

## **Easter Day 3**

Tuesday April 3, 2018

### **Reading:** John 20:19-31

<sup>21</sup> Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

### **Reflection**

When I was a kid, I came to faith in a staunch, little, Baptist church. I found from coming to faith there a heavy emphasis on correct belief. It was important to believe; again, the mental furniture needed to be in the right arrangement in order to be saved. When I went to Bible College in my 20s it was more of the same. Working at Tyndale years later I could always spot the first years — they were the ones arguing the loudest about everything. Right belief is important, but it’s not the end. It’s a means to an end — which is mission.

Parallel to this emphasis on belief, was the gifts of the Spirit. This emphasis came in my 20s as well when I came to an adult faith and joined a Pentecostal church. My childhood Baptist church had spoken about the Holy Ghost, but my Pentecostal church spoke about the gifts of the Spirit. In particular, there was an emphasis on receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit as manifested by the speaking in tongues — to be distinguished from the gift of tongues which was given only to some. My pastor emphasized that this was a special infilling of the Spirit available to all believers for the purpose of equipping for ministry. What I saw was a regular praying for this manifestation for the purpose of being able to say that, “I have had this happen.” It seemed like more of an insider experience. Again, being filled with the Spirit is good, but it’s a means to an end — mission.

John ends chapter 20 by saying he’s written this gospel so that we may believe which might give the impression that belief is the last word. However, we have to remember that what John is doing is putting an eyewitness testimony down on paper in order for it to be used in mission, so others might come to believe based on his testimony. But, what Jesus does is engage the church in mission. He tells his disciples to get out of their closed and locked room, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” What Jesus did for Israel, the church does for the world. But, we don’t do this alone, we have been given the Spirit for mission. Again, it means that we have to move beyond asking for an infilling so we can be insiders. The gift of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are for us to engage in the mission of God.

Right belief and spiritual gifts are indeed good, but can be misused and become idolatrous if it doesn’t aim where God does; in mission to, in, and for the world. This is what happens in a book like Corinthians; they thought they were wise and some were better than others because they had the showier gifts. That’s what happens when the church turns inward. But, if we turn outward forgiving sins, healing the sick, exorcising the demon possessed, raising the dead, feeding and clothing the poor, and caring for the weak then we will turn the world upside down which will lead to salvation, right belief and the filling of the Spirit, but more importantly more mission.

### **Prayer**

Breather of life, thank you for your Spirit. Breath on us in fresh new ways and continue to send us out on mission. Give us the power to do ministry in your name. Amen.