

Abe Harder and Isaac Harms started us on this series two weeks ago. ** Slide_0

In chapter one John announces a new reality in the world –

the Word / has become flesh and blood.

That was a shock to the Greeks and to the Jews, but especially to the Greeks.

God breaks all the rules.

It turns out that, as John tells us in 3:16,
God really does love this world.

In chapter two we have the wedding in Cana and Jesus first miracle.

God breaks all the rules again.

He takes the cleansing water,
and turns it into wine.

And because of his action the father of the bride wasn't shamed /
by running out of wine for his guests,

In chapter three we get an introduction to the Holy Spirit.

Or really, we find out

just how difficult it is / for someone who has lived by the Law
to get their head and heart
around what God is really doing in this world.

*That which is born of the flesh – is flesh.
And that which is born of the Spirit – is Spirit.*

And then we come to chapter 4.

Chapters 3 and 4 create a contrast --

John writes chapter three to tell us about a very well educated man.

A wealthy and powerful man who comes to Jesus by night.

He has a lot to lose / and Nicodemus does not confess Jesus as Lord.

Then in chapter four we get a very different story.

We are presented with the story of a social outcast,
a mixed blood Jew who is living in sin.

Yet it isn't the doctor of the law who is justified

And who comes to know Jesus as Savior

But an ordinary and broken woman discovers the love of Jesus.

Then last week in John 15-17 Abe told us about the parting words of Jesus

His parting words

Words from his heart /
to the ones he had loved / and lived with / for three years.

And we heard something of God's heart for the Church.

God's heart for our Church – and for every Church.

Because Jesus is not a Mennonite – or an Anglican or a Baptist

He is God in the flesh – the Head of His body - the Church.

And he desires that His bride discover the ONE thing that is really, really important.
The ONE thing that holds us together.

LOVE ** Slide_2

A new commandment I give to you - *that you love one another* --

When possible?

That you love one another -- when it's convenient ?

That you love one another -- when you agree on the main things?

No – he prays the highest goal possible –

That we know the same love for one another

As the love that exists between Jesus / and the Father. He prays,

“I have made you known to them,
and will continue to make you known /
in order that the love / you have for me
may be in them / and that I myself / may be in them.”

It's a lofty goal – and one the Church has rarely seen.

Yet this is the heart of God for us.

Jesus barely finishes this prayer before he is arrested.

He is handed over to the ruling council, then to Pilate,

Then crucified.

And then we arrive in John 20. **** Slide_3**

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On the first day of the week, something happens to his dead body.

And right away we should be clueing back to John 1.

John 1 echoes the creation story of Genesis 1

And in verse three of that story / is this little phrase – “the first day.”

“there was evening and morning, the first day”

The story we are going to hear in John 20 / is a creation story –

But a new kind of creation – for a new kind of world.

//

So the disciples arrive at the tomb and Jesus body is gone.

Mary is standing there weeping.. and she sees someone she thinks is a gardener.

But it's – Jesus! She must have been stunned.

Somehow everything we have known about life and death is all mixed up.

The table of reality has cracked and broken –

And time is running backwards...

And there is Jesus – the resurrected Lord –

Death had no power to hold him.

And he is experiencing what we will all one day experience – life after life.

He tells Mary that he will ascend to the Father –

She is the first to see Jesus – and she tells the other disciples.

Mary is the very first witness / to a completely new reality in the world.

A new creation.

And so we come to verse 19, where we start to unpack this new reality

And as you might expect, this short passage is one of the richest stories in all the Gospels.

Because when we see what is happening here / we see Jesus –

His work in the world –

And our own calling / with greater clarity. **** Slide_4**

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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!”

The first thing I see here is a paradox – and it’s quite funny.

And it reminds me of a story in the book of Judges chapter 6. /

11 The angel of the LORD came and sat down
under the oak in Ophrah / that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite,
where his son Gideon / was threshing wheat in a winepress /
to keep it from the Midianites.

12 When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon,
he said, “The LORD is with you, mighty warrior.”

Here’s the scene in Judges.

Midian has been pillaging all over Israel. And God has let them get away with it,

Because they have been worshipping idols.

And it’s been painful and shameful. So Israel cries out to the Lord.

And the next thing we know, an angel appears to Gideon.

But what is quite funny is where this happens.

Gideon is in a winepress -- threshing wheat.

So basically, he is hiding. It’s not safe and he knows it.

So what does the angel say?

“The Lord is with you, mighty warrior!”

And you have to wonder if the angel kept a straight face.

But then this story unfolds – not so much of Gideon the mighty warrior –

But of a faithful God who sends out his Word –

And calls into being / that which was not.

But there is another parallel in this much older story
with our story in John 20.

Gideon realizes he has been speaking to the Lord, verse 22 **** Slide_5**

When Gideon realized / that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed,

“Ah, Sovereign LORD!

I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!”

23But the LORD said to him, “Peace! Do not be afraid.
You are not going to die.”

24So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there
and called it -- The LORD Is Peace. /

“The LORD is peace” -- literally, *Adonai Shalom*.

And then the story that follows shows us HOW God intervenes.
How does God accomplish his mission?

God takes an ordinary man – Gideon says of himself / that he is the least in his family –
And makes him into a mighty warrior.

And this is always the way it works.

God delights in taking ordinary people –
As Paul says - not many among you were wise, not many powerful –

And uses us to bring his kingdom into the world in power.

As in Acts 2 – “even your sons and your daughters- even your servants” will prophesy.

/

So back to this story in John 20. /

Jesus has been crucified – but now they are hearing that He has been raised...

It’s confusing and strange – *what is really going on?*

Their leader has been killed by the Jewish leaders – are they next?

Their leader was accused of sedition by the Romans.

Their own people AND the occupying army may be after them.

And in the midst of their doubt and fear – suddenly there is Jesus among them.

And he says, "Peace be with you" literally: *Shalom Alechem!* ** Slide_6

What is really going on here?

This passage is a parallel story to Judges chapter 6.

Here in this upper room – locked away in fear –

A band of ordinary people are being commissioned as mighty warriors.

How is this possible?

Because our God -- is the *Creator*.

He releases his word – and mountains move –

And stars shine where before was only darkness.

And what is Luke's message here?

Why is he telling us about the locked door and the fear?

These men and women are just like us!

They aren't extraordinary people!

Can you imagine if Peter the fisherman knew we thought of him
as some godlike apostle?

He would die laughing!

God takes ordinary, fear-filled, doubting and broken people /

Farmers and framers, truck drivers and housewives..

and speaks a word of creation – a word of power – over them.

Can the God who creates world / take ordinary people –

And make a kingdom of priests?

The God who spoke creation into being – something out of nothing –
Is here creating the church. /

Creation – NEW creation. /

But let's pause a moment and think about this scene a bit more.

This is NOT the same Jesus they knew.

This is a Jesus who has passed through fire and water –

He has passed through death and Hell – and appeared on the other side.

He still has the wounds in his body.

He was dead – but here he stands – alive and breathing.

And then he repeats himself – again he says to them,

Peace be with you!

And this time he follows with a commission:

“As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

To understand this sending we need to remember the story of Israel.

Because at this time in the Gospel, the church is Jewish

The Church is being formed out of Israel /
According to the Promise of God to send a Messiah.

What is the church anyway? ** Slide_7

One teacher writes,

*“The church is a movement / launched into the life of the world /
to bear in its own life / God’s gift of peace /*

for the life of the world.” (Newbigin, The Open Secret, 48)

Our WAY is peace- shalom.

Peace is not merely FOR us – it is with us and IN us –

We BECOME the peace - then we go out into the world.

How blessed are the peace-makers.

After giving this commission,

Jesus breathes on the disciples and says, “Receive the Holy Spirit”

[Genesis 1. Spirit = breath. New creation. Cf. Rev.21]

There is a LOT more to say – but first we need to look at this word PEACE.

In the Greek it is Irene – but in the Aramaic / it is **SHALOM**.

And SHALOM is one of the largest words in the Hebrew bible – as big as COVENANT.

In fact, covenant and shalom are two sides of a single coin –

Because Jesus IS our peace – his blood establishes the new covenant.

As in Ephesians 2:14

For he himself is our peace...

Now remember --

Jesus arrives on the scene talking about **good news** and God's kingdom.

That's the BIG STORY.

How does this story in the upper room
relate to the big story?

How does SHALOM -- relate to the good news – the Gospel?

This word we translate “good news” or “Gospel” is the word *euangelion*.

What we so often do with words like this is add our own meaning.

But these words had their own story in the first century.

So Gospel was NOT first a Christian word.

“Gospel” was a current word when Jesus arrived on the scene in Galilee.

The announcement of the birth of Octavian – the Roman emperor -- about 55 BC went like this: **Slide_8**

“The providence which has ordered the whole of our life ..
has ordained the most perfect consummation for human life
by giving it to him . . .

“and by sending in him, as it were, **a savior for us**
and those who come after us,
to make war to cease, to create peace everywhere. . . .

“The birthday of the god / was the beginning for the world
of the *euangelion* – the **gospel** -- that has come to men through him.”

So this word “Gospel” was already a political term in Jesus time –

it meant the reign of a king who would bring peace -- and prosperity.

The Romans claimed that this was exactly their role in history.

Rome brought peace – by the power of the sword.

The whole world lived under what Rome called the PAX ROMANA.

So already in Jesus time “good news” was connected to politics –

The rule of a king or Emperor.

And we see this also in the New Testament.

When we pray “Thy kingdom come”
we are asking for God’s just reign to appear on earth..

today-- where we live-- not only in the future.

When we pray “Thy kingdom come” we are saying to God-

Lord, may YOUR rule -- overtake every earthly and heavenly power.

To YOU ALONE O Lord -- are honor -- and glory -- and power -- and dominion.

LORD, bring peace and justice – let your kingdom come.

And if you want a picture of God’s rule - the coming kingdom –
it’s very different from the kind brought by the Romans,

or the kind enforced by aircraft carriers and Marines.

Isaiah 32 tells us how we get
from the oppressive rule of kings to the rule of the Messiah. **** Slide_9**

The palaces -- are forsaken, the city -- deserted..

until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high,

*And the wilderness becomes a fruitful field,
And the fruitful field is counted as a forest.*

*Then justice will dwell in the wilderness,
And righteousness remain in the fruitful field.*

*The work of righteousness will be -- SHALOM,
And the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever.*

*My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation,
In secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places..*

Desolation.. then the Spirit and SHALOM.

When God's kingdom comes -- everything changes..

There is peace, justice, joy and harmony and salvation –

And all this is summarized in a single Hebrew word -- **SHALOM**.

So in the New Testament Jesus arrives / preaching the good news,
and *demonstrating the good news* / through his life and work.

So when Jesus is raised – here is what happens.

The power of the coming kingdom – where there is no death –

God's kingdom of justice , healing and salvation

Suddenly breaks into this darkness –

You can almost feel the coming wind of Pentecost.

Without this background, you miss the meaning here.

Without knowing the big story, when we read “Peace be with you” we might hear

“Have a nice and restful time”

Or even simply, “Be blessed”

But we would be miles off.

First, because of the biblical meaning of the word.

Second, because these words are spoken / *as a word of creation*
by the God whose word has *power*.

Third, because Luke is well aware that the Jews of his day
are expecting a Messianic warrior.

And he knows full well that God's kingdom of peace
is already in conflict with Rome's gospel of salvation.

So how do we read this passage? Like this --

When Jesus says “Peace be with you” He is NOT saying “have a nice day.”

He is declaring war!

He has defeated death and sin –

The Prince of this world is on the run!

And now his followers are going to go out to make war on the enemy.

They are going to raid Satan's camp and take prisoners!

Or better – they will break all the chains and set the prisoners free.

And Jesus is also saying to all earthly rulers –

Time to bow the knee!

Your small rule is about to pass away.

And all your false glory / will be measured by my own.

Every power – Every Kingdom – will declare that Jesus is Lord
to the glory of God the Father.

But God's kingdom is like no kingdom ever seen.

It comes on a donkey's back.

It's imperial council was comprised of a handful of unemployed fishermen,
a prostitute and some hangers on.

Jesus demonstrated how to wield his imperial power by washing feet,
telling stories and playing with kids.

Jesus' empire is based on the absurd values that the last should be first,
losers are winners / and the most influential in the empire / should clean the toilets.

Seriously is this any way to run an empire?

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So the next question we ask is this:

*What does it mean to be sent as Jesus is sent? ** Slide_10*

What are some of the answers that are popular out there?

1. It means the Great Commission – and we translate that as evangelism
2. It means sharing the Four Spiritual Laws.
3. It means inviting people to church

Is that what it means to be sent?

Suppose that you are trying to plant a corn crop.

And you need some help, so you invite some friends.

And they come, and each of them plants four kernels of corn.

And the four tractors you had ready - just sit there.

You would be upset, right?

Why?

They helped you plant your corn – didn't they?

But they missed the point.

They didn't understand the task / or the power / you had available.

When we shrink the Gospel to the great commission

Or to evangelism..

Or to a spiritual reality / that is separate from life in this world –

We miss the point.

Jesus really entered our world.

As we learned in John 1 – he became flesh and lived among us.

He didn't come just for our souls.

Or just to make us good –

He came to give us life – LIFE ABUNDANT John 10:10

He came to -- CHANGE EVERYTHING. /

So what does this sending mean?

*How does Jesus send his disciples? ** Slide_11*

- He sends them with the Peace.
- He sends them knowing that He is Lord / over all the powers.
- He sends them as the triune God: Father, Son and Spirit.
- He sends them in the power of the Spirit.
- He sends them with authority.
- He sends them as a community – a new social reality / in the kingdoms of this world.

So often we have separated the Gospel from justice and from life in this world.

But Jesus came to create a new social reality – a new kingdom with a new king.

We have a good word for it – we call it “the Church.”

“A community of people who / in the face of the tribulations they encounter, keep their eyes steadfastly / on the reign of God / by praying for its coming, by being its disciples, by proclaiming its presence, by working for peace and justice in the midst of hatred and oppression, and by looking / and working / toward God's liberating future.” (Bosch, Transforming Mission, 54)

Unless we have this visible life / together in this world, living in a new way,

A way where the Gospel can be seen as well as heard –

We haven't really understood the good news.

How does Jesus send his disciples? / *“as the Father sent him”*

In John 17 Jesus prayed for us –

Not that we would be taken out of the world.

But that we would be protected / as we live IN the world.

One writer says that we are called to become liquid..

To enter the cracks and crevices of society.

Scattered like salt – or like leaven in dough. ****TABLE Slide 1**

Many of you do this in the most natural way – in your day to day work.

Jesus has accomplished salvation --

But it is the disciples who will implement it.

The composer writes the music.

The performers implement it.

The architect designs the building.

The builder implements the design.

We are sent as He is sent / to implement what he has accomplished.

And this is IMPOSSIBLE without the Holy Spirit.

It is the Spirit that brings God's rule to earth.

He sends them as triumphant Lord / ruling over ALL the powers.

So often we have acted as if the mission is our possession.

As if / we are in control.

We are not – God is.

When Jesus is among us / he is vulnerable /
and does not use the power *that is his right*.

Remember his meeting with the Samaritan woman.

By asking her for a drink of water /
Jesus puts *himself* in a position of need / and **elevates / her**.

Now suddenly SHE has power.

God identifies with the small ones of the world. ****TABLE Slide 2**

He sends them as Father, Son and Spirit. /

What does it mean that we are sent by God / the Trinity – God as three in one?

God is the perfect community.

“The church is meant to be / that community of people / who make salvation visible /
for the rest of the world.” (Cavanaugh, *The Church as God’s Body Language*)

How do we make this new life visible?

In our relationships with one another.

In groups that meet during the week.

In our way of serving others in our neighbourhoods.

Every Wednesday and Friday a group from Metro went to a corner in Kelowna
offering sandwiches, maybe cookies, gloves and hats, jackets..

whatever we could give to whoever needed it.

One evening I was with the group. It had been a bright sunny day
and we thought it would be a pleasant evening.

But it was cold – with the wind off the lake.

I remember after the first hour standing and talking with a brother and shivering..

Not long after a man I didn’t know rode up on a rickety bicycle. I’ll call him Fred.

Fred was actually younger than me, but looked ten years older.

He had a cut above his left eyebrow, and a slight limp as he got off his bicycle.

When we chatted a while, I asked him about the limp.

He had been beaten up a few days before, and for no apparent reason.
Probably he was just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

As his story came out, I learned that he was an alcoholic,
and had been an alcoholic for most of the eight years since his wife had left him.

There weren't any huge glaring reasons for their split:
he told me just that they had grown apart
and the kids were no longer enough to hold them together.

Six months after she left he hit the bottle.
Soon he lost his business as well as his wife and home.

About two years later he made an attempt to put his life back together.
He was sober for nearly a year.

Something else went wrong in his life,
and his recently learned coping mechanism soon had control of him again.

At the end of this story Fred was a bit teary so I asked if I could pray for him.
He went silent.

After a minute he wandered away.

I worried that I had offended him in some way,
but I waited to see what would happen.

After another minute he waved for me to approach.
Then he told me another part of the story.

His wife's family were very religious.
They often told him that they were praying for him.

Meanwhile they had made it difficult for him to see his daughters,
both of whom were teenagers.

And the prayer didn't seem to be making any difference.

Then he shocked me with a direct question:

Do you think God loves me in spite of all I have done wrong?

Now it was my turn to get a bit teary.

But I was grateful he had asked the question, and I told him without hesitation:

God loves you no less today than he did ten years ago.

I asked him: You have children.

If one of them fell down and was hurt, what would you do?

Fred began to weep openly and he answered me, "I would run and pick her up."

How is this new way of life possible? ** **TABLE Slide 4**

He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

This new life/ is a graced life

And a reconciled life.

It's a life / of forgiveness and grace.

It's not a new way to live by the law.

This life is only possible in the Spirit. (see also Isa 22:22)

Reading from Matthew 5, *The Message* **Slide****

13"Let me tell you why you are here.

You're here to be salt-seasoning / that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.

If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?

You've lost your usefulness / and will end up in the garbage.

14-16"Here's another way to put it:

You're here to be light / bringing out the God-colors in the world.

God is not a secret to be kept.

We're going public with this / as public as a city on a hill.

Slide **

If I make you light-bearers,
you don't think I'm going to hide you / under a bucket, do you?

I'm putting you on a light stand.

Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand

SHINE!

Keep open house; be generous with your lives.

By opening up to others, you'll prompt people / to open up with God --
this generous / Father in heaven.

Lord, Creator and Redeemer / You came to make all things new.

Renew us in the life of Jesus. / Fill us with your Spirit.

Pour oil in the broken places of our lives.

Take away the fear – show us your love and mercy./ Roll away the stones.

Then send us out to show your love to others – fearless in the power of the Spirit.

TK Video Clip?