



TIME OF GRACE®

Time of Grace Ministry

Jesus: Extended Cut: The Right Way to See Jesus

John 20:19-23

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Pastor Mike Novotny

Who here in church today, or who there watching at home is a fan of superhero movies? Show of hands. Batman, Superman, all the things. DC, Marvel. If you're a superfan of superhero movies, you might know the famous insider story of the Snyder Cut. Back in 2017, above the San Diego Convention Center as Comic Con was in full swing below, a small airplane pulled a long banner back and forth, and back and forth for two hours so that everyone below could see a message. The message pulled on the banner behind the plane said, "Release the Snyder Cut." Do you know the story?

In 2017, a Hollywood director, Zack Snyder famous for the Batman, Superman, the movie "300", was asked to be, like, at the helm of this blockbuster film "Justice League." Have you seen it? All the superheroes in one spot. And he was a brilliant director, he filmed brilliant footage but unfortunately, just as his filming was ending and before the editing began, a family emergency pulled him away from the project and the film company put in another director who later released a film that fans would say... was fine, I guess. The two-hour movie theatre version of "Justice League" fell a little bit short of the blockbuster that the studio was hoping it would be. And so, fans, and even some of the actors within the film started to chant, even start a hashtag trend, "Release the Snyder Cut."

They wanted the original director's vision with all the details and back stories that the film was supposed to be. That's what led a man in San Diego to pay an airplane company for two hours to demand the release of it. And that's exactly what happened. Four years after the movie was made, HBO decided to release "Zack Snyder's Justice League." Not the slouch two-hour movie. No, it was a four-hour-and-two-minute movie. And if you got nothing going on for the rest of the day after church you can find it online.

You know, some people really appreciate the full story. There may be an edited, shortened, condensed thing that fits into pop culture attention spans, but other people want everything that the director intended. And I share that with you because do you know that Jesus has an extended cut? Most people, sometimes even people who go to church a lot, think of Jesus as like he was born, and that's Christmas, and then he lived and taught some things and did miracles and then he died on the cross and then he rose, that's Easter. Roll the credits. But if you actually

read the Bible, you'd find out that there's not, like, double that, but there is more than that.

That after Easter morning, after he was raised from the dead, Jesus spent 40 days on earth teaching vital truths before he returned to heaven and sat at the right hand of his father. Have you seen the extended cut? Have you read that part of the Bible? What did Jesus do as he knew the clock was ticking before he would return to heaven? What did he say? What did he want the first Christians to know and what does he want you to know today?

I've had a chance to read the whole extended cut. A little bit in Matthew 28, little bit in Mark 16, little bit in Luke 24, but mostly in John 20 and 21 before a little bit in the book of Acts 1. And I've discovered that what Jesus did was brilliant. Because what he did in all these different ways was repeatedly answer three of the biggest spiritual questions that you need to ask yourself and be able to answer with the truth. If you want to jot down some quick notes, here's the three things Jesus wanted to do. He wanted to give proof to your head, peace to your heart, and a purpose for your hands.

All right? Proof for the head, peace for the heart, and a purpose for your hands. You can live a vibrant Christian life if you can answer the question, is this true? It's just a story. It's just what my grandparents taught me about -- No, is this actually true? Why do I believe this? Is this for you? Like, is all this forgiveness and salvation for a person like me with all my ups and downs and struggles and sins in past and present? And finally, what should I do? If I believe this, how should I -- What's the thrilling reason to get out of bed in the morning?

In the next 40 days, for Jesus, he's going to speak to the head, the heart, the hands, he's going to give you proof and then peace and then purpose. And today, as we jump into the series, Jesus is going to do all three in a very short amount of time. So, let's jump into the extended cut. We're in John 20 today where we read these words, "On the evening of that first day of the week," so the evening of Easter, "when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders," who had just unjustly arrested and then murdered Jesus, that's why they were afraid. "Jesus came and he stood among them and he said, 'Peace be with you!' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. Again, Jesus said, 'Peace be with you!'"

You see it? The proof and the peace? Actually, to be more precise to the text, it's the peace, and then the proof, and then a little bit more of the peace. Jesus shows up and the first thing he says is, "Peace be with you." And the disciples are so stunned. They think, "People don't rise from the dead, this can't be true. This must be a ghost of some sort." That Jesus has to show them the proof, his hands and his side, until the joy kicks in. They believe it and then he repeats the first message, "Peace be with you."

It reminds me of the day I proposed to my girlfriend at 30,000 feet. Have I told you this story? I proposed to Kim on a plane that she did not know I was on and her mom and her dad were there and Kim was sitting on the aisle. I had, like, borrowed some of my buddy's clothes, I was hiding in the back in a hoodie. It's a long story. The woman next to me thought I was a terrorist and -- Two months after 9/11 I'm wearing someone else's clothes, I'm fidgety. I keep thinking I forgot the ring, so I keep checking my backpack. The air conditioning goes down on the plane so everyone's stripping down layers because it's boiling hot and I'm just there in a hoodie like this checking the backpack.

Anyway, so I get up and kneel down in the aisle next to Kim and she turns over to me and I start speaking to her heart. "I love you; I want to be with you." But her head gets in the way. As I'm expressing love in the most poetic of fashion that I've practiced time and time again she says this, "What -- Why are you -- Where'd you -- Why are you -- Why -- Uh?" So, I had to pause, like, this is me. Unlike Jesus I didn't take a piece of fish to eat it to prove that I was a real person, but once her head clicked, "Oh my -- My boyfriend is here." Then her heart could lean into the moment.

That's what Jesus is doing, he's speaking peace to people who had, like, facepalmed and faceplanted that weekend, who had denied him and run away from him. He wanted to speak to their hearts, but they couldn't believe it just yet. So, he gets to the head, he proves that it's him and once they believe it then he speaks down to the heart and offers them forgiveness and peace for their sins.

Now, I'm so tempted to spend about ten minutes on that text but here's the deal. Last week if you were here on Easter, I talked a lot about proof for the head and peace for heart. And in the next two weeks of this series, we're going to meet a guy named Thomas who needed tons of proof for the head, we're going to talk about that. And the week after that we're going to meet Peter who totally messed up and needed tons of peace for his heart. So, because we covered that and we're about to cover that, I instead want to focus today on the next verses where Jesus talks mostly about the purpose that he has given to every Christian.

"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's sins, they are forgiven. And if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'" This is a great calling from Jesus. I mean, the way he says it, "As the Father has sent me." Jesus came down from heaven to earth on a mission to save souls. So, also, Jesus almost equates it, "I am sending you with the same purpose to save souls." And what does he send us to do? Well, if repetition means anything, he wants us to talk to people about whether or not their sins are forgiven.

Jesus's purpose for his first century and 21st century disciples is for our family and our friends, and the person sitting next to you and you to see sin the right way. This is

no small task. Everyone that you know is a sinner. There is no one who is sinless, there's no one who is perfect like God is perfect. There is no one who is that holy. I'm a sinner, you're a sinner, the person you love is a sinner, the person you hate is a sinner, your best friend, your worst enemy. Every human being is a sinner. "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." We humans have that in common. But what we do not have in common is the way that we see our sin.

In fact, if you're taking notes, I want to go deep here. There are three ways that a person can see sin, two of which are catastrophic for your soul and one that will land you in heaven to be happy forever. Write this down. The first way that a person can see sin is when they see sin too lightly. When they normalize, when I minimize, when you justify sin. When we don't see it as damnable or evil, or something to be concerned about, but we can shrug and continue in it. We don't feel that much sorrow or repentance towards it.

Do you know someone who sees their sin that way? Maybe your best friend who can be kind of selfish and self-centered, and even self-righteous, but if you ask them, they really think that they're a good person. Of course they have a spot in heaven, it's not like they're Hitler, it's not like they've abused a child, they've never been behind bars before. They might think, "I'm one of the good ones." They take their sin too lightly.

Maybe it's the woman who comes to church every Sunday and she thinks that by saying her prayers and giving her money to Jesus that excuses how judgmental she is, how cringey she can be, how little patience she has for people who aren't following the right path of Jesus. Like, she's so fixated on truth that she forgets love. She's justified her own sin. It's the guy who drinks too much and he minimizes the sin saying, "Well, at least I don't drive." It's the person who is not at all being like Jesus to their spouse, but instead of owning their sin, they point a finger, "She started it." Or, "You don't know how he is."

And we think that if someone has insulted us, we can insult them back and it's not sin. We think if someone has raised their voice and brought up the past with us, we can do it right back and it's not sin. We think that if they start -- Do we allow our children to do this, "He started it"? And? That's not an excuse to do or say whatever you want. Now, people are hooking up without the covenant of marriage and they say, "Well, at least we're being faithful." People don't come to church at all and they think, "Well, at least I'm not a hypocrite like my buddy who goes to church."

We find a thousand different ways to normalize it and think that it's okay, to not be grieved by our own sin and say, "God help me and forgive me." Some people, maybe you're one of those people, see sin too lightly. You think that God accepts you because you're good. You think that you're going to go to heaven because you're not that bad. Some people have not seen the way that God sees sin. But if what I have

done literally put God on a cross, how can I stand at the foot of the cross while Jesus is gasping and bleeding and say, "Are you overreacting, Jesus?" I think between tortured breaths, he'd say, "Are you under?" Have you diminished what God says is serious? Have you been so, like, focused on how other people behave and comparing yourselves to them that you've lost sight of a holy God who wanted you to love him and love your neighbor as yourself? Some people, countless people, they take their sin too lightly.

And number two, perhaps just as many take their sin too seriously. When you can't believe that you could ever make it to heaven, when you -- when you can't think that God accepts you, when you can look at a cross and wear a cross and have a shirt with a cross on it, but you can't believe that the cross was enough for that thing that you did, for that sin you committed. You live with the consequences. Maybe you have a legal record or a family or a marriage that didn't make it and you just think, "If they didn't like me, there's no way that God could like me." And you live in shame. And you have repented, but you haven't received the love and acceptance of God in Christ.

Some people, especially those with sensitive consciences, and those who were raised in very religious environments, they can't just, like, be loved by God. And the devil, who the Bible calls the accuser just accuses them day and night. They can never stand in front of the cross because they're too busy looking in the mirror. And they see how much they have failed, and they think they don't stand a chance.

But in between those two catastrophic lies is the truth, and this is when you and I see sin biblically, like God does. This is when you say, "Sin is bad and my sin is bad. I'm not a good person, I'm a sinner. And maybe I didn't do that sin, but I have done something, so many things, that have grieved God. He should be so mad at me, he should rightfully punish me. I don't deserve a spot in heaven. I'm not worthy of eternal happiness, but..." But. People who see sin biblically say "but." But when I was bad God was so good to me. But when I was just a sinner, God sent his Son to save me. Now, I have a list of things I wish I could go back and change, and I can't change them, but Jesus can, and he shed his blood to erase everything wrong that I have ever done. Do I deserve heaven? No, but I'm going there. Should I be a child of God? I should not, but I am by the mercy and grace of God.

When you see sin biblically, you repent and you believe that you're sorrowful over your sin. You can't live in it; you can't keep doing with it without a pang of conscience. You're going to struggle with it. You're not going to be perfect. But you see sin biblically when you repent of your sin and you trust in Jesus. When your heart's desire is not to go back to what God hates, but instead to turn to the God who has always and will always love you. This is the heart of the Christian faith.

Jesus was giving his friends and he's giving you today the most amazing purpose, to save them from one and two, and to get as many souls as possible to number three.

In fact, Jesus with shocking language says, "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven." We all must stand in Jesus' place, and we look people in the eye and we say what Jesus himself would say. "You want to hold on to sin? You want to keep doing that? You don't care? And I'm grieved to say it, but you are not forgiven." But you are sorry. Sweetie, God knows your heart and Jesus died for that sin and we can look people square in the face and say, "There is a spot at the feast in heaven and your name is on the little sign." We can forgive and not forgive. Open the gates of heaven or close them in the mighty name of Jesus for those who repent or don't.

Maybe you can think of it like this. Let's imagine this little yellow ball is sin, and because God is such a good God he hates the sin, it makes him angry in all its shapes and colors and sizes. Now, human beings tend to compare sin to sin. We think, "Well, it's not a watermelon sized sin, so this isn't a big deal." And sometimes we get so comfortable with this, it almost becomes a game to us. We're not sorry for it, we're not confessing it to God. We put it in our pocket, we play with it and we think it's not a big deal.

But when your last day comes, if God sees this on you, God will be mad. If you stood before a human judge and had done something wrong, his justice would make him mad. Turn so that those who have been victimized by sin could be protected. So, if God sees this on you, you are in trouble. And we sometimes have to say this hard thing to our kids, our friends, maybe to a fellow church member that you can't toy with sin. You can't mock God. You can't think because it's not that sin it's not a serious sin. If this is on you when God shows up, when you take your last breath, you are in eternal trouble.

But. But there are other people that you know that are not holding on to sin. You know, Jesus in this text uses the word forgive four times. Did you know that the Greek word for forgive, that the New Testament originally used, means to send something away? Which means my sin and your sin is not like right here for God to send the lightning bolts down. Do you know where God has put your sin? As you fix your eyes on Jesus do you know where that thing from your past, the thing you struggle with in your present, you know where it is? It's right here. Yeah. Not bad for a soccer player, huh?

And I can feel like God is mad at me, but God is mad at sin. And if sin, as the Old Testament said, has been separated as far from me as the east is from the west, then that thing you did that you think about all the time that you can't forgive yourself for, it's not stuck to you, it is stuck next to the cross of Jesus Christ. And the sin you struggle with and you're so repentant of, where is it? It is next to the cross of Jesus Christ. Every single thing that you and I have ever done wrong, it's not hanging over our head waiting for God's judgment, it is poured out on the cross of Jesus Christ.

So, what is God going to be mad at me for? Nothing. Nothing. He delights in me, not because I'm a good person, but because all the things that made me a bad person have been taken off of me and sent to the cross of Jesus. You and I get to say this and it's the best news to people who are just stuck thinking of their sin and we say, "But it's gone." That rough season of your marriage when you just wanted to be so right, it's gone. Jesus knew it and he died for it. The addiction that landed you in jail, that messed up your friendship, it's gone. Everything that burdens your conscience, it has been separated you as far as the east is from the west.

Jesus said, "If you forgive anyone their sins, they are forgiven." So, I have some homework for you. In the next 7 days, and this is for you who are watching and listening at home too, I want you to have a spiritual conversation with just one person you know. Here's why. In my experience, we should not assume that people know the very basics about sin and salvation. Whenever I sit down at a coffee shop and I ask someone, "Do you think you're going to heaven? And tell me why." Nine out of ten times the answer is wrong, even for those who have lots of experience in church.

I've seen people who have given much of their lives to prostitution say, "But I'm a pretty good person." Hold up. I've seen people say, "I believe that Jesus died for my sins." Oh awesome. How are you going to get to heaven? I don't know. People have a general category of, like, right and wrong and that Jesus died on the cross, but they have not connected to how bad their sin is or how good the cross of Jesus is. And so, I want to challenge you with just one person to have a spiritual conversation. Ask them if they think they're going to heaven, see how they reply. You'll find out very quickly if they see their sin biblically, if they repent and turn to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins. That's your homework before next Sunday.

You look excited about it. I have a hunch I know what you're thinking. "Oh, man, pastor, that could get weird. I don't know if I'm ready for this. You're a pastor. You probably know what to say. I don't know what to say." I get it, but get this, when did Jesus send his disciples to forgive sins? One sentence after they realized he was alive. It wasn't like, "Oh, okay, now we get it." And let's go for like a four-year master degree and then you'll be ready to talk to your friends. They just were overjoyed because they realized he was alive and the next thing he said was, "Receive the Spirit. It's time to send you out on a purpose."

You don't need to be a pastor. You don't need a master's degree. You just have to share the very heart of the Christian faith, that sin is bad, but Jesus is good. And you got some help. "Jesus breathed on them," verse 22 says, "and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Now the Bible doesn't say -- I'm kind of curious how that looked when he did it. How do you picture it? Did he get right up in Peter's face? I don't know why he did it, but if you like nerdy deep Bible knowledge, wake up really quick. The word that

John uses in Greek is only used two other times in the Bible. When the Old Testament Hebrew was translated into Greek, that's called the Septuagint. If you don't know this, that's okay. This word to breathe into, it's used two times in the Septuagint, the Old Testament, the first time when God created Adam and he breathed into him and the guy who was not alive came alive. And then in the book of Ezekiel, the valley of dry bones. Have you heard the story? These dead, dry, lifeless bones and suddenly they come to life. How? Because the breath of God comes.

Jesus breathes on them, picking up on this Old Testament idea that when you think miracles can't happen. When you think this guy will never stand up, when you think these dry bones could never live the breath of God, the Spirit of God can do things you can't imagine. And so please, friends, do not talk yourself out of this conversation. Do not assume that your brother or your friend will never, because they just might. And when they do, you will get to experience a joy that most Christians miss, the divine purpose.

We wake up not just trying to put food on the table, not just trying to survive raising these kids, you and I get to bring people from death to life as we direct their thoughts and their hearts back to the cross of Jesus. To be candid with you it might not work. You might try; they might not be interested. You might invite someone to church, they might say "No, thank you." You might want to talk about sin and salvation, and they might find you awkward and change the subject, that happened to Jesus too. But I just want to ask you this question as I close, what if they do listen? What if they do come? What if something in their heart does change?

We pray all these things in the mighty name of Jesus our savior, who taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the Kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever, amen."

Now, brothers, sisters, go in peace, live in harmony with one another, and serve our Lord with gladness. Lord bless you and keep you, he will make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, will look upon you with favor because of Jesus and may that give you peace. And all God's people said? Amen.