

“Pass It On” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Easter 2 – April 12, 2026

- I. **John 20:21** – ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”
- II. **I’m a big track and field fan.**
 - a. Of course, Oregon has a long history of track and field, and we even host the biggest track meets in the world down in Eugene.
 - b. There are many different events that I appreciate, there’s one I want to talk about today... the relay.
 - i. Essentially, the racers only race when the baton is in their hand.
 - ii. When the first leg takes off, the other three wait for the baton to be passed to them.
 - iii. They don’t have anything to do... but once the baton is passed... what is the expectation?
 1. That they kneel down and tie their shoe?
 2. That they jump the fence and go get a hot dog at the concession stand?
 3. Or, do they strain ahead toward the goal – to either pass the baton or finish the race?
 - iv. Now, I understand that all analogies will break down at some point, but what I hope you can see from our reading today is the passing of the baton to the next disciple and what we are to do with that baton.
 - c. The resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was still very new in the minds of the disciples in our Gospel reading today.
 - i. They were still holed up in a locked room somewhere, as the Jews were more than happy to have them arrested and maybe even executed just like Jesus.
 - ii. I imagine they were discussing the news from earlier that the women and others had told them that Jesus was not in the tomb, but He had shown Himself to them and was alive.
 - iii. Suddenly, the risen Lord was among them, and there could be no doubt that He was actually back from the dead and in the flesh.
 - iv. Now, the first thing out of His mouth was not the usual, “Do not be afraid...” as He had said when some amazing or shocking miracle took place... but He started with, “Peace be with you.”
 1. This is the peace that was won on the cross through Jesus’ death and the victory over sin as He rose from the dead.
 2. Romans talks about this kind of peace, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1)
 3. The first pronouncement from Jesus to the disciples was that He has won peace through His death and resurrection.
 - d. Then He gives them the baton.

- i. “As the Father has sent Me, even so I am sending you.”
- ii. Jesus tells them they are now the ones with the message of salvation, the Good News of God’s grace through His Son.
- iii. Yes, they will wait a little longer for the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of many, but the baton is passed in that room as Jesus tells them... “Go!”

III. **I wonder how qualified and prepared the disciples felt.**

- a. It’s one thing to have your Teacher, the Son of God, walking alongside you, always there to ask questions, step in and save the day, or always have the right answers.
 - i. It’s another thing to go in the Holy Spirit in faith to walk in the ways of Jesus and boldly share His name throughout the world.
- b. How qualified do you feel to take the baton of the Gospel and hear the word, “Go!” as you share the message with those around you?
- c. Many Christians don’t feel qualified to share the Gospel... but why?
 - i. Sometimes it’s because as Christians, we don’t know our Bible well enough... so we feel uncomfortable if someone were to ask a question and we don’t know where to find an answer in Scripture.
 - ii. Other times, we feel unsure or even fearful of how the other person will receive our message, and they might reject us...
 - iii. Some of us think that sharing Jesus is some kind of performance, and we have to have just the right words, or an eloquent and persuasive delivery to “win someone for Christ.”
 - iv. And then there are those of us who just believe the baton is better in someone else’s hands... like pastors, or the Outreach Board... or the people who are gifted in that kind of thing.
- d. I’m not sure if you know this or not, but Jesus didn’t find the most qualified people when it came to the standards of the world.
 - i. He found fishermen, tax collectors, zealots, and the uneducated.
 - ii. In fact, if you look at the rise of Christianity, it was mostly spread through average, blue-collar workers with limited education.
 - iii. These people took the baton of the Gospel and simply passed it on to the next person and the next... and as they came to believe, they also passed the baton on to the next person.
- e. Today, our world has an estimated 2.5 billion Christians, or 1 out of 3 people on earth believe in Jesus, and our Gospel reading is the first time the baton gets passed...
- f. You see, all believers in Christ are called to be witnesses... and to live out their lives blessing others with the Good News.
 - i. Do you feel any urgency in that calling?
 - ii. Again, let’s just say you hear the starting gun, you see the other legs of the relay race coming your way... the anxiety and adrenaline is pumping and you hear your cue, “go!” and you take off running with

your hand behind your back awaiting the handoff... it goes into your hand cleanly and you... what?

- iii. Every intention of our Lord is to save the lost and keep the sheep in the fold... and yet many of us stay in the fold pretty well, but don't really feel like it's our job to necessarily reach out to the lost.
- iv. I never want anyone to think, "that's the pastor's job... he gets paid for that, right?"
- v. No, taking the Good News to people with the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of Jesus Christ is every believer's calling... and whether you believe it or not, you are qualified.

IV. **Jesus died and rose again** to make you qualified by grace through faith.

- a. As Jesus went to His death, He took our brokenness, our sin upon Himself to break those chains of bondage... and by His resurrection, He calls us right with God... we are no longer enemies of God... but we are chosen... we have peace with God... and each other.
- b. In this great season of Easter, we are reminded again and again that **He is risen!** (He is risen indeed, Alleluia!) – we are reminded of this because the victory of Jesus is our victory too.
- c. Without a doubt, Jesus rose from the dead to claim the victory... and without a doubt, He gave all of that to us through our faith in Him.
- d. So, in God's amazing grace and glory, He has claimed you as His child... For most of you the journey started in your baptism, and He has raised you up in the faith so that you understand the depth of His sacrifice for you personally.
 - i. From my perspective, I give all glory and honor and thanks to Him for freeing me from an eternity lost in hell... and I have a deep sense of gratitude that He has saved me... a sinful person.
 - ii. God saves us, and with that gift comes a sense of gratitude and the desire to respond to the love He first showed us.
 - iii. That's all it takes to be qualified... to have faith, which prepares us to take the baton and run the race with Jesus.
- e. Each of us has had our eyes opened to the truth in the Scriptures... the resurrected King has passed us the baton through the work of those first Apostles, and now, we have a gift that longs to be in the hands of another.
 - i. As we received the gift of Jesus' death and resurrection, we also received a gift of being a follower... one who runs with the Good News to share it with those around us.
 - ii. So, the baton is in your hand... Not because you are qualified on your own... but because Christ has given it to you... along with His peace, His Spirit, and His promise.
 - iii. Run the race... not to win salvation, but because the victory is already yours in the risen Christ... so run, and pass it on. Amen