

Easter 2021 - Who Do You Say That I Am? "A Different Kind of Easter"

April 4, 2021

Overarching theme: John 20:21, Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' In 2021, as DISCIPLES, we are SENT with the peace of Christ to share with others!

Instructions: When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Passages:

Mark 16:1-8 NIV When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. ² Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb ³ and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"⁴ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. ⁵ As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.⁶ "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"⁸ Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

John 20:19-22 NRSV 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."

Commentary:

In Mark 16, the women's response to this initial Easter encounter with the Angel brings readers face to face with the mystery of faith. There are no heroes among Jesus' followers. The hostility that puts Jesus on the cross had reduced them all to flight and fearful silence. Nevertheless, God brings faith out of just such weakness and failure. Jesus did not need to come once again and choose a new team in some grand lottery for better disciples. Despite all the appearances, Jesus did accomplish the will of God through suffering on the cross. However imperfect our faith and however many times we remain silent when we should testify to the gospel, we can always return to the Lord. None of us can get so far away from Jesus that we cannot be touched by God's healing presence.

In John 20, the risen Christ's repeated words "*Peace be with you*" (v. 21a) is not simply a redundant greeting. The disciples really can receive Jesus' message and his life-changing gift of peace after they recognize that the person who speaks to them is "the Lord" (v. 20). Jesus thus commissions the faith community to continue the work God sent him to do. Jesus' breathing on the disciples (v. 22) is explicitly linked with his words in v. 21 ("When he had said this..."), so that the gift of the Spirit is presented as that which empowers the community to continue Jesus' work.

– adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible, Vol VIII p. 733 (Mark); Vol IX p. 846 (John).

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

1. In all four gospels, it is women followers of Jesus who venture out on Sunday morning to prepare Jesus' body for a proper Jewish burial, while the 11 disciples are laying low. Why do you think this is?
2. Mark tells us that the women fled the tomb 'bewildered' and 'afraid' (V. 8)? What do you think precipitated this reaction? What are some things that cause similar reactions in people today, particularly during a pandemic?
3. How is the resurrection appearance of John 20 a game-changer? Why do you think Jesus said "*Peace be with you*" twice?
4. Jesus then says "*as the Father has sent me, so I send you...*"? Did he mean just the 11 disciples? What are the implications for us today? What is the significance of breathing on them and saying, "*Receive the Holy Spirit?*"

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional and spend time pondering and meditating on the challenge.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Mark 16:6-7
"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. ⁷ But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"
3. Brainstorm ways that your life can be different, practically speaking, as a result of Easter.