

**First United Methodist Church
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Lectionary Study Guide**

For use the week of April 17-April 23, 2014

2nd Sunday of Easter

April 23, 2014

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

^{2:14a} But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ²² "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – ²³ this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴ But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵ For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' ²⁹ "Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Commentary

The people of the day were struggling with the notion of how an all-wise and all-powerful God was able to use the suffering and death of the Messiah to bring salvation and forgiveness to all the world. This was, Peter was saying, God's plan all along. But we know today that a dead Jesus could not bring this salvation—God brought him back to life. Peter even quoted David as proof of the Resurrection. Few of the Jew's ancestors were held in greater esteem than David,

so to appeal to him was an effective tactic. But Peter did more than that. “David,” Peter said, “both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day” present in Jerusalem and a place of great interest to all the Jews). David, a great hero and one of God’s favor, could not do what Jesus did, but he prophesied the resurrection of the Messiah, who was one of David’s own descendants. Peter reinforced David’s prophecy as one witness among many (2:32).

Reflection

Peter saw the Lord and his signs and wonders during his life, and after his resurrection as He appeared to the disciples. On what do you base your faith in Jesus as Lord? What signs and wonders has Jesus wrought in your life?

1 Peter 1:3-9

^{1:3} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith--being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

Commentary

This letter was probably written between AD 70 and 90, after Paul’s missionary travels and before widespread persecution of the early Christians. The social context of the Greco-Roman world was very patriarchal, and foreign religions were suspect. Conversion might lead to division within the family and a resulting disruption of the social hierarchy. Most of the letter tacitly reassured Christians that by imitating Christ (and by obeying the authorities) they would survive the “various trials” brought on by their despised position in the culture. The writer was trying to establish the legitimacy of Christians and their faith so they would become accepted and no longer have to suffer unjustly.

Reflection

What does it mean for you to confess that Jesus rose from the dead?

John 20:19-31

^{20:19} 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." ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." ²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ 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." ²⁶ 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." ²⁷ 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." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ 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." ³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ 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.

Commentary

This account between Thomas and Jesus set the stage for a real transition—from seeing and believing to simply hearing, and still believing. Jesus was mindful of all future generations of Christians who would come to faith without an eyewitness. "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet they believe." (20:29) Both Jesus and the Evangelist were eager to get this message across. This transition implies the need for a new definition of faith in the absence of Jesus. Looking to the future, Jesus could see all those who would come to trust him "and have life in his name," even though never physically seeing him.

Reflection

What can we learn from Thomas about how to deal with doubt? Can doubt be understood as “searching faith?”

Responsive Psalter

Psalm 16

^{16:1} Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

² I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight.

⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips.

⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

⁶ **The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.**

⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

⁸ **I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand,
I shall not be moved.**

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.

¹⁰ **For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.**

¹¹ You show me the path of life.
**In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.**

Closing Prayer

Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.