I. INTRO:
A. Teaching Schedule next 2 weeks: [Wed 3/3 Worship Night; Sun 3/7 Jeff T + Comm; Wed 3/10 Pastr Tony Sch; Sun 3/14 Greg Opean]
C. C.S. Lewis in, A Grief Observed - You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death! It is easy to say you believe a rope to be strong as long as you are merely using it to cord a box. But suppose you had to hang by that rope over a precipice. Wouldn’t you then first discover how much you really trusted it?
1. Do you believe? Do you have faith in Jesus? Do you really trust in Him?
D. Outline: In ch.20 we have 4 reactions to the resurrection:
   1. Hearing is Believing! (Mary Mag hearing Jesus say, “Mary”) - Seeing is Believing! (10 apostles) - Proving is Believing! (Thomas) - Trusting is Believing! (us)

II. TRUSTING IS BELIEVING!
A. SEEING IS BELIEVING! (19-23)
B. The room is dark. Only a flickering oil lamp dancing shadows upon the walls. The windows shuttered & door barred, the disciples cower in the shadows. Nails bitten to the nub. Jaws clenched in anxiety. Heads aching. Throats parched. Tongues clinging to their mouth. (Chuck Swindoll John; pg.95)
C. But locked doors will not give you peace...nor keep your Savior out!
   1. Matter of fact He shows up & gives these frightened disciples what they need most...Himself!
D. Peace be with you -
   1. This peace is based on His sacrifice on the cross.
   2. Rom.5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,
E. (20) With the words Peace be with you, a calm settles over their heart, so they gather around for a closer look. {They were glad when they saw the Lord}
F. “Look at the wounds of Jesus!” cried Staupitz to Martin Luther (Staupitz supervised Martin Luther during a critical period in his spiritual life).

1. There is indeed no other sign which can give rest/peace to the penitent.
   a) Have you “Look at the wounds of Jesus”?

G. Peace to you! - The 1st message of peace was accompanied by Him showing his wounds. Now the 2nd time the message of peace was accompanied by an injunction to go forth into the world. (On the great errand of world evangelism)

1. See My hands...It’s Me! - See My hands...and Go!
2. The 1st “peace” is peace with God, based on His sacrifice on the cross. That is why He showed them His hands and side.
3. The 2nd “peace” is the peace of God that comes from His presence with us.
   a) He commissioned them to take His place as the Father’s ambassadors in the world.

H. (21-23) Jesus Commissions his apostles: By what authority? (21) Father; With what power? (22) H.S.; For what purpose? (23) Sin (to forgive or retain)

I. (21) He breathed on them - For their new commission they needed spiritual power.

1. The image and wording of breathing on them recalls God’s creative work in making Adam. (both gave life: 1 physical, 1 spiritual)
2. This reception of the Spirit was in anticipation of the day of Pentecost and should be understood as a partial limited gift of knowledge, understanding, and empowerment until Pentecost, 50 days later. (Knowledge Bible Commentary)
3. Like an instrument is blown into, to make music. They were to sing & sound the note of the new kingdom.

J. (23) Forgiving or Retaining sin?

1. In light of being called to be sent to the world, the church (not just the apostles) is now given authority to declare that certain sins are forgiven & certain sins retained. (Morris; LKGN; pg.261)
2. Proclaiming the forgiveness of sins was the prominent feature of the apostolic preaching in the Book of Acts.
   a) Jesus was giving the apostles (and by extension, the church) the privilege of announcing heaven’s terms, on how a person can receive forgiveness.
      (1) If one believes in Jesus, then a Christian has the right to announce his forgiveness. :)
      (2) If a person rejects Jesus’ sacrifice, then a Christian can announce that that person is not forgiven. :(
3. **Note:** There is no instance in the New Testament of any apostle forgiving sins.

K. Jesus put into the hands of Peter and of all believers *the keys of the Kingdom* which we should use to open the door for those who wish to enter.
   1. This glorious promise applies to all believers who will tell the story of Christ’s love for men.

L. **PROVING IS BELIEVING!** (24-28)

M. (24) Thomas the **bold skeptic**, the **classic empiricist** *(the theory that all knowledge is derived from sense-experience; a person who relies solely on observation and experiment)*
   1. He had the *I will not believe unless*...head-wag going!
   2. Maybe you’re at the place where you will *not believe* unless Christianity passes your battery of scientific tests.
   3. But...you believe in things you *can’t see* all the time!
      a) Have you ever seen a germ with your naked eye? Yet you don’t walk around licking hand rails.
      b) Have you ever seen electricity? Yet you wont touch a bare copper wire!

N. **How great the anguish** of Thomas during that week. Tossing between *hope & fear*. And seeing on the other 11 faces the light which he cannot share!

O. Yet, how tenderly Jesus deals with our *doubts & unbelief*.
   1. Jesus *came & complied* with the conditions that Thomas’ poor faith laid down.
   2. Jesus was *set on winning* this 1-poor-starving-soul to Himself & blessedness.

P. (28) I think its *unlikely* that Thomas took Jesus up on His invitation to touch.
   1. Thomas hears that Jesus had knowledge of what He said & His willingness to meet it, were sufficient.
   2. *My Lord & my God!* - all demands for proof forgotten.

Q. So for Thomas *seeing/proving was believing*...but to his discredit! - The greater blessing is to *not see & believe*!
   1. W/o faith it is impossible to please God. Heb.11:6

R. **TRUSTING IS BELIEVING!** (29-31)

S. Listen up...this is our category today!
T. Blessed are those who have **not seen** - Blessed are those who believe, even in the pitch black when no stars are shining; Blessed are those who believe even when the sun hasn’t shone for days, but stays hidden behind the darkest blanket of clouds; Blessed are those who believe when there is no friendly voice amidst the crowd.

1. To **believe** then is to get very near the heart of Him who on the cross clung to the Father in the midnight darkness.
2. Trusting is believing. Relying on Jesus, blesses Him.

U. **Habakkuk** ends his letter with a **Hymn of Faith**!

1. His name means “embrace/one who embraces/or clings.”
2. Habakkuk chooses to **cling firmly to God** regardless of what he sees before his eyes! (see 3:17-19)
3. Here is one of the greatest confessions of faith!
   a) Though Babylon comes to destroy; Though You send away your people; Though the bottom drops out of everything…yet I will trust in you!!!
4. Had he looked **ahead** he would only see the invading Babylonian army; Had he looked **within** he would only see fear & trembling; Had he looked **around** he would only see everything falling apart; But by **looking up by faith** he saw God…& all his fears vanished!
5. To walk by faith means to focus on the **greatness & glory** of God!

V. **God** became Habakkuk’s **Strength, Song, & his Salvation**!

1. “If my legs were shaking, I probably would be looking for a place to sit down…not bounding up the side of a mountain, like a deer!”
   a) The Lord gives us **bounding feet** so we can overcome the obstacles of life.
   b) God doesn’t always change the circumstances, but He can **change us** to meet the circumstances!
2. **Faith** gives you the ability to stand sure-footed like a deer, & to be able to **run-swiftly & go higher** then ever before!
3. Like the **eagle** & like the **deer**, God made us for the **heights**!
   a) They both will go down into the **valley**, but that’s not where they live! (us too!)

W. (31) That you may believe that Jesus is **God**; that **you** might have life!

1. Have you experienced that abundant life?

X. **Prayer**: *Blessed are those who do not hear...or see...or feel, or prove...& yet believe.*