

**Sermon Discussion Questions & Follow-up Notes**  
**May 19, 2024**  
**Rev. Dr. Andrew Keuer**

Sermon Text for Easter 8: John 20:21-23

Title: “Broken Relationships” / Series: “Things He Heals”

Schumann Hall Art Exhibit: “Stations of the Resurrection”

Core Observations of the Text

- 1. The Problem:** The disciples were hyper-sensitized to the hostile world around them. At the cross, all their hopes had been canceled, ostracized, threatened, intimidated, etc. And their reaction was to retreat, escape, withdraw. The momentum of their relational world was towards isolation. Making it worse, their little band of twelve was beginning to rip apart: Judas had defected, Peter had thrice denied his association with them all, and where was Thomas?
- 2. The Hope:** The aspect of the resurrection that gives hope this week is not only that Jesus overcame death, but that he overcomes blockaded doors that we set up to protect ourselves from the world’s (and church’s!) brokenness. Jesus steps into the brokenness and empowers disciples to do the same (v21).
- 3. The Power:** In their human wisdom and power, the disciples could not move into brokenness. But Jesus breathed His Spirit upon them, which gave inner resource to reverse the momentum to isolation. God’s Spirit propels them outward, so they can be a healing force in broken places.
- 4. The How:** How can we receive the Holy Spirit? First, immerse yourself in the Gospel stories. The Spirit empowers us to be like Jesus in the world (v21), and the Spirit’s role is to remind us of Jesus’ life and teachings (see 14.26). So the Spirit is connected to meditation on Christ’s life. Second, find the resurrected Christ. The entire point of John 20-21 is that Jesus is alive and accessible to those who seek. The Holy Spirit comes only from the resurrected Christ. Pray to find Him, ask others who know Him, and be consistently in the one place Jesus promises to regularly show up – Sunday morning worship (see Matthew 18.20). Third, breathe in the Spirit. It is commanded in this text (“receive”), and we can do this by stopping to pray whenever the Spirit’s presence is felt.

Questions to Ponder & Discuss

1. What is the most recent graduation service you attended, and what was unique about it?
2. Pentecost (the giving of the Holy Spirit) is the church’s graduation, as God upgrades disciples from relating to an external Christ to experiencing also the breath of Christ that moves inside our souls. When was a time you breathed in God’s Spirit? What relationship changed in your life as a result?
3. A congregant asked why John’s Gospel seems to place the gift of the Holy Spirit earlier than does the Book of Acts? On the sermon study page you will find a short video of explanation.
4. Jesus says sometimes we need to extend forgiveness and other times withhold it (20.23). Why do we need the Holy Spirit to discern what is needed?

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Books cited: *Bowling Alone* by Robert Putnam and *The Drama of Living* by David Ford