

Title: I AM SENDING YOU, JOHN 20:19 – 31
(Chatham, NJ; 04/03/16, AM) [S-P, Narrative Analysis]

Theme: Implied by Jesus words are several groups of people who react to the message of the Gospel by intimidation, doubt, or faith.

Purpose: To clarify how some people think about the Gospel but also to encourage belief.

Introduction:

1. The narrative of the resurrection continues after the disciples' first exposure to the message.
2. Jesus appears to the disciples and then to Thomas with them.
3. We haven't yet moved past the initial stage of faith to the point of witness to the world, but we are getting closer to that time.
4. These episodes explain what happened.

I. Behind Locked Doors, 19 & 26

- A. "For fear of the Jews" (19) and others today
 1. These are the intimidators: early on the persecution came from the Jewish leaders (Acts 5:27-32, guilt, threat to their influence) and the Jews outside Palestine (Acts 13:45 & 17:5, jealousy), later the Gentiles (Acts 19, Ephesus: economics)
 2. Today the intimidation shows up in people who expect a person's faith to be only a personal matter, not fit for the public square
 3. As long as you keep it to yourself and don't get really serious about changing your behavior or seek to impose it on others
 4. Piety without real-life significance: keep it "behind locked doors"
- B. Yet Jesus doesn't want it to stay there, 21
 1. Jesus "sends" them
 2. They and the church they establish take up the mantle given to him by the Father
 3. This is a divine commission
 4. They will act as emissaries from God
 5. As becomes apparent, the message of the Resurrection is not something they are even able to suppress
 6. Others will seek to tarnish the witness by lies and persecution just like it was with Jesus: labeled "demon-possessed and insane" (10:20)

II. Demanding Proof or Avoiding Commitment: the Thomas Generation

- A. A fair shake
 1. Thomas asks to see for himself
 2. We tend to separate him from the others as a "doubter"
 3. However, they had already seen what he wanted to see, 20
 4. They were "doubters" up to this point
 5. The rest of us must rely on their witness: especially the witness of one who had to see for himself
 6. Such as these are blessed by Jesus, 29
- B. No rebukes
 1. In Mark 16:14, Jesus rebukes the disciples for not believing others
 2. Luke 24:25 – he calls the two disciples "slow of heart" for not believing the Scriptures
 3. John is unconcerned about this rebuke: he just wants others to believe

C. The Thomas Generation

1. Today many people want Christians to prove themselves before they will believe
2. Some have even left the faith because Christians didn't measure up
3. The responsibility for their faith seems to be on others or even on God
4. Waiting for the church to be perfect may be another means of confronting the real issue of their own sin or avoiding the demands of the Gospel
5. Let's not forget, Christianity is still true even if Christians aren't perfect examples of it, just like the Resurrection was true before Thomas was convinced
6. Neither God nor Christians have to prove themselves to the satisfaction of others
7. The new Thomas Generation may just be copping out

III. Another Group: Those Who Accept Jesus by Faith in the Witnesses, 29

A. Our Legal System Demands the Same Thing

1. To convict someone of a crime, we depend on evidence and testimony
2. Why isn't the testimony of these witnesses good enough?
3. John seems to think it is, 30-31
4. "These are written that you may believe"
5. Ask yourself, "Is John a credible witness? Can I trust his testimony?"
6. Is there corroboration for his testimony? 1 Corinthians 15:6 tells us that there were more than 500 who had seen him at one time.

B. Belief because of John's testimony (30-31)

1. John's message is for you
2. Eternal life: John wants this for us
3. He demands nothing for himself; this is a free testimony offered to all
4. Peace – three times (19, 21, 26) Jesus extends the blessing of peace
5. Not freedom from tribulation but the peace that comes through the hope of eternal salvation

Conclusion:

1. Believe the testimony; accept the gifts of life and peace.
2. Don't put your heart behind the locked door of unbelief.