

Sunday, April 18, 2021
Third Sunday of Easter
Reflections by Juel Pierce

First Reading

Acts 3:12-19

After healing a man unable to walk, Peter preaches to the people, describing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Through the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection, God is offering them forgiveness and restoration in Jesus' name.

¹²[Peter] addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him.

¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out."

Reflection

This text takes place at the temple after Peter and John healed a man who had to beg because he couldn't walk. What does Peter say happened? (verse 12) Who does he say didn't heal the man?

Who does he remind the people of? (verse 13) What does he accuse them of? (verses 14-15) How does he say the man was healed? (verse 16) What does Peter accuse the people of? (verse 17) Peter doesn't just accuse them, he tells them that God used their ignorance for God's own ends. What were they? (verse 18) What does he call on them to do? (verse 19) What do you remember Peter doing as we read about him during Holy Week? (see Mark 14:66-72) How do you account for Peter's change in behavior? What difference did Jesus' resurrection make for Peter?

Psalm 4

The LORD does wonders for the faithful. (Ps. 4:3)

¹Answer me when I call, O God, defender | of my cause;
you set me free when I was in distress; have mercy on me
and | hear my prayer.

²**"You mortals, how long will you dishon- | or my glory;
how long will you love illusions and seek | after lies?"**

³Know that the LORD does wonders | for the faithful;
the LORD will hear me | when I call.

⁴**Tremble, then, and | do not sin;
speak to your heart in silence up- | on your bed.**

⁵Offer the appointed | sacrifices,
and put your trust | in the LORD.

⁶**Many are saying, "Who will show us | any good?"
Let the light of your face shine upon | us, O LORD.**

⁷You have put gladness | in my heart,
more than when grain and | wine abound.

⁸**In peace, I will lie | down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me | rest secure.**

Reflection

I'm sure Peter knew the psalms, including this one. While he did not arrange our lectionary, the people who did, found this psalm to be appropriate when we remember Peter's acts after Jesus' resurrection. What did the psalmist ask of God? (verse 1) Verse 2 is God's answer to the psalmist and all the people who call on God and ask God to help them. What does God say? (verse) What is the psalmist's declaration of faith? (verse 3) What does the psalmist remind people to do? (verses 4-5) Not everyone hears the psalmist's plea to them. What are they saying? (verse 6) Now the psalmist responds to God's answer to prayer. What does the psalmist attribute to God's mercy? (verse 7) How does the psalmist respond to God's answer? (verse 8) Do you think perhaps Peter was comforted by this psalm? How might this psalm comfort you?

Second Reading

1 John 3:1-7

God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Reflection

What has God the Father of Jesus given us? (verse 1) Why does John the letter writer say we are called children of God? Why does the world not recognize us as God's children? Once again, John reminds us ("Beloved") that we are God's children. (verse 2) What will we become? If we don't know that, then who will we be like? What will we do in hope? (verse 3) Why will we act this way? What happens when someone sins? (verse 4) If we sin and are lawless, who comes to rescue us? (verse 5) How can Jesus do that? What happens if we abide (stay) in Jesus? (verse 6) How will we know that we are righteous? (verse 7) Why are we righteous? How can we know that?

Gospel

Luke 24:36b-48

In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, "Peace be with you." ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, "Why

are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?

³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

Reflection

Where were the disciples on the evening of the day Jesus rose from the dead? (See Luke 24:31) What happened as they were gathered together? (verse 36) What was the reaction of the disciples? (verse 37) How did Jesus reassure them? (verses 38-40) Why do you suppose that “in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering”? (verse 41) I can imagine how we would react if we saw someone dear to us who had died suddenly appearing before us—sort of like the disciples, but maybe even more so. What did Jesus do to convince them? (verses 42-43) How did he explain to them what had happened with his resurrection? (verse 44) Note that when he “opened their minds to understand the scriptures,” (verse 45) the scriptures he is talking about are what we know as the Old Testament, because the letters and gospels we know as the New Testament had not

been written yet. How did he explain the scriptures? (verses 46-47) What does he tell the disciples about their role in what must happen next? (verse 48) Which disciples is he talking about when he says "You are witnesses of these things"? Only the few gathered together? Or are we also included?