

# *What Happened???* - *A Modern Day Parable* *inspired by John 20:19-31*

The long, difficult week was finally drawing to a close. It was very late. Streetlights were on, most people were home getting ready for bed. But, in the corner office on the 4th floor, a tiny lamp was glowing indicating all the work had not been done for someone. The shades were drawn and the doors were locked. The team sat huddled in that room for fear of being discovered. All but one member was present.

The thought of facing the outside world felt like ice running through their veins. Failure was their biggest fear. Failure was their biggest critic. Success and confidence was all they had shown for many months. Words like “no other will do” and “this is the one” and “Follow us. We know the way.” they had splattered them everywhere! It was so easy to reach the ends of the earth, shouting all the great plans and promises.

Now it's impossible to take the words back. They can't be gathered in and erased. There is no “undo” button here. So, all the promises hang out there, unfulfilled, empty, heavier than anything they had ever felt. The weight of it all silenced their tongues and troubled their minds and hearts. The team felt lost with nowhere to turn, nowhere to run away. They dove straight into defeat and simply gave up. So they sat in the dark room, deflated and depressed.

The silence was broken with the familiar buzz of a message coming through on their phones. They all received the same message -- 4 simple words -- “Peace Be With You.” No one spoke. They looked around at each other and showed the message to the person at their side to compare and confirm they all received the same text. It was like magic, but more like the Holy Spirit. They all began to relax and smile a little. Then, the same text came through again -- “Peace Be With You” -- 4 simple words packed with power.

The air began to clear and lighten. The team members felt like they could breathe again. Had they really been holding their breath? It sure felt like it! The fear and shame had paralyzed them. Even swallowing and blinking were a chore. Someone sent the message to Tom, the team member who was absent. No one actually knew where Tom had been that night. What was he doing? Why had he not come back to the office? How could he face anyone at this dark hour of defeat?

Tom didn't respond right away, so all the others sent him the message, too. "We have seen the light. We know there is a way out." Tom replied, "Unless I see the numbers rise, and the marks of success on the chart, I will not believe."

Now a week later, the team was gathered once again in the corner office, and this time Tom was with them. The doors were locked, the shades were still drawn, and the small lamp was lit. To the rest of the world, it seemed nothing had changed. Once again the room was silent and dim. The tired team had much to discuss, but they were once again held by the cruel grip of fear. Slowly, the blame game took hold of them. At last they were talking, but it was destructive speech. Somehow, it still felt like progress. They pointed fingers at each other naming faults -- where he screwed up, how she dropped the ball, when he went astray, and that she didn't put in enough effort. Strangely, seeing fault in others gave them a superficial level of comfort, and relieved them from having to look too closely at themselves.

Suddenly the buzz hit all 12 phones at once -- Peace Be With You. All fell silent. Everyone turned to Tom to see his reaction. He slowly ran his finger over the screen tracing the words. Tom put his phone at his side and said, "Now I see. I have come to believe. We will get through this, but in a very different way. We have to begin by forgiving one another, rather than holding onto faults.

"This is the difference maker, and each person has to feel it. Peace can't be forced from the outside, it has to start within. And it is possible and available to everyone, not just some. These are the words to be written and sent around the globe.

Someone asked, "But, what about those who won't see? How might they believe?" Tom replied, "Writing them is just the first step. We, ourselves as individuals and as team, have to be signs of this Peace that others may come to believe."