

Fear to Freedom

When we come to John 20, we find the apostles hiding away in a room with the doors locked. John said, “for fear of the Jews.” They had just watched Jesus hang upon a cross and die. There must have been a thought in their minds: Are we next?

This week I think I’ve learned this lesson from God through John chapter 20:

JESUS TURNS FEAR INTO FREEDOM.

How? How did Jesus turn their fear into freedom? And how would Jesus do that today?

Well, I believe the way Jesus did it then is the same way He would do it now. If we observe the text, we’ll learn that Jesus took 5 actions.

Action #1 - Jesus showed up. **20:19-20**

While the disciples were fearful, confused, and thought everything around them was chaos, Jesus showed up in the middle of it all. In the middle of their heartache, Jesus showed up.

When? Sunday - the first day of the week - the day Jesus met with His own as they were gathered together.

Where? In a closed and locked room in the city of Jerusalem.

Who? 10 of the 12 disciples were present. 2 others who Jesus talked to earlier that day were there, and likely the women who had seen Jesus.

How? He physically entered a room without having the door opened to Him, just like He physically left His grave clothes behind as a hollow shell.

If I could capture what John is telling us, he is saying, “this was the moment our eyes opened. In the midst of us, He showed up. Even though we had our doubts, He still showed up, and Joy filled our hearts.”

Jesus turned their doubts around when He personally and physically showed up that day, but I believe He is still in the business of turning doubting and disbelieving minds around by showing up in people’s lives today.

Action #2 - Jesus spoke to them of peace. **20:21a**

The first two statements John remembers Jesus saying both were the same message: Peace.

Do you realize that the message of the cross of Jesus is a message of peace? When Jesus went to that cross and died for our sins, God was offering peace to a broken world.

In the midst of a fallen and chaotic world full of fear, would you like to have peace with God?

Romans 5:1 - *therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Action #3 - Jesus gave them a purpose for their future. **20:21b**

Jesus told Pilate in chapter 18 that He came into this world to bear witness to the truth - to be the embodiment of truth - and to proclaim truth.

He taught the truth. He lived the truth. God the Father sent the Son into this world to live in truth, and to proclaim the truth.

Just like Jesus was sent into the world from heaven, Jesus sends His disciples into the world as heaven's representatives.

What did Jesus give them? He gave them the only purpose one can have in this world that actually leads to freedom. He sent them out into the world and testify to the truth - to live in and proclaim the truth. From that moment on the entire purpose in life for the disciples became sharing the good news of Christ with others and living in the truth. They were the most free people of all time.

Action #4 - Jesus promised the Holy Spirit for their strength. **20:22**

Jesus gave them freedom to stand strong. Jesus had promised there would be another Helper come to them, and Jesus reassured them of that promise when He showed up in resurrection.

Why did He breathe on them? I think Jesus breathed on them as a picture of Genesis 2:7 when God breathed life into Adam, and the man became a living creature.

Was the Holy Spirit given to indwell the believers in that moment? I would say no. I think Jesus was giving them a sure promise of what's to come. I do believe that Acts 2 was officially the day that Holy Spirit came to permanently indwell the disciples.

What exactly is going on here? I would say that Jesus telling them that they will have the strength to stand strong because they will have the God's Spirit enabling them to handle what's to come.

Jesus assured them, as if to say, "I'll give you everything you need to do all I've called you to do."

Action #5 - Jesus gave them confidence regarding forgiveness of sins. **20:23**

Jesus' death and resurrection is the message of forgiveness of sins. In the days ahead, the disciples will be strengthened by the Holy Spirit to share the good news of God's offer of forgiveness.

With Jesus risen from the dead, they now had the surety of the good news message of forgiveness of sins. Those who listen to that message and receive it, have forgiveness of sins by God. Those who do not listen to that message and receive it, do not have forgiveness of sins by God.

How can a person be forgiven by God of His sins? Peter (one of the twelve) gives us the answer in Acts 10:43 - *To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.*

To be forgiven by God of all sins is freedom. That is what the disciples went on to preach, and it's what we have the privilege of continuing to preach today - confidence of forgiveness of all sins through faith in Jesus.

I really do believe Jesus turns fear into freedom.

Death? Jesus went before me and rose again.

Living in a broken world? Jesus brings peace between me and God.

Trapped in fear of not living the life of satisfaction? Jesus freed me to live with an eternal purpose.

What if ___? The Holy Spirit will strengthen me to do everything God calls me to do.

Facing God when I die? Through faith in Jesus, all my sins are forgiven.

