

Becoming apostles

By [Steve Pankey](#)

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One of the clichés I found myself saying more than once during our children’s sermon program this Easter is that Jesus being resurrected from the dead changed everything. As I said it, I imagined a child asking me a classic children question, “How did Jesus coming back to life change things?” How, indeed. What are the practical examples of resurrection in a world that still seems full of death, fear, and sadness?

In the Gospel lesson for Sunday, the story of Jesus and his disciples in the upper room from the second half of [John 20](#), we have a few examples of how Jesus’ resurrection changes things. First, there is the disciples’ move from fear to joy. Second, there is the move from disciples to apostles. Third, there is the gift of the Holy Spirit. Fourth, the establishment of the authority of the church (sins forgiven and retained). Fifth, there is the evangelistic moment, “We have seen the Lord.” Sixth, there is Thomas’ shift from doubt to proclaiming “my Lord and my God.” Finally, we have Jesus’ assertion that there will be those who come later who will have to believe without seeing.

That’s a lot of change in 13 verses. No wonder the Revised Common Lectionary gives us this story every year. Maybe one of these years, we’ll realize that life in the resurrection means that change is the only constant.

Of all this upheaval in the Gospel lesson for Sunday, what struck me today was that Jesus gives the disciples a new identity in his resurrection. For three years they have been disciples—students under the Rabbi Jesus, learning what it means to live under his teaching, or what Jesus called the kingdom of God. In the the Matthean and Markan stories of the resurrection, the job of teacher now falls on the disciples, but first, they are called to go. For John, the task isn’t to teach, but simply to go: that is, to be sent.

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

The group gathered in the upper room moves from discipleship to apostleship, which literally means “one who is sent.” The resurrection of Jesus means that each of us is called to be sent into the world with the good news of Jesus Christ on our lips.

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