

Sunday, April 11, 2021  
Second Sunday of Easter  
Reflections by Juel Pierce

## First Reading

Acts 4:32-35

*While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.*

<sup>32</sup>Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common.

<sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

<sup>34</sup>There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. <sup>35</sup>They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

## Reflection

*What was the community of believers like? (verse 32) Verse 33 implies that this way of living resulted in "great power." What were the apostles empowered to do? (verse 33) What was the result of this decision on how to live together as far as those who were needy was concerned? (verse 34) How did they manage this? (verse 35) There are stories throughout history of people who tried to live this way. Perhaps one of the most successful was the monastic movement, in which men or women or both decided to live together in community with no one owning property except the monastery. What would be the advantages of such a way of*

*living be? Is there any way in which this way of life could be a model for us, as American Christians?*

## **Psalm 133**

*How good and pleasant it is to live together in unity. (Ps. 133:1)*

<sup>1</sup>How good and how pleas- | ant it is,  
when kindred live togeth- | er in unity!

<sup>2</sup>**It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down up- | on the beard,  
upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar | of his robe.**

<sup>3</sup>It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the | hills of Zion.

For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life for- | evermore.

## **Reflection**

*This psalm describes the results of the kind of life the disciples lived, described in our first reading. What is it like when kindred live together in unity? (verse 1) The psalmist uses two metaphors for this. I find it hard, out of my own experience, to appreciate the metaphor in verse 2, although the oil poured on the head of a guest was a sign of hospitality and welcome. The metaphor of dew on the mountains of Zion is easier to understand as a sign of plenty and blessing. (verse 3) When have you felt truly welcome? How can we offer this sense of welcome to guests and to one another?*

## Second Reading

1 John 1:1—2:2

*The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.*

<sup>1</sup>We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—<sup>2</sup>this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—<sup>3</sup>we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

<sup>5</sup>This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

<sup>2:1</sup>My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; <sup>2</sup>and he is the atoning sacrifice

for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

## **Reflection**

*In this epistle, John (the letter writer) describes the life that this early Christian community who lived together in unity and fellowship experienced. Who were they in fellowship with? (verses 1-3) Note that they were not only in fellowship with one another. Who was the source of their fellowship? (verse 3) What was the result of this fellowship? (verse 4) How are faith and joy related? Who is God? (verse 5) What does John mean when talking about “walking in darkness”? What happens when one claims to have fellowship with God but walks in darkness? (verse 6) Can we get ourselves out of the darkness into the light? (verse 7) The metaphor of darkness and light is used throughout the Bible. What does it stand for here? Who helps us if we confess our sins? (verse 9) Is that easy to do? Who helps us? (verse 2:1) How does Jesus help us? (verse 2:2) One of difficulties in understanding this letter is that, unlike Paul’s letters, it is not an argument. It reads more like poetry. What do you think?*

## **Gospel**

**John 20:19-31**

*The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.*

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his

hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” <sup>22</sup>When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup>If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup>So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

<sup>27</sup>Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” <sup>28</sup>Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!”

<sup>29</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

## **Reflection**

*What happens on the evening of the day of Jesus’ resurrection? (verse 19) What were Jesus’ first words to the disciples? Why do you think he said those words? What then does he do? (verse 20) Why do you think he did that? How did the disciples respond?*

*What commission does Jesus give them? (verse 21) How does he empower them? (verse 22) What does it mean to have the authority to forgive sins? (verse 23) Who was missing from this place? (verse 24) What was his response when the others told him they had seen Jesus? (verse 25) What happens when Jesus appears to them again? (verse 26) What does he say to Thomas? (verse 27) The text doesn't say if Thomas actually touched Jesus' wounds. Thomas says he wants "proof," but what does he really need? (verse 28) What does Jesus say about us who do not "see" Jesus? (verse 29) Why did John write this Gospel? (verses 30-31) Why/how do you believe in Jesus? What does the Easter message of Jesus' resurrection mean to you?*