

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

Sermon Reflection Notes

We are in the season of "Easteride" which will take us through April 28. We often say "every Sunday is Easter Sunday," but what do we mean by that? Jesus is risen...and where are we? The disciples were in hiding, grouped behind a closed and locked door, afraid of the Jews who were quite angry with them. The "good news" of Jesus's resurrection reached them, and they didn't throw open the door and go search for Jesus. They stayed put. We can imagine that the idea of facing Jesus again would have scared them too. After all, this group contained people who betrayed him, denied his name, turned away. Who among us rushes to see someone we have wronged?

Jesus, unbothered by details like locked doors and fear, appeared anyway. And instead of launching into a rant about the events of the last few days, Jesus offers peace. He offers purpose. He offers a path forward. Jesus moves the disciples away from the place where they are 'stuck' and into a future of newness, healing, and deceptively simple good news: forgiveness.

Their mission is our mission. *"Peace, a new shape of life; I send you, you cannot just sit around; You will get power, to go beyond yourself; to forgive, to break the cycles of death and give life a new chance"* (*The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann* 36).

Scripture

John 20:19-23 (NRSVUE)

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, 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."

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus is the only voice we hear in this scripture passage. He says 4 things that the people hiding in fear need to hear. What are those 4 things?
2. The first words the risen Christ speaks to the disciples hiding behind a locked door are "Peace be with you." What does it mean to receive peace?
3. What does it mean to be "sent"? What are we being sent to do? How is being sent tied to peace?

4. Jesus did more than just say to the disciples “Receive the Holy Spirit.” What else did he do and how is this an echo of the creation story in Genesis?
5. “The wind of God is promised to us by the risen one who will never accept our fearful lethargy. It is this one who says to us, expect to be visited, and summoned, and authorized, and surprised—beyond your usual self.” (*The Collected Sermons of Walter Brueggemann* 35). What kind of power is this that we are being given?
6. The last piece of Jesus’s instructions is about forgiveness. He says: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Forgiveness is hard. Forgiveness hurts. Forgiveness often seems unimaginable. Why? Why is it so hard to forgive and to accept forgiveness?
7. Difficult to give and accept or not, Jesus is quite clear about forgiveness. How does practicing forgiveness help us bring us to new life and build the Kingdom of God?

Closing Prayer

Holy God, you are the one who “unsticks” us from those places where we are locked in fear, paralyzed by anxiety, worn down by our sense of failure and loss. Help us to accept the good news of your unconditional love and forgiveness. Help us to offer that same love and forgiveness to someone else. We pray in the name of Jesus, who showed us the way. Amen.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”