

John 20:19-31

### **The Risen Lord sends us to announce forgiveness**

So here it is the Sunday after Easter, and you've probably eaten all the candy. For Vanessa and I we didn't have any candy, but we had so many leftovers we didn't have to cook all week. The leftovers are gone now, so we have to start cooking again. But what is the bigger point, what effect does Easter have on us long term? How has it changed our lives.

You would expect someone rising from the dead to really make a difference. I mean if there was any one big thing that could make a huge difference on this earth. It would be someone rising from the dead. That and maybe an alien spaceship landing in Utah. But it doesn't feel like a huge change. In fact it may even feel like a big let down. Where is the joy? Where is the exuberance? How come we are not feeling the spirit

It doesn't feel like something major like an alien landing happened last week. Does it? No, for the simple reason that it didn't. Jesus rose 2,000 years ago. And at that time and for the centuries afterwards it did change the world. But we having been living with the consequence of that event our whole lives. If it feels like we are just back to our normal lives this week, that is because for most of us the risen Lord and the Holy Spirit have always been a part of our lives. It's harder to see the effect of Easter in our lives simply because it has always been there.

It is easier to see the effect Easter has on our lives when it is no longer there. I mean when someone turns from the faith. And then the risen Lord and holy spirit aren't a part of their lives. And it usually leaves them very angry. A lot of times they will blame the church, and yes sometimes the church doesn't act towards such people in the loving manner it should. But I think the bigger reason for their anger is that they have lost their relationship with God, and their hope in the resurrection.

Even though we might not always recognize the effect that the Resurrection and the Holy Spirit have on our lives, we can certainly see the effect that it had on the lives of Jesus disciples.

### **The disciples became those who are sent**

The first thing that Jesus does when he appears to his disciples is to "send them out." "As the father sent me so also I send you." The odd thing about what Jesus says here is that He switches verbs. What He says is "as the father sent [*apostelloo*] me I also send [*pempe*] you." Now people do this all the time when we are speaking, I might tell my wife, "buy some milk and make sure to get some cookies." I switched verbs and it didn't mean anything, its just for variety. But in this sentence it is a little odd

because the whole point of the sentence is the similarity between the two actions, “as my father . . . I also . . .” So you would think that the same verb would be used. Why doesn’t He.

The word apostleoo has that rather significant implication to it. Apostelloo means you aren’t just sending anyone on any particular task, but you are choosing someone special for a very important task. Pempoo. I think the Lord specifically switched the verb for this very reason, because we aren’t special.

Jesus was special, he was the apostelloo the one specially chosen by God for a task that no one else could do. Jesus was special we are not. We are normal sinful human beings, who have nevertheless been given this amazing and super important task, to announce the forgiveness of sins to everyone who repents.

Paul talks about the responsibility of preaching this message as a gift almost on par with the news itself.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself . . . and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ( 2 Corinthians 5:19 )

First he died on the cross to forgive our sins, then he entrusted to us this message to tell the whole world. And that second part Paul says is almost as amazing and wonderful as the first part, because there is nothing special about us, however much the 80s tried to teach us that we are all “special.” And yet Jesus entrusts this message to us.

We see what a change this made in the lives of the disciples. They were restless and aimless. They were hiding in fear. They were sitting around the lake with nothing to do so they go fishing. Then in the first chapters of Acts instead of sitting around behind locked doors, they are preaching Jesus in the temple. They stand up to the Sanhedrin. They rejoice to be counted worthy to be persecuted for the sake of Christ.

Thomas himself, what an example of faith and service to the Lord, we call him doubting Thomas because he at first doubted. But so did all the disciples, none of them believed until they actually saw the Lord. Thomas wasn’t particularly doubtful, he just happened to be the last one to see the Lord. But immediately upon seeing him, He gives that wonderful confession. “My Lord and My God.” And then he wanders to the ends of the earth, to India, and some think even to Japan. He made that confession not only with his mouth but with his whole life. The resurrection made a huge difference in his life.

Everytime we talk about “doubting Thomas” we criticize Thomas for his unbelief, but how many of us have confessed Christ with our whole life the way Thomas did?

### **The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit**

Jesus knew who His disciples were and still are. He knew they weren’t really anything special. That they were sinful human beings. Because he knew/knows this. He gave and gives another gift.

“He breathed on his disciples and said to them receive the Holy Spirit.” He gives us the Holy Spirit.

Two questions, Who receives the holy spirit? How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

Only those who have received the baptism of the holy spirit have the holy spirit. Or only those who feel the spirit have the holy spirit.

Don't ever confuse earthly emotions with spiritual truths. If only those who "feel the spirit" have the Spirit we are all doomed. Because I can pretty much guarantee you that when you are lying on a hospital bed riddled with cancer, or drowning in the arctic ocean because you thought it would be fun to retrace the steps of Sir Edmund Hillary, you aren't going to be feeling the spirit.

Who was in the room when Jesus breathed on his disciples? Luke says the Emmaus, the "eleven" ( not all the eleven for Thomas was gone) and those with them. So clearly it's more than the 11 Apostles. It's all the disciples, and it's all his disciples that Jesus is speaking too

How do we receive the Holy Spirit?

Look how quickly Satan perverts the truth of God's Word. So we have these people running around now a days with all these plans, how to really receive the Holy Spirit? And it's always the same lies of Satan that we see through out the Pagan world.

1. If we are good enough, if we get to a level that pleases God than we will receive the Spirit. John doesn't mention this, but Mark tells us that Jesus appeared to the disciples and "rebuked them . . ." just before giving them the Holy Spirit. The holy spirit is a gracious gift from the Lord not a desert that we earn because we ate our peas. Throughout the old testament Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, etc, the Lord chose people out of his mercy not because they deserve it. The closest you can come to is Noah, but even there, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."
2. Well if we have enough faith. What did Jesus rebuke the disciples for? He rebuked them for their unbelief. We call Thomas the doubter, but not one of the disciples believed. They were all hiding in fear. What did the Emmaus disciples say? We THOUGHT (past tense) that he was the one to redeem Israel. The giving of the Spirit is a gracious gift from God, its not a power up that we get when we reach a certain level in the "video game" of our faith.

In a way such people are right it does take a certain level of faith, level one. Those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, who saved them from their sins have the Holy Spirit. To whom does the Lord give the Holy Spirit? To his disciples. When? When they believe the word of God which is spoken to them. What prerequisites are required? None. It is a gracious gift from God.

**They were sent and given the spirit so that they could speak the forgiveness of sins**

Both of these things, the fact that they were sent, and the fact that they were given the Holy Spirit, were for what purpose, **“If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld.”**

So this really ugly man named C F Walther wrote this book called Law and Gospel. And so Lutheran pastors are taught you have to preach law and gospel. Every confirmation class, every bible class, every devotion, every time I visit your homes, when you are born, when you are a child, when you are married, when you having marriage problems, when you are sick, when someone you love dies, when you are sick and dying. I'm going to pretty much tell you the same thing, you are a sinner but Jesus loves you and died for you sin.

Oh my goodness that is so boring. We have to spice it up, we have to preach something the is relevant, we have to preach something that matters to this generation, that matters to this market group. Yeah its boring, the job of a pastor is in some respects boring, and yeah church is sometimes boring. And yeah the amazing joyful unbelievable message of Easter has lost some of its luster because we hear it Sunday after Sunday year after year our whole life.

And then we have these evangelical preachers, who think oh we have to make church exciting and relevant. But guess what? Jesus didn't die so that you could have your dream job and the prettiest wife on the block. Jesus didn't give the Apostles the Holy Spirit so that they could tell funny jokes and make people laugh in church. And he didn't tell us go throughout all the world and find interesting and relevant things to talk about.

He said “forgive the sins to those who are penitent and retain the sins of those who are impenitent.” Guess what that sounds suspiciously like “preaching law and gospel.” Guess what Walter didn't make it up on his own. He was reminding us what Jesus said to the disciples on Easter Evening. And preaching law and gospel isn't a Lutheran thing, it's a Christian thing.

What effect does Easter have on our lives? We have been sent, we have been given the Holy Spirit, all so that we can proclaim the forgiveness of sins. In Jesus Name, Amen.

**The Peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.**