

A Room with a View
People of the Resurrection
Sunday, March 30, 2008

Sometimes our view about God is simply off kilter. We might have a sense of who he is, but not the whole story. Our view of God can be based on information or knowledge alone, leaving us feeling distanced from him. We forget that he is interested in a relationship with us—that he wants to reveal himself to us—that he comes right into the centre of our world, our lives, our hearts, when we cry out to him. On the Sunday after the Friday when Jesus went to the cross, the disciples were gathered together in a locked room, for fear of their lives. And Jesus came and stood amongst them, and called them, in that little room, to a new view of both him, and his Kingdom.

Questions

Reread the passage of scripture John 20:19-23

1. What were your perspectives of God growing up? Did you have a personal sense of connection with God—a sense of his presence and voice—or was God a ‘distant power source’ to tap into when you needed him? How did your prayer life (if any) relate to your view of God?
2. The disciples in our passage were locked away in a room on Easter Sunday, for fear of their lives. They had been through the Last Supper on Thursday night, followed with the death of Jesus on Friday, followed by the long, empty day of Saturday. Was there a time in your life where you felt ‘locked away’ in a struggle of some kind? If you think of that time, did you have perspectives then about your circumstances that felt difficult, but simply weren’t based on the whole story? Did things turn out differently than you might have expected? Where were things about the situation that you just couldn’t see or understand at the time? Talk about some of these perspectives.
3. Have you ever had doubts about God? How have you resolved them, or have you? do you see God as one who accepts people with their doubts, uncertainties and fears, or one who expects us to have everything worked out before we actually come to him? Are your thoughts in this regard in alignment with what Jesus taught and modeled, or off kilter?
4. In our text, Jesus says “Peace be with you”, and then says it again, adding “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” Why do you think he said this twice? Can you identify something the disciples may not have understood when he said it the first time? Based on the text, what do you think Jesus wanted them to know about peace and its purpose in their lives? What do you think of when you think of ‘peace being with you’? (comfort, security, safety...? Or courage, boldness, stepping out...?)
5. Throughout history, ‘the church’, in various ways, has been a community of people who are ‘locked away’ in an ‘upper room’. What have been your experiences of church? What emphasis has there been on sending out vs. being locked away? How does this align with what Jesus is saying in the text?
6. Look at Genesis 2:7 – The word ‘breathed’ here is the same word used in John 20, when Jesus ‘breathed’ on the disciples and they were given his Holy Spirit. In this New Testament verse, John is telling his readers and listeners that something new was happening in that little upper room. Given that the first time God breathed on creation, humanity was formed from the dust of the earth, what do you think is happening now as Jesus breathes on his followers? Talk about what this new breathing means for those who believe in Jesus. How does this relate to his Kingdom on earth?

7. The last verse of our passage, John 20:23, quotes Jesus' words about forgiveness. In the Old Testament, forgiveness was managed through the priestly role of animal sacrifices. How is the perspective changed by what Jesus says here? Is forgiveness opened up in a new way through this text? What is the witness about Jesus if we harbour unforgiveness in our hearts?

8. We are the people of the resurrection—the resurrection of Jesus. What are the implications to us as we participate in his mission on earth? Do we act like we are followers of a King who has conquered death and broken into the very heart of our world, our society, our culture? What does this mean to you as a follower of Christ?