

## **Annotated Readings for Easter 3**

**April 14, 2024**

### **Acts 3:12-19**

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? The 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. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And 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.

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

***Context.** Peter’s sermon is addressed to the Jews who witnessed a healing he and John performed at one of the gates to the Temple in Jerusalem. They ordered a crippled beggar to get up and walk. It astounded the crowd, but would prove to be small potatoes in the larger scheme of Acts. Still, it provided a context for Peter to use Jewish imagery (God of Abraham, etc; the suffering servant; the author of life) to bring the people to repentance.*

#### ***Questions for Consideration/Discussion***

- 1. Peter claims that God used the ignorance of the people to fulfill the prophecies. Can you think of a time in your life when God brought new life out of a situation where you acted in ignorance?*
- 2. Peter sounds like the stereotype of a guilt-inducing Jewish mother. His aim is clearly repentance, and/but he throws in a big helping of guilt on the side. Does God do that?*
- 3. Peter tells the people to repent and turn to God that their sins may be wiped out. Which is easier, do you think: turning to God, or repenting?*

## Psalm 4

### *Cum invocarem*

- 1 Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause; \*  
you set me free when I am hard-pressed;  
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.
- 2 "You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory; \*  
how long will you worship dumb idols  
and run after false gods?"
- 3 Know that the LORD does wonders for the faithful; \*  
when I call upon the LORD, he will hear me.
- 4 Tremble, then, and do not sin; \*  
speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.
- 5 Offer the appointed sacrifices \*  
and put your trust in the LORD.
- 6 Many are saying, "Oh, that we might see better times!" \*  
Lift up the light of your countenance upon us, O LORD.
- 7 You have put gladness in my heart, \*  
more than when grain and wine and oil increase.
- 8 I lie down in peace; at once I fall asleep; \*  
for only you, LORD, make me dwell in safety.

*Context.* We don't see this type of Psalm very often in our lectionary texts: it is a Psalm of Supplication, a prayer for deliverance. The Psalm has some interesting twists and turns, though; it keeps us on our toes!

### *Questions for Consideration/Discussion*

1. Verse two is God's response to verse 1. Does it strike you as an appropriate answer?
2. Does the verb "tremble" tell us to react with fear or with some other emotion?
3. How do you think verses 6 and 7 relate to each other?
4. How is the Psalmist able to achieve the peace described in verse 8? Is that peace available to us who want to sleep but can't?

## 1 John 3:1-7

See 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. Beloved, 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. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

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

*Context.* Some people dislike the letters of John because they sound like they were written for a kindergarten class. This passage, however, is packed with meaning. Like many other letters in the New Testament, this one addresses what will happen when Jesus returns in power and great glory; as we have come to expect from John, however, it does so in ways quite unlike the other letters, such as Paul's.

### **Questions for Consideration/Reflection**

1. John says that being children of God is a gift from God, but what we will become at the Parousia ("Second Coming") is still a mystery. I think that many of us see death as an improvement of our present condition; that is, moving from corruption to incorruption. What does John think is so great about our current status? Do you agree?
2. What does John say we should be doing while we wait?
3. The second paragraph brings a major shift from focus on the next life to a focus on sin. How do you respond to John's statement that "No one who abides in [Jesus] sins?"
4. True or false? "No one who sins has seen [Jesus] or known [Jesus]."

## Luke 24:36b-48

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look 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." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then 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." Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,

and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

**Context.** *We are taking a quick break from John and going to Luke for reasons known only to the people who assembled the lectionary for our use. This story takes place on the evening of the day of the Resurrection after the two unnamed disciples had returned from their journey to Emmaus, where they encountered the risen Jesus on the way. The first paragraph echoes John's account in many ways: Jesus offers His Shalom, the disciples were terrified, Jesus offering His wounds for examination. It includes a nod to John 21, where Jesus eats fish with the disciples at the edge of the Sea of Galilee (Sea of Tiberius in John). It would appear that Luke "borrowed" from John's Gospel, but Luke was written at least 10 years before John; possibly even 20-25 years earlier. There is little evidence that John "borrowed" anything at all from of the synoptics (Matthew, Mark, Luke). So we end up with two very different Gospels, written years apart, telling essentially the same story.*

### **Questions for Consideration/Discussion**

1. *Jesus tries to convince the disciples that He is not a ghost; He is a real person. Our faith teaches us to recognize the Face of Jesus in one another. When we're able to do that, what/who are we seeing? An "image" of God? The "real presence of Jesus?" Jesus Himself? Or is the person in whom we see the Face of God simply a reminder to us that God is everywhere?*

2. *Throughout Luke/Acts (he wrote them both), people have to have their minds opened to understand. (The road to Emmaus, the Ethiopian eunuch, the crowds awaiting Baptism/Conversion, etc.) Do you and I have to have our minds opened by someone else to understand Scripture? If so, by whom?*

3. *Here's your freebie for the day: Fish figures prominently into the Gospels, most startlingly in the post-Resurrection appearances by Jesus in John and Luke. Fish then became a symbol of Christianity and was used to mark the locations of the catacombs where the early Church worshipped in secret. The symbol of the fish is still around on bumper stickers, Altar hangings and vestments, and other places. Here's why:*

*The Greek work for fish, in all capital letters, is ΙΧΘΥΣ (ICHTHUS). Each letter of the word is the first letter of the following:*

*I (Greek Iota; Greek has no J so they use I) – Jesus (in Greek, Iesous)*

*X (Greek Chi, represents CH) – Christ (in Greek, Chistos)*

*Θ (Greek Theta, represents TH) – Theou (God's, of God)*

*Υ (Greek Upsilon, represents U) – Uios (Son)*

*Σ (Greek Sigma, represents S) – Soter (Savior)*

*So the fish spells out "Jesus Christ, Son of God (or God's Son), Savior"*

