

## Gifts from the Resurrected Jesus

The human condition is one that can be very depressing and even scary. We all know that eventually we get sick and die, as will everyone whom we love, unless the Lord returns during our lifetime. These thoughts normally depress and frighten human beings like ourselves, but Jesus shows us the difference His Resurrection makes in our fearful lives. Jaroslav Pelikan put it this way: "If the resurrection of Jesus actually happened, then nothing else really matters. If the resurrection of Jesus did not actually happen, then nothing else really matters." In our text we can see how Jesus has transformed our sorrows and fear into joy and mission.

### John 20:19-23

**19** On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **20** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." **22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

#### I. Jesus scatters our fear and gloom (vv. 19-20)

As the hymn writer says, "Lo! Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb; lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom; let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing, for her Lord now liveth, death hath lost its sting."

He, first of all, scatters our fear and gloom by returning to us physically, as He promised (see John 16:16, 22). Notice the emphasis in these verses on Jesus' physical body. He stood among them and He showed them His wounds. Jesus brought them great joy because He was alive and He was among them. He is *still* alive and *still* with us (see Matthew 28:20).

Secondly, He scatters our fear and gloom by speaking peace to our fearful hearts. Shalom, or "peace be with you," was a common Hebrew greeting (and still is), but Jesus means it in a deeper theological sense. We have peace with God, we have the peace of God, we have peace with one another, and one day we shall have peace with the entire cosmos, because Jesus has won that peace for us through His mighty resurrection.

#### II. Jesus sends us into the world (vv. 21-23)

He sends us into His world, first of all, by commissioning us into that mission. He says "As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." Just as the Father sent the Son, so surely the Son is sending us into His mission. There was a bumper sticker not too long ago that said "In search of the eternal buzz." Unfortunately, that is how many see their lives; but Jesus gives us an eternal purpose for our lives. Joanne Shelter, a missionary to the Philippines, said once, "It is not a tragedy to die for a great cause. The tragedy is not to have a cause big enough for which to die." Jesus gives us such a cause. Plato once said, "Man is a being in search of meaning." We have found our meaning in the mission of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, Jesus sends us into the world with the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus (v. 22) "breathed on them and said to them, 'receive the Holy Spirit.'" Here, just as in Genesis 2:7, where God breathes into our nostrils and gives us life, Jesus is breathing upon His disciples to give us new life. Pentecost is yet to come, when we experience the fullness of the Spirit poured out upon His Church, but here, Jesus "sprinkles" (as Calvin says) His disciples with His spirit to

keep us to the day of fullness 50 days away. As John says in his first epistle (4:13), “By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.” Jesus never sends us where He does not empower us to serve. Gary Burge in his commentary says, “John 20:22 becomes the climax to the entire Gospel.”

Thirdly, Jesus sends us into the world with His authority. He gives us a message that forgives sins and also withholds forgiveness, based on whether the message is believed or not. We have this awesome obligation and privilege of proclaiming the message of the Gospel of forgiveness of sins.

### Discussion Questions

1. From today's text, how does Christianity differ from other world religions?
2. Describe what Jesus' words means: “Peace be with you.”
3. What was the disciples' reaction to what Jesus did and said? What can we learn from their reaction?
4. What does it mean for us to be sent by Jesus just as He is sent by the Father?
5. Explain the meaning of verse 22. Why is this event crucial to the Christian mission?
6. How should we apply verse 23 to our lives today?

### Going Deeper

1. Have you fully received and implemented the commission of Jesus in verse 21?
2. Have you fully received His gift in verse 22?
3. Have you fully accepted the authority given you in verse 23?
4. How does your life need to change in order to say “yes” to questions 1-3 above?