

EASTER POSSIBILITIES: Gifts For Your Easter Basket

April 17, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord’s Favor* (Luke 4:19)

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 Point:

As the world begins awakening from 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming “the year of the Lord’s favor” is a message whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the ‘year of jubilee’ of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can envision new *possibilities* with God this Lenten season and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: John 20:19-22 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.*

This Week: John 20:19-22

Jesus’ repeated greeting, *Peace be with you* (v. 21a), is not simply reduplicative. But the disciples can receive Jesus’ words as his gift of peace and not simply as a greeting only after they recognize that the person who speaks to them is “the Lord” (v. 20). Jesus’ words in v. 21b are a direct echo of his prayer at 17:18. The syntax of both verses clearly positions the Father’s sending of Jesus (e.g., 3:17; 4:34; 5:36, 10:36; 14:24; 17:3, 8) as an analogue for Jesus’ sending of the community. Jesus thus purposefully 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. The Spirit was promised for the time after Jesus’ glorification (7:37-39), and at v. 22 that moment has arrived. The

verb “to breathe” occurs only here in the NT, and its usage clearly evokes the description of God’s breathing the breath of life into the first human in Gen 2:7. Jesus’ breathing the Holy Spirit on his disciples thus is described as a new, second creation. The image of new life provides an important link with Jesus’ announcement in 20:17. Those who believe in Jesus receive new life as children of God (cf. 3:3-10), and the Holy Spirit is the breath that powerfully sustains that new life. This Easter evening appearance thus offers his followers profound gifts for their journey ahead – peace, purpose and power.

– adapted from the *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary, Vol IX p. 846*

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. On Easter evening, prior to seeing the Risen Christ, Jesus’ disciples were still locked up in fear. How was their encounter with the risen Christ a gift to them? How is the promise of Christ to be with us always (Matt 28:20) helpful for you?
2. Why do you think Jesus showed his disciples his hands and side?
3. The first thing the risen Christ says to his disciples in the gospel of John is “*peace be with you!*” The word Jesus likely used for ‘peace’ conveys a sense of safety, security, wholeness. Why do you think he says this to them twice?
4. The Risen Christ then sends his disciples into the world in the same way he was sent by his Father, offering them a sense of profound purpose. How is having a compelling purpose in life a gift? How might God be sending you right now?
5. Jesus then breathes on his disciples and offers them the gift of the Holy Spirit, empowering them for their mission. How might you tap into the Spirit’s power this week for your mission?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: John 20:21-22 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.”*