

We're looking at what happened after the resurrection—from the Resurrection to Pentecost...

Jesus appears to the disciples several times and in those visits gives them instructions

Generally people talk about Matthew 28:19—*"Go and make disciples of all nations..."*

But it isn't the only instruction Jesus leaves with the disciples and therefore the church

To Mary and the women—Tell the others that I'm alive

Look at me—touch me

Receive the Holy Spirit

Forgive sins

Throw the net on the other side of the boat

Come and have breakfast

Feed my lambs—feed my sheep

Go and make disciples

Wait for the Holy Spirit

Be my witnesses

We're going to look specifically at some of them over the next few weeks...

Forgive sins—Feed my sheep—Be my witnesses

John 20:19-23

This is Jesus first appearance to the disciples as a group—gathered in a locked room out of fear

Jesus appears and talks with them—his words are few, yet incredibly significant

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

Shalom is more than "peace"—wholeness or completeness are 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

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

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"
You have the full Presence and Power of God with you!
In fact, Jesus said we would do greater works than he did—John 14:12
*Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do
and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.*

3. Then he took a deep breath and breathed into 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

Remember that Jesus said we would do even greater works than him
When Jesus healed the paralytic that came down through the roof (Mark 2:1-12)
He first forgave his sins—then got in trouble with the religious scholars
Jesus said, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic,
'Your sins are forgiven,'
or to say, 'Stand up and take your mat and walk?'"

Then Jesus heals him to affirm his authority to forgive sins
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

When Jesus told Peter that he was the rock on which he would build his church
Matthew 16:18-19 "... whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven,
and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."
God has given us the task of setting people free! Of loosing the captive! Forgiving sin!

In his death and resurrection, Jesus "broke the power of sin" once and for all
The full work of forgiveness was accomplished in Jesus' death and resurrection
It is complete and there is nothing more to be done
In that new resurrection life and power—Jesus sent the disciples out to forgive
...and Jesus sends us out to forgive
It was their first instruction of how they are to go forth in this world—forgive!
The world may not say so, but they are desperate to know they are forgiven
As followers of Jesus, we must set people free from their bondage—forgive them!

Jesus doesn't tell them to forgive their enemies or to forgive those who've hurt them or...

This isn't about personal forgiveness work that we do—that's another message
(Look online for a message given last summer on August 9, 2015)

This is a global, preemptive forgiveness for everyone
We're not to ask anything of folks—nor demand anything in return—we just forgive sins
The work of forgiveness is done—
—absolutely and completely through Jesus' death and resurrection
If it's done, why do we ask something of people first?

Unfortunately, we've made forgiveness of sins a transactional proposition...
If you repent and are sorry for your sins, then God will forgive you
But there is no mention of that here!
Also, remember the parable about the prodigal son...
He is starving and decides he has to go home to his father
He isn't repentant—he simply has no other choice and knows it
But he plans a speech to convince his father to take him back
But his father interrupts the speech and welcomes him home as a son!
No repentance—no obligations to fulfill—no punishment—nothing!
It is a beautiful picture of preemptive forgiveness
This is the kind of preemptive forgiveness God is asking us to give
Some may have work to do to realize the full power of forgiveness in their lives
But it is done and not dependent on anything—not even one's repentance

We've also taught that we can't forgive sins, unless it was directed at us personally
Only God can forgive sins
But I believe that Jesus has given us the work of forgiving sins
We are to go forth and forgive sins
We sidestep it when we tell them to go to God
Many don't know God—don't have a relationship with God—why go to God?
God has given us that work to do
I don't even think we need to make a big deal about God
The beginning step is to simply forgive!
We can then trust God with the next steps...
In forgiving, we cut the chains—the ropes that tie them to their sin
Then they are free to look up and begin to move—finding way forward

This can be done a thousand ways—and it is usually not by preaching or with a bull horn
When in conversation and someone is struggling—forgive them preemptively
When you feel a nudge to say it—forgive them
Say it in the Spirit—without words—as you drive down the highway
Or walk through crowds—forgive them

Start by owning that this is our work
Open yourself up to being willing to follow Jesus and continue this work
Ask Jesus to show you when and where to forgive people