors locked for fear of the Jews," the very same people who arrested their leader. "Jesus came," the locked door was no obstacle for him, "and stood among them," and said wonderful words to build up their faith. He said, "Peace be with you!" and demonstrated his hands and his side. The other two gospels that tell this story – Mark and Luke – mention that they were eating supper. This is Easter evening now, Sunday evening, they were having fish. And Jesus ate some food to demonstrate he was not just a computer simulation or some kind of projection or some kind of fantasy. He ate food, chomped on it, swallowed and the fish disappeared inside his real body. He once again had working saliva glands. Once again, his choppers were used for the same thing you're going to use your teeth for later today. And it went into the same digestive system that sustains your body and would still sustain his.

And he said – here's the significance – "You're not just watching me do something cool," although he sure did. He said, "The significance is that you now have peace. Peace with God.

Your fear can be gone. You're now immortal and bulletproof. You will live every moment that has been a portion to you in this life and even the end of this life is nothing but an immediate transition to the real life that is still coming. The reason you can be so confident is you have peace."

And here is fact number one: The resurrection of Jesus Christ guarantees the forgiveness of your sins. That's what was at the root of why they were so gloomy because if Jesus failed on them, that means that all of the sacrifices of those dead animals that had been dying in the temple sacrifices for many, many centuries were meaningless. No animal can die in court so that you are acquitted. The only thing that gave that animal blood the slightest bit of power to help people in their relationship with God was that those were stand-ins for the Lamb of God. But if Jesus had failed, his death would have simply been an ugly death and he would have stayed dead. But his resurrection guarantees that when God looks at you, he looks at you through the lenses of grace. Meaning, "I now decide to like you. And the reason I have nothing against you is I've put all of my anger at your sin on top of Jesus." And because he has risen, that is the guarantee that the plan worked.

So when Jesus said, "Peace be to you," he's saying, "It's all good." Everything – no matter what is happening in your life – it's all good. It's under control. The plan is working. The plan is moving along as the Father has designed it. Everything is good. I'm good with you. You're good with God. Relax. Don't be afraid. Just let go of your fear. It means you can enjoy the ride; not be tormented by your guilt of all the messes in your past.

I had an interesting conversation with one of my kids yesterday and he uttered a pretty interesting line. We were talking about frustrations in life and he said, "You know, Dad, I think most people that I know hate their lives. And the point is you do a lot of dancing and smiling and fooling around on the outside, but inside is fear and despair. There's no meaning there; there's no fun. There's no joy. I can't relax. Nothing's working for me. Everything is so hard. It's just a grind and for what? So finally you make it to the end of your life and tip over and so what – then what? It means nothing. And the people essentially" – he meant the people I hang with – "there's nothing past the crust." Jesus is giving you some filling. Peace with be with. It's okay! Relax. It's all good because not only are your sins forgiven, the second powerful message of Easter is that your immortality is guaranteed because this is not like going and gawking at Mount Rushmore where you look at the work that someone else did and it does nothing for you. When you go home, you don't become a sculptor yourself. You can look at Mount Rushmore but that doesn't make you a granite sculptor. You just think, "Well, I saw something; a really amazing engineering and artistic fete."

But when you look at the work of Christ, you realize that he has purchased forgiveness for you that you may count on every day of your life. And he has purchased immortality so that Easter is interactive. His resurrection becomes yours, for his death on the cross was really yours. You were hanging on the cross and you were getting punished. It was all put on him so that by his wounds we are healed.

And then Jesus said once again, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am now sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’”

So this is good news to share, as well. “The peace I give you is not supposed to stop with you. But I’m commissioning you now as I have been commissioned by the Father, I am now sending you.” And Easter is a motivating and empowering thing. It sets things in motion. You can go look at Mount Rushmore, but those figures are never going to move. They’re frozen in granite; they will never move. But Jesus set air in motion. He breathed. He made a little – not a joke, really – but it’s like a play on words, as it were, because breath and Spirit in the Greek language in which this gospel of John was originally written, are the same word. So he kind of went, “Whoooosh.” Like, imagine that you’re visualizing me. I’m commissioning you with the Spirit – with the Spirit’s message, with the Spirit’s power, and with the Spirit’s authority. I am commissioning you as royal priests of heaven to share that message of hope with a world that is full of despair. To share a message of confidence in Christ with people who are afraid. To share some hope and purpose with people who don’t know why they exist. They’re just scratching out a living but they don’t know why. Like, “Why does this matter? I’m surviving. Okay, we went out and partied last night, but now what? So what? Where is there any significance? Is there anything higher than just my survival, scraping and scrapping, just to survive? Hoping to have a few laughs and then you die?”

You and I are commissioned to be Easter tellers. You and I can share the peace that we have received and you have authority to do so! If you hear someone’s words who has a broken heart and says, “I’m afraid. I’m afraid to die because I’ve lived like such a selfish pig.” You can announce grace – not try to set the bar and say, “Well, if you clean yourself up then God will start liking you.” You start with grace. Don’t start with people’s behavior; start with unconditional love that Christ died for sinners, not to pin a gold medal on the achievers. He died for fools and sinners just like you and me and we have the opportunity and the commission to be brokers of grace, to share words of peace.

You all have clusters of friends and relationships that multiply the gathering here today – through Time of Grace television and through your friends – this can radiate out and we can share this double message of peace that you have forgiveness and the promise of immortality. That even the grave, even Satan, even hell no longer need to make you afraid and miserable. You have a purpose for being here. You’re a beautiful masterpiece of God’s design; better looking even than Mount Rushmore because those stone figures will just slowly erode and eventually, like the Sphinx in Egypt, weather away until their features are just nubs.

You are immortal. You have been created not by a jackhammer out of granite; you’ve been fashioned by the hands of a master, brilliant, Creator. You have important work to do while you’re here on this earth. And then life begins. This is the message of Easter. Let Jesus breathe his Spirit upon you so that you claim the status of who you are, royal priests of God, commissioned and authorized to encourage people to believe in Christ. To warn them if they don’t they will die with their sins still on their head, but to promise and assure them that all who trust and believe in Christ, whoever believes in him will not perish, but have eternal life. Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again.

We have a question from a viewer that I think might be of interest to you. You know, as we think about Easter and the resurrection, as we marvel at Jesus' own resurrected body walking again on the earth, brought back complete one hundred percent with the same body that was put into the ground, you know that promises that the same thing will happen for us as well. We're going to come back not as something or somebody else, but we're going to come back as ourselves with our personality, our thoughts and memories, what's unique about us, our unique DNA. We'll even look like the way that we did originally. God's perfect design for our bodies will reemerge and we'll be our ideal selves again.

But that leads to some questions such as: *"I think a lot about heaven around Eastertime"* this man writes. *"I'm on my second marriage and I wonder will I be with my first wife or my second wife or neither?"*

That's a hot one. Normally, I wouldn't venture out into that live fire zone except that Jesus himself heard a question similar to that and he answered it once by saying, "In heaven they neither marry nor are given in marriage but we're like the angels."

Now what I think he means by that is we will not be bound together for one spouse for all eternity. But that doesn't mean, though, that you will be unaware of the people who have great significance to you on this earth. It doesn't mean that you will not be able to live in close proximity or enjoy really strong relationships with people that will continue on into heaven. It just won't be with the earthly rules for marriage. And what that type of relationship will be, I don't think God can trust us with that information yet. It will be revealed to us at the right time. But let me just assure you that you and all other people who wonder and worry about these things – it's all going to work out. We will enjoy all our relationships from this earth and God will figure out a way in which we won't be sort of fighting for exclusive rights over other people, but we will be able to enjoy our wonderful spiritual family in heaven to the full. That's God's promise to us.

This Easter season, let's come before our Lord with our prayers of thanks.

*Dear Lord Jesus, we're in awe of what you did. You have pulled off something even greater than the carving of Mount Rushmore. You have beaten and defeated death and hell and Satan. Your crucifixion paid the price. Your resurrection is the guarantee that it's real for us, as well. Through your resurrection, we now are guaranteed the forgiveness of our sins. We now can walk every day of our lives confident of living in God's favor. You have also bought us the gift of immortality. Through you, our life will go on forever. We can never thank you enough but today, hear our prayers of thanks. May we believe it and share it. We pray this in your holy name, Amen.*

For Time of Grace, I'm Pastor Mark Jeske, guaranteeing to you with good news of the resurrection of Jesus today, right now, is a time of God's grace for you.

### Easter in Motion

**John 20:19-23:** "On the evening of the 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. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' And with that he breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

#### Points to Ponder

1. There were several reasons why Jesus showed himself to his followers after his resurrection. Besides assuring them that he was truly alive, why else did he show himself?
2. When Jesus appeared in the room with the disciples, why did he say, "Peace be with you"? Why could the disciples now be at peace and without fear? Is the same true for us?
3. Because of God's grace and what Jesus did for you, what does God see when he looks at you?
4. In what way is Easter interactive? In other words, what does Jesus' resurrection mean for you too?
5. The Easter message motivates and empowers us to keep the gospel in motion. How can you do that in your life?

#### The Bottom Line

Jesus' resurrection changes our lives. It gives us peace in the knowledge of our own resurrection someday and motivates us to share that peace with others. It is God's plan for each of us to keep the Easter message in motion for all to hear.

#### What Else Does God Say?

**John 16:33:** I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

**Mark 16:15:** Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.