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Exuberant Peace in the Face of Fear

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Exuberant Peace in the Face of Fear

Abstract

"First the disciples touch Jesus' wounds; now he breathes on them. How close they must have been."

Posting about Christ's presence which erases all fear from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/exuberant-peace-in-the-face-of-fear/>

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

Exuberant Peace in the Face of Fear

□ inallthings.org/exuberant-peace-in-the-face-of-fear/

Dave Schelhaas

June 4,
2017

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#)

[Numbers 11:24-30](#)

[Acts 2:1-21](#)

[John 20:19-23](#)

On the evening of the first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me so I am sending you." And with that, he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

John 20:19-21

Picture yourself in that room. The fear is palpable. The body of Jesus has disappeared even though soldiers had been posted at the tomb. Who are the most likely suspects for stealing the body? The disciples, of course. They know it and they are afraid.

They are grief-stricken as well. For several years now they have been following Jesus around the country. Captivated by his love, grace and wisdom, as well as his fearlessness when he is confronted by the authorities, they had left family and job to follow him. They love him. Now who will stand up to the authorities with absolute fearlessness?

And then suddenly, in spite of the locked doors, Jesus! Like the time when the storm came up at sea and they thought they all might perish, Jesus pops in saying, "Peace be with you." Immediately the winds of fear and discouragement dissipate. The disciples are overjoyed. Exuberant.

But wait? Is it really him? Could they be dreaming? Could it be a ghost?

"Touch me," he says. "Touch my side where the sword went in. Touch the nail-holes in my hands."

And they must have done it. Touched him. They must have run their hands over the wounds, felt the indentations. What intimacy!

But John tells us something else, something more mysterious, something as odd as that time just a few days ago when he washed their feet. Jesus breathed on them. Picture him walking around the room and breathing on each disciple. First they touch his wounds; now he breathes on them. How close they must have been.

Before he breathes on them, he commissions them, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." After he breathes on them, he says, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This might indicate that he is breathing out his Spirit on them to equip them for the work he has called them to. One cannot help but ask, "Did Jesus pour out the Holy Spirit on the disciples here? After all wind and breath are signs of the Spirit."

My speculation is that Jesus breathed on them, not to pour out the Spirit, but as one more proof that he was alive. When Jesus says “Receive the Holy Spirit,” he is really telling them to “Receive the Holy Spirit [later].” I say that for two reasons. First, prior to Pentecost, the disciples did not exhibit Holy Spirit power. The second reason is that in Luke’s account of this event he writes, “I am going to send you what my Father has promised [the Holy Spirit]; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.” And that’s what the disciples do. They wait in the city for a number of days until that mighty wind and those tongues of fire filled the room where they were waiting.

If we use scripture to interpret scripture, then Luke’s text beautifully explains Jesus statement.

These few verses foreshadow the eventual coming of the Holy Ghost. But they also give us a beautiful picture of the how the presence of Christ eradicates fear and replaces it with exuberant peace.