

Read also Psalm 146:1-10. Check out the service at [www.fpcd.org](http://www.fpcd.org).

Remember a day of utter happiness. For me, it was a day when I graduated from something. Perhaps it is for you:

- seeing someone who is important to you whom you haven't seen for a long time, or
- the birth of a baby or grandchild, or
- moving into a new place, or
- being in a special place or doing something memorable
- the championship game
- starting your own business
- retiring

Whoever wrote Psalm 146 seemed to be utterly happy in God. What makes you utterly happy?

There was one event that made the disciples utterly happy. It happened on Resurrection Day.  
READ Jn 20:19-23

A few days before, Jesus had said this to them:

*"In a little while you won't see me anymore. But a little while after that, you will see me again."*

They had not understood that at all.

*He explained, "I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy. It will be like a woman suffering the pains of labor. When her child is born, her anguish gives way to joy because she has brought a new baby into the world." So you have sorrow (now), but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy" (John 16:16, 18, 20-22.)*

This was the fulfillment of that Scripture. They were ecstatic. Wouldn't you be?

When you go through something traumatic and then the most incredibly unexpected positive thing happens, no one can rob you.

That's exactly how they felt when he showed up suddenly and said, "Look! Look at my hands and my side, as if he's saying *can you believe this—well, believe it!* Don't you think he was ecstatic? Don't you think he rejoiced, thinking, oh, they finally know what God is really like!

The night before he died he had also said:

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives."*  
(Jn 14:27)

They couldn't understand that either, because the next day was about as far from peace as you could get, and there they were as a result, paralyzed in fear behind locked doors. Jesus appeared and twice he said, "Shalom!" "Peace!" His greeting was not your ordinary shalom; it was so much more, so much greater than the peace of this world, which is not firm or reliable.

Shalom is a huge word in the Jewish culture and faith. They used it every day to greet each other. At the same time, prophets used this word to predict the abundant blessings which would come with the Messiah. So it means this life-changing, supernatural blessing. Scholar George Beasley-Murray says when Jesus spoke this word it is the same equivalent of Jesus saying “It is finished” on the cross, because “the peace of reconciliation and life from God is now imparted.”<sup>1</sup>

That is, “*You don’t need to worry or be afraid of the Jewish leaders at all.*”

Or, “*You don’t need to worry when things go bad for you in 2014.*” Whatever the problem, Shalom! Ultimately, all is well for you! Jesus is just as here for you as he was there for them. And so he went out of his way to confirm that it was him. They were filled with joy. Are you filled with joy? Do you ever take the time to just be grateful?

Do you stop to tell yourself every once in a while that God’s in charge—*always*, that you are in great hands?

And Jesus was just so ready to give them something. He gave them his Spirit.

It was through the Holy Spirit that the first church flourished. Acts tells us:

- Living in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the church increased in numbers (Acts 9:31).
- And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (even in the midst of persecution) (Acts 13:52).
- And hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us (Ro 5:5).
- For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Ro 14:17).

So the Holy Spirit is a gift, and the giving of the Holy Spirit continues daily. It’s not something that only happened that day or on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit continued to be given to believers as they heard the good news and the Holy Spirit is given today.

Jesus also said, “I am sending you just as the Father has sent me.” The Jews had this saying: “The one who is sent is as he who sends him.” So as the Father was present in all of Jesus’ words and acts, Jesus through the Holy Spirit is present in your words and acts. Your mission is to be his representatives.

If you forgive someone’s sins – that means if they respond to your message about me, they are forgiven. If they do not respond to your words, they are not forgiven. It’s not some weird power we gain; it’s a partnership. When I give you this Word, if you respond by taking it to heart, you will grow in faith. If not, you won’t.

If you will embrace it, it will be a major gift to you. Here are some examples:

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<sup>1</sup>“John,” from *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 36 (second edition).

Stella Atkinson, a dancer with Ballet Magnificat, now teaches at Experience Arts in School, Mesa, AZ. She uses her expertise in theater to offer a Christian perspective to her students, helping them share their faith through dance, music, theater, media, and the entirety of artistic expression. She uses what she does and it blesses others.

Jesus works through your particular gifts, talents, and interests and enhances them beyond what you can imagine.

Max McLean is an actor. He has a unique combination of oratorical skill and passion for God's Word, so he does dramatic readings of the Bible. If you have the Holy Bible app on your phone, he does the readings in the NIV. He is also the founder and artistic director of Fellowship for the Performing Arts which produced the play Screwtape, and now The Great Divorce, by C. S. Lewis, both touring the nation now. His mission is to use his passion for theater to engage diverse audiences with theater from a Christian worldview.

He's been so blessed as he's seen the Holy Spirit do more than he can imagine.

Fiona Dieffenbacher is a professor at a fashion design school. You might think God doesn't care about fashion, but New York City alone employs 173,000 people in this industry, which generates \$10b in annual salary and makes up five percent of New York City's employment. She felt called to fashion since she was a young teen. She wanted to know that God was calling her to go to art school. So her youth leaders prayed over her for protection and direction. It was challenging because there were very few Christians in the field.

In this industry she saw very dark moments as the industry brokenness particularly has to do with women, their view of beauty; the images put forth in advertising, sex images. But she also saw hope. In the academy she has an opportunity to train the next generation of trendsetters. She lives by Christian ideals of honoring people; making positive influences, and using integrity. Consumer mentality at the school is a problem. Students contest grades, threaten legal action against the school. She needs to hold to truth. What the student wants/desires does not drive everything; they have a responsibility to learn, and she holds that standard.

See what a difference it can make when you let the Holy Spirit make your work a mission.

Dick Bergman, used car sales business whose desire it is to bring integrity to an industry with a reputation for exactly the opposite. "Ninety-nine percent give the rest of us a bad reputation," he says. He's been a mechanic all his life. He took over the donated car program for Wycliffe, which put him in touch with car dealers all over the U.S., which has provided him with a strong customer base. Then he began his own business, buying cars and selling them for a reasonable profit. His philosophy is that high integrity, value, and guaranteed satisfaction help people that need help. It also gives him contact with the secular world, including repair shops where he can be give a witness to a better way.

God knew this way back when he gave him the mechanical skill; God knew this when he put him in charge of the Wycliffe program; the Holy Spirit has led him all the way so that Jesus' mission goes on.

Are you allowing yourself to receive the gift that keeps on giving? If you do, you will find great joy.

Shalom! Receive the Holy Spirit.

AMEN