

Sent

by Miriam Ryan

Does your heart feel a bit heavier these days? The new coverage of the war in Ukraine is enough to break your heart every time you turn on the TV or check your phone. It's hard to fathom this is truly happening, perhaps it stirs up a sense of overwhelming fear and uncertainty within you. Our hearts long for peace. Our world needs peace. Although they were facing vastly different circumstances, after Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples were also facing a devastating disappointment that caused them to hide behind a locked door out of fear. Their leader, the one they had placed their hopes in had been killed.

Read John 20:19-22

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

²¹ Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." ²² And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Amid their fear and devastation, Jesus appears to them and offers them a blessing of peace, "Peace be with you." When they see the resurrected Christ, they are overjoyed. He then blesses them with peace a second time and "sends" them out with a sense of purpose. Finally, he breathes on them the gift of the Holy Spirit, God's abiding presence within them. They are not sent out on their own strength; he fills them with his power before sending them out.

When we think of those first disciples being sent out into the world to spread the message of the gospel, we often think of the Great Commission, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit." We remember the courage of these disciples and later the Apostle Paul as they traveled the world spreading the message of Jesus boldly.

I find it encouraging to be reminded that these same, bold witnesses for Jesus, started out huddled up together in fear, longing for peace, and needing the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit before they got started. What if being "sent" starts with receiving this blessing of peace in our own lives? Remembering that the Holy Spirit will guide us, fill us, and empower us to spread the love of Jesus to those around us. When we are sent, we are first blessed and filled up. We are empowered by the Holy Spirit who will lead and guide us to share God's love with others.

Today, as you go about your day, receive this blessing from Jesus: "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." Who will you bless today with the peace and love of Christ?

Questions for Discussion

1. What stood out to you, encouraged you, or challenged you from this past Sunday's sermon?
2. What sort of emotions has the news in our world stirred up within you lately? What makes you feel a lack of peace in your life?
3. How have you understood the role of the Holy Spirit in your life? What do you learn about the Holy Spirit in this passage?
4. What do you think it means to be "sent"? How does the notion of being sent in this passage encourage or challenge you?
5. As you think about your own life, where are you feeling "called" or "sent" (for example, is there a certain person or group of people the Lord has placed on your heart, or perhaps it's your neighborhood, your place of work, or a particular cause).
6. How does the idea of being "sent" fill you with a greater sense of purpose?