

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK FORTY-EIGHT: JESUS APPEARS TO HIS FRIENDS

READING

19 That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! “Peace be with you,” he said. 20 As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! 21 Again he said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.” 22 Then he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” John 20:19-23 (NLT)

TEACHING

It’s hard to imagine how incredible this moment must have been for Jesus’ disciples. Just 48 hours earlier they went home devastated with broken hearts. Jesus was dead, executed by the Romans at the request of the Jewish religious leaders. Now that Jesus was dead maybe the leaders would come after them. That’s why they were meeting behind locked doors. Even though some of them had seen the empty tomb and heard Mary’s story about seeing Jesus, they were still uncertain and filled with fear. Then all of a sudden, Jesus is standing with them. Amazing! Notice what Jesus did for them:

- 1) Jesus spoke peace.** Twice he said, “Peace be with you.” Jesus knew they were filled with fear and confusion. Jesus still walks into our lives to bring his perfect peace.
- 2) Jesus showed them his wounds.** He did this to prove it was really him. When we remember the cross and the suffering of Jesus, we find proof of his goodness and grace.
- 3) Jesus gave them his Holy Spirit.** In this story, Jesus breathes on them and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” In a way, this was their moment of conversion. Jesus had promised to send the Spirit of God to dwell within his disciples and he kept his promise. Jesus still gives his Spirit to all who believe in him to fill us with life, hope, strength and power.
- 4) Jesus sent them out.** Once they recovered from their shock, I’m sure the disciples wondered – what now? What does this mean? And Jesus makes it clear: Just like I was sent into this world to declare and demonstrate the kingdom, so are you. This is a sending God. The Father sent the Son, the Son sends the Spirit and now Jesus sends us in the power of the Spirit to do the will of the Father.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- What helps you when you are afraid?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- Where were the disciples when Jesus appeared?
- What is one thing Jesus said to the disciples and what did that mean?

CHILDREN:

- Why were the disciples hiding when Jesus appeared?
- Why did Jesus say “Peace be with you” twice?
- What were the disciples being sent to do?

TEENAGERS:

- Why were the disciples hiding when Jesus appeared?
- Why did Jesus say “Peace be with you” twice?
- What do we learn in this story about the mission of God?

ADULTS:

- What is a situation in your life where you need more of God’s peace?
- How are you living your life at work or at home as one who has been sent?

PRAYER

God, you find me in my fears and sadness. Thank you that you walk into the tough moments of my life and you speak peace. Help me to know the peace that passes all understanding. Thank you for giving me your Holy Spirit. Help me to receive all that the Spirit has for me and help me to walk in his power. Send me out for your purpose and plans and give me the boldness and wisdom to know how to lead others to know you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

Verse 23 is a confusing verse. The ESV Study Bible note on this passage is helpful: *The expressions they are forgiven and it is withheld both represent perfect-tense verbs in Greek and could also be translated, “they have been forgiven” and “it has been withheld,” since the perfect gives the sense of completed past action with continuing results in the present. The idea is not that individual Christians or churches have authority on their own to forgive or not forgive people, but rather that as the church proclaims the gospel message of forgiveness of sins in the power of the Holy Spirit (see v. 22), it proclaims that those who believe in Jesus have their sins forgiven, and that those who do not believe in him do not have their sins forgiven—which simply reflects what God in heaven has already done (cf. note on Matt. 16:19).*