

**The Holy Spirit
John 20:19-23**

April 22, 2018

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. 21 Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." 22 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 retain the sins of any, they are retained."

In the Gospel of John on Sunday morning there was a divine miracle - Jesus was not in tomb. There is no other alternative than resurrection because the tomb was sealed and it was guarded by Roman soldiers. This guarantees that the body was not stolen. Mary Magdalene sees that the tomb is empty. Peter also sees that the tomb is empty. Now, at this point in the Scripture, the only thing the disciples know about this is that the tomb is empty. Then the disciples go home but Mary stays at the tomb grieving. Then Jesus appears to her. The disciples miss out on this because they went home. So, Mary announces with great joy and excitement "I have seen the Lord!" Mary testifies to the resurrection - the Good News - the Lord is risen. Now on that Sunday the only thing the disciples know about this is that the tomb is empty and Mary's testimony.

Then in today's Scripture it is Sunday evening. The disciples are together and the post-resurrected Jesus appears to them. Jesus provides evidence of his crucifixion by showing them his hands and his side. At this time the disciples rejoice. Personally I think there is not a strong enough word to reveal their joy. It is the happiest time ever! Mary has seen the Lord and now they have seen the Lord. In anyone's life when you receive the news that a love one is alive and well it is the greatest moment ever.

Notice what happens next. Jesus announces he is going to send them out on a journey and he breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit." Maybe you remember the Holy Spirit is something that Jesus promised several times in his talks with the disciples. In the Gospel of John it is covered in chapters 14-16 (John 14:15-17, 25-26, 15:26, 16:7-15). He is going to send the Advocate, that is a helper, it is the Spirit of Truth, it is sent by God, and it will teach them everything. So now, the Holy Spirit is given to them on Sunday evening of the day that Jesus was resurrected.

This is the purpose of the meeting, to deliver the Holy Spirit to the disciples. So that they can go on their divinely appointed mission. It is not just a mission - this is a solemn commissioning - the disciples must be in perfect obedience to the Lord. This is a solemn commission given to the community of believers to continue the work of Jesus. Christ delivers the Holy Spirit for a specific purpose - to build the church. This is a big responsibility.

I want to make sure we understand the significance of this event. All of the Bibles and commentaries that I have researched label this section as "Jesus Appears to the Disciples." It is a very serious event that the disciples see Jesus is alive and well and they are eyewitnesses to the post-resurrected Jesus. This is a very significant event because the very person who was crucified is risen and he is alive and well. Our faith is built upon this premise that the Lord Jesus lives. This is the Good News. The mysterious nature of Jesus appearance I classify as a mysterious transposition. In John the Scripture shows Christ appearing without any physical hindrance even though the door was locked. The Scripture does not explain how this happens. It

just indicates that Jesus has power and ability beyond human capacity which, of course, indicates his divine status.

What I think is very significant, and often gets overlooked, is the reason for all of this. Jesus appears to them to send them on a mission. This is a game changer. This is the beginning of a whole new realm. This is the church of Jesus Christ. It is one body infused with the Holy Spirit continuing the mission of Jesus which is based on love. If I could sum everything that we are about into one sentence this would be it. We are one body infused with the Holy Spirit continuing the mission of Jesus which is based on love. The disciples now present the Good News to the world - the Lord is risen indeed. The disciples now represent the love of Christ to the world.

The contemporary Lesson is how all of this connects to us. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" indicates a direct link. God grants to Jesus who gives to the disciples who in turn deliver to us. The disciples are charged to go and do what Jesus did. They are to take care of others, to reveal the love of God to the world and to represent Jesus to the world. They are to make disciples, to teach obedience to the lessons of Jesus. That's who we are and that's what we are all about - discipleship - living the gospel of Jesus. It's not just coming to church but being sent out to share the love of Christ. We are to live a life that is devoted to Jesus, a life that is anchored in the Bible, and we are to make Jesus known into the world. We are to love one another as Jesus loves. In so doing, the faith community reveals God to the world and makes the love relationship possible. The faith community has a responsibility. The mission is not to judge right or wrong; the mission is to bear witness to the love of God in Jesus.

Jesus lives not because he can transpose through locked doors or show his wounds. Jesus lives because he is resurrected. Jesus lives because of his divine nature. And Jesus lives in us today. Jesus breathes new life into the disciples. Jesus gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit and commissions them to continue his work. This is extended to us today as disciples to continue the divine mission of Jesus.