

Jesus is Alive! Now What?

John 20:19-23

The disciples were confused enough with Jesus' death

But now Mary and the women say he's alive? How can that be?
With that, they decided it was best to stay out of sight—and lock the doors
Who knew what the Jews would do to them

It was while they were together in a locked room that Jesus came...

He appeared in their midst quite suddenly
He said, "*Peace be with you.*" And showed them his hands and side
The disciples were exuberant—Jesus was alive—they saw him living, breathing alive!

Jesus repeated his greeting, "*Peace be with you.*"

It's with his next words that
we begin to realize this is more than a greeting—"Hey, I'm alive" conversation
Particularly the last one about forgiving sins is unexpected
These are Jesus' post-resurrection instructions to the disciples
He comes to them after his death and resurrection and tells them
what he wants them to be about
In light of that, I think even "*peace be with you*" is more than a greeting
Let's look at the 4 post-resurrection instructions Jesus gives the disciples
...really the instructions that Jesus gives to all his followers
...our instructions

1. "*Peace be with you.*"—immediately they are calming words
You are afraid and confused—I give you peace
But I suggest that it's a bit more than that—particularly the 2nd time
The Hebrew word for peace is shalom
Shalom symbolizes Israel's ideal of living in the presence of God
and in accordance with who God is
and what God has told them to do
Walter Brueggemann and Christine Sine talk about shalom
as more than "peace"
They suggest wholeness or completeness as better words
Shalom is more than the absence of conflict or existence of inner peace
Shalom involves all of one's being—mind, body, soul, and spirit
the wholeness and well-being of the community
the wholeness of creation
"*Shalom embraces God's desire to restore every part of creation and all aspects
of life to the wholeness and harmony of relationship with him that was
broken through the disruption of the fall.*"¹
In Jesus' death and resurrection—it has been accomplished
What was broken—has been fixed through Jesus
Shalom—I am alive and you are alive
It is accomplished

¹ Christine Sine, Sacred Rhythms: Finding a Peaceful Pace in a Hectic World, page 14

Jesus is Alive! Now What?
John 20:19-23

2. *"As the Father has sent me, so I send you."*

In the same way that God sent Jesus to this earth,
Jesus sent the disciples to their world,
and Jesus sends us to our world.

We are sent with the "same everything" that Jesus was sent with
...the same God is sending us
...the same power and authority!!
...the same mission—to show people the Father and to do the Father's will

Jesus had used these same words in his prayer for the disciples recorded in John 17
"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world." John 17:18

Here Jesus reaffirms their purpose in the world—their calling
It didn't end with Jesus' death
Jesus is alive—comes to them—and says "Go in the name and power of God"

3. *Jesus breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."*

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes in fullness
But Jesus doesn't wait, but gave them the gift of the Holy Spirit now
...the gift of God's Spirit who would remain with them and with us on this earth
This gift was not simply a "friend" to stay with us so we won't be alone
But the gift of God's self
the gift of God dwelling within us
the gift of God's transforming power

4. *"If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them;
if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."*

This is the task Jesus gives us to do
I think we can look at this 2 ways—we are to simply announce Jesus' forgiveness
...or somehow we hold the power of forgiveness

First remember that we are sent in the same way that the Father sent Jesus
...the same power and authority
*John 14:11-14 "...The person who trusts me will not only do what I'm doing
but even greater things..."*

When Jesus healed the paralytic that came down through the roof
He first forgave his sins—then got in trouble with the religious scholars
Jesus said, "Which is simpler:
to say to the paraplegic, 'I forgive your sins'
or say, 'Get up take your stretcher, and start walking'?"
If we believe that God heals
AND that God has given us the power to heal in his name
How much more that we have the power to forgive sins in his name

Jesus is Alive! Now What?

John 20:19-23

The commission to forgive sins is phrased in an unusual construction.

Literally, it is: *“Those whose sins you forgive have already been forgiven; those whose sins you do not forgive have not been forgiven.”*²

In his death and resurrection, Jesus “broke the power of sin” once and for all

The work is done—Jesus did it all—It is finished

But Jesus has given us the power of sending forgiveness forth in the world

It is our job to forgive

We've taught that people are to pray and ask God to forgive them

But it is our job to forgive—even preemptively

Clearly Jesus is not talking about forgiving for wrongs against me

We are to enact forgiveness for all people for all sins—You are forgiven!!

If we refuse to forgive—people will be stuck with the weight of sin

Thankfully it is not all up to me as God works through many

But it is our job to forgive

We have the power and authority to forgive sins—as people sent by God

living shalom

full of the Holy Spirit

Jesus post-resurrection instructions to us:

“Shalom be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

-The words of Jesus from John 20:21-23 NRSV

”

² Tenney, M. C. (1981). John. In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: John and Acts* (Vol. 9, p. 193). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.