

Why Jesus Gives The Holy Spirit
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Call to Worship Text

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 You will live in the land I gave your forefathers; you will be my people, and I will be your God. (Eze 36:26–28)

Title: Why Jesus Gives the Holy Spirit

Text: John 20:19-23 NLT

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

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.”

Why does he pronounce peace, and then show them his wounds?

- It’s really me, and it is the real me... The “me” who experienced all those terrible things. Not a “spiritual me” that remained separated and untouched by betrayal and brutality. There is no separation between spiritual and material.
- What Jesus so profoundly demonstrates to us in his passage from death to life is that the walls between the realms are paper thin. Along the entire ray of creation, the “mansions” are interpenetrating and mutually permeable by love. The death of our physical form is not the death of our individual personhood. Our personhood remains alive and well, “hidden with Christ in God” (to use Paul’s beautiful phrase in Colossians 3:3) and here

and now we can draw strength from it (and [Christ]) to live our temporal lives with all the fullness of eternity.

- Jesus seems to also be saying, in essence, “What I experienced and you most fear, doesn’t need to be feared anymore.”

Why does Jesus breath on the disciples, and give them the Holy Spirit?

Deputizing them in his ministry. Commentator Dale Bruner calls this “the great commission meeting” (John Commentary 1158). Should we be surprised how rarely this text get cited when we talk about the great commission? In Matthew, the emphasis is on “Go and make disciples” (or more accurately, “Go with me...”) But here it is about receiving. Receive my peace. Receive my Holy Spirit.

Ministry of freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. – 2 Cor 3:17

Images: Having the key to jail cell but keeping it in one’s pocket.

Having a whole bakery full of bread... what will you do? Eat it all? Give it away for heaven’s sake!

Why do you think it is that Christians have a reputation for being in the judgment business, and not the forgiveness business?

- The Message paraphrase offers a interesting reframing of our forgiveness commission:

Message Paraphrase:

19–20 Later on that day, the disciples had gathered together, but, fearful of the Jews, had locked all the doors in the house. Jesus entered, stood among them, and said, “Peace to you.” Then he showed them his hands and side.

20–21 The disciples, seeing the Master with their own eyes, were exuberant. Jesus repeated his greeting: “Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I send you.”

22–23 Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he said. “If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good. If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?”

- It is good to remember what Henry Blackaby reminds us of in his wonderful teaching series, *Experiencing God*: Only the Holy Spirit can convict people of sin.

- This last verse seems to have been taken by the church as a statement of retributive power instead of restorative privilege. That is, we hear Jesus saying, “You have the power to withhold forgiveness from those who don’t show enough remorse or contrition.”
- What Jesus is actually saying is, “You have the privilege of giving away forgiveness lavishly to absolutely everyone indiscriminately!”

Conclusion

At the beginning of the week, I was excited about sharing this text with you. But as the events of the week unfolded and the messy, awful business of working out justice and forgiveness stares us in the face, I come to this with a lot more trepidation. I surely do not wish to suggest that Jesus is commissioning us into a ministry of cheap grace and empty forgiveness. Remember that that this text began with wounds. Sin takes a toll – an unspeakable toll – on those who sin and on those who are sinned against. What I believe Jesus would want to say to us now is:

Look at me, and see the price that has been full paid.

Receive from me, the fullness of power needed to live free and freeing

Go with me, sent out by the Father, to live out this commission of suffering love.

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