

**Sermon Series: “When Heaven Invades Earth”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—4/15/2007**

**Title: “Receive This One!”**

**Text: John 20: 19-23**

**Intro.:** *Ills.: Receiving Phil Niekro’s (late 1960’s Atlanta Pitcher) knuckleball by Joe Torre*

**Theme:** Christ boldly invades our world with his Spirit and forgiveness so that the Divine tension that is built into our grace-giving lives evokes a response of faith from those with whom we have dealings.

### ***Heaven invades our fear with its peace***

- Jesus unsettles our world-based fear with his out of this world peace
  1. Jesus was not willing to let his disciples remained holed-up in fear (no matter how compelling the reason)
  2. What hole of fear have you climbed into? Jesus stands before you/your fear and says come out of the cave
    - a. **Ills.: Getting Stuck Short of the Goal**
  3. *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. John 14:27*
- Jesus conquers our fear with the evidence of the cross and empty tomb
  1. Why did the marks of crucifixion remain in the post resurrection?
    - a. Jesus showed all is overcome through his death
    - b. *But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 1 Peter 4: 13*
  2. Letting heaven invade your world through your attitude of joy
    - a. When the disciples realize that Jesus was real, their Easter joy became their insurmountable strength
    - b. *“Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” Nehemiah 8: 10*
    - c. **Ills.: Big Fish — Living with Assurance**

### ***Heaven invades our brokenness with its forgiveness***

- In view of the cross and empty tomb, Heaven invades our unreconciled sin by forgiveness within us
  1. The disciples stood in a broken relationship with the Savior, which needed reconciling
    - a. Peter with his denial; The ten with their desertion; The company of believers with their doubt and unbelief
  2. To often we play around in the swamp of our past sin afraid to reconcile our brokenness with Jesus
    - a. A past affair, a dark-side living lie, a filthy unethical action at work, an addiction sucking our spiritual life dry
    - b. We believe/fear that we can’t come clean, won’t be received, must live a fraudulent double life
    - c. Jesus calls us to come home, today, because of his promises and power of forgiveness
      - i. **Ills.: True forgiveness**
      - ii. *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. Romans 8:1-2*
- Heaven invades our world with forgiveness through us
  1. Jesus puts us in the honored/uncomfortable position of being bears of his forgiveness to our world
    - a. Jesus **“Breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” vs. 22**
    - b. Commissioning all his disciples, broken as they are, to carry his powerful word of forgiveness out to the world
    - c. *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 2 Cor. 5:18-19*
    - d. **The Office of the Keys of the Kingdom/Priesthood of all believers — Print John 20: 23**
    - e. We are not accustomed to being the ambassadors of grace but Jesus commands all of us to go and speak it
  2. Jesus invades the darkness and prison of others’ sin through us
    - a. **Practicing limitless grace** for the habitual offender
      - i. **Print and read Psalm 103: 11-14**
    - b. **Practicing unconditional grace** when another sins against us

- i. *"I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."* Jeremiah 31: 34
- ii. Refusing hell's lie (I can forgive but I can't forget) and praying for Christ's blood to wash over hurt/memory
- iii. **Ills.: City of Peace**
- c. **Practicing tough love** to lead another back to repentance and forgiveness
  - i. **Withholding forgiveness** – Not done out of ill will or grudge but so that the other spends eternity in heaven
  - ii. *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."* Matt 18: 15

### **Handling a knuckleball**

Phil Niekro was a all star, knuckleball pitcher for the Atlanta Braves in the late 60's and early 70's. He pitched his team to several National league championships. His trademark pitch was often described as "voodoo" as it darted and wove its way to the batter, sometimes moving three and four different directions. Not only did opposing batters have a hard time connecting the bat to it, but most of his team's catcher's refused to catch for him because it made them look like fools as they dove and bobbed and ducked pitches from him. Only Joe Torre, now the Yankee's manager, consistently served as his catcher. When asked how he could manage to handle a ball pitched with such quirky motions. His response, "I don't try and control Phil's pitch. I let it lead me. Rather than trying to anticipate its moves, I know where Phil intends to pitch it, and I place my catcher's mit in that position and the ball find its."

### **Getty Stuck Short of your goal**

A man named Floyd Collins, in 1925, was exploring near Mammoth Cave in Kentucky and got stuck. He was fifty-five feet from the surface and he got stuck. Icy water was dripping in his face. The rescuers came in and diverted the water, and they talked with him, they calmed him down, but they couldn't get him out. He began to come unglued there, stuck in that cave. He was able to see the light, able to see where he wanted to be, hearing voices, getting food, but he was stuck and he couldn't get out. So he slowly began to have raving lunacies about everything from chicken sandwiches to angels in white chariots. The newspapers got in on it, and ten thousand people came to see him. They sold hot dogs and sandwiches. It was a side show. Seventeen days later Floyd Collins died in that hole, able to see where he wanted to be and not able to get there. **Roger Thompson, "The Good News Is: The Bad News Is Wrong," Preaching Today, Tape No. 55**

### **True Forgiveness**

A man who lived in England came over to the United States to go to a resort for several months. He wanted to bring along his Rolls-Royce for the trip, so he had it carefully packaged and shipped overseas. While visiting the U.S., something happened to the car—a mechanical failure of some sort—so he called over to England and explained his problem to the company. Rolls-Royce told him, "That's fine. Within 48 hours, we'll have a mechanic with the auto parts there to fix it for you." They put a mechanic on a plane with the necessary car parts and flew him to the United States. He worked on the car in the parking lot of the resort, fixed it in good time, got on a plane, and flew back to England. The man happily drove his Rolls for the rest of his time in the U.S. Then he packaged it back up, put it on a ship, and sent it to his home in England. Nearly a year after the man returned to England, he discovered he had never received a bill from Rolls-Royce. So he wrote the company a letter, saying, "This date last year there was something wrong with my Rolls-Royce and you flew a mechanic over to help me. You fixed it, but I've never received a bill. If you should find that bill in your office, I'll be happy to pay for your efforts at fixing my car." He received a letter back from Rolls-Royce that simply said: "In the files at the headquarters of Rolls-Royce, there is no such account saying anything has ever been wrong with a Rolls-Royce anywhere that you speak of." Now that's justification. **Mac Brunson, "The Purpose of the Passion," Preaching Today Audio, No. 282**

## **City of Peace**

The feeling of being beset by blind forces is especially strong in the mixed city of Jerusalem. ... Hardly a day passes in the "holy city" without a riot or a stoning, without cars being torched or firebombs thrown, without attempted lynchings or the stabbing of an Israeli by a Palestinian (or vice versa). After each incident, municipal cleaning machines, marked "CITY OF PEACE" in three languages, appear on the scene to wash the blood from the streets in time for the next group of pious pilgrims to pass by and visit sites holy to their faith. **Amos Elon in The New Yorker (Dec. 24, 1990). Christianity Today, Vol. 36, no. 3**

## **John 20:19-23**

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>And when He had said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>So Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you." <sup>22</sup>And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>"Whenever you forgive the sins of any, their sins have been forgiven them; whenever you withhold forgiveness of any, they have been not been forgiven."

For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. **Psalm 103: 11-14**