

A Credible Faith

In the Holy Spirit

October 30, 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 awakens 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 year and always.

Reflect on this Scripture: John 20:19-22 NRSV¹⁹ *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.” And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”*

Commentary:

Jesus’ repeated greeting is not simply reduplicative. 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”. These verses clearly position the Father’s sending of Jesus as an analogue for Jesus’ sending of the community. Jesus thus commissions the faith community to continue the work God sent him to do.

Jesus’ breathing on the disciples 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 (death and resurrection), 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. It also recalls the description of the breath of life upon the 'dry bones' of Ezekiel 37:9. Jesus' breathing the Holy Spirit on his disciples thus is described as a new, second creation. Those who believe in Jesus receive new life as children of God, and the Holy Spirit is the breath that sustains that new life.

- Adapted from the New Interpreter's Bible Commentary, Vol IX, p. 846

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. In your formative years what images came to mind when you heard the words "Holy Spirit" or "Holy Ghost"? Do you remember being taught about the Holy Spirit? If so, what stands out about that teaching?
2. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word for Holy Spirit is 'ruah' or 'ruach' – breath or wind. What is significant about breath or wind in everyday life? Why do you think the Holy Spirit is represented as the breath or wind of God?
3. In John 20:22, Jesus breathes on his followers and tells them to "*receive the Holy Spirit.*" On a scale of 1-10, how receptive would you say you are to the Holy Spirit on an average day? What could help you become more receptive?
4. The Holy Spirit empowers followers of Jesus (Acts 1:8) to be sent as witnesses through their words and through their lives (the fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5:22-23b - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control). Which fruit of the Spirit do you need to grow in most over the next few months?

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." And when he said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*
3. Reflect on the words of the Apostle's Creed this week:

The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**** Universal**