

Bible Tuesday for the First Sunday after Easter, 2019

Acts 5:27-32

27 When [the Temple police] had brought [Peter and the apostles], they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. 30 The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

This event takes place in the weeks after Pentecost. Peter, the disciples, and apostles stayed in Jerusalem after Pentecost. They worshiped in the Temple daily and evangelized that Jesus of Nazareth is the long awaited Messiah and Lord, the son of God, whom the High Priest et. al. had crucified but whom God raised.

Peter and the apostles had been arrested by the Temple authorities for healing people which caused disruption in the Temple. When they were tried by the Temple authorities, they were told to stop speaking about Jesus and flogged to impress upon them the gravity of the situation. The above passage illustrates the unwillingness of the disciples and apostles to silence themselves when Jesus commanded them to testify about Him.

Note that Peter and the apostles and disciples did blame the Jewish authorities for Jesus' crucifixion, and not themselves. The understanding of Jesus' death being an act of atonement for all humanity, and that each of us has a hand in Jesus' crucifixion had not yet been developed. "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." St. Paul would develop that in his letters to the early Christian churches in the next few years.

Psalm 150

1 Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! 2 Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! 3 Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! 4 Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! 5 Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! 6 Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!

While most of the psalms in the psalter were originally poems and hymns collected to create the psalter, it is speculated that some psalms were written specifically to frame the amassed collection. Psalm 150 is the very last psalm in the psalter and was likely written specifically for that purpose. Unlike most other psalms, there are no pleas for God's attention or requests for retribution against enemies in this psalm. Rather, it is pure praise reminding Jews and Christians that, in the end of all things, we are left with gratitude to God expressed in pure praise.

Revelation 1:4-9

4 John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

John of Patmos writes this letter and vision to many congregation communities, specifically to seven congregations. Seven is a symbolic number in Hebrew tradition, combining the four corners of the world or the four winds, with the perfect number 3 which symbolizes God. Seven is the symbol of God's activity in the world or completeness. The seven spirits before the throne of God symbolize all of God's people serving God in eternity. The seven congregations symbolize all of the congregations of Christians in the world.

The title "The one who is and who was and who is to come" is a tweak of a phrase used to describe Roman gods. Those were described as "the one who is and who was and who will be" indicating a constant presence that does not change. This phrase describing Jesus is different because he is now and he was before time and Jesus will come again and bring with him change, the end of all things old and the making of "all things new."

Why does John write this letter with apocalyptic vision?

"For a long time, many scholars thought the Empire was persecuting the congregations to whom John wrote so that John encouraged the communities to remain faithful during persecution. However, there is no evidence of wide-spread persecution at the time John wrote (roughly 92-95 CE). A good bit of scholarship now thinks that John believed that many followers of Jesus were accommodating too much to Rome. They went along with the idolatry, injustice, and violence of the empire. Some may have participated in the imperial cult and in other activities related to the Empire." Ronald Allen, *Working Preacher*. John of Patmos writes Revelation with a carrot and stick approach to chastise Christian accommodation of the Roman Empire and to show the Empire as cruel, evil, and a tool of Satan.

Luke 24:13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles^[a] from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad.^[b] ¹⁸ Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" ¹⁹ He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth,^[c] who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the

people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.^[d] Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah^[e] should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us^[f] while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴ They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

This event, only recorded in the gospel of Luke, is immediately after the women seeing the empty tomb and angels telling the women to go tell the apostles and disciples to go to Galilee to meet Jesus. The women are not believed so Peter runs to the tomb and finds the linens but no body.

Now that the sabbath is over, these two disciples, Cleopas and an anonymous disciple, are seemingly walking home. They came to Jerusalem for Jesus, ate the Passover with the other disciples, apostles, and Jesus, and now are heading back. The journey is seven miles, five miles too long for the sabbath day, so they were constrained by Jewish Law from going home until the sabbath was over.

Why did these disciples not recognize Jesus? I remember when my grandmother Dirks died and then again when my dad died, I would “see” them in crowds or driving past me on the road for a few months after their deaths. Later I learned that is a common phenomenon. Was Jesus somehow disguised from them or was his visage post mortem that different from his visage pre mortem? Was Jesus’ voice somehow unrecognizable? Why would their eyes be prevented from seeing Jesus until they recognized him as the meal host?

It had to hurt these two disciples to have this guy, whom they later learned is Jesus, call them foolish and slow of heart. Yet, the guy stayed with them and taught them, instead of blowing them off and continuing on his way.

It was tradition in Jesus' day for the male head of the gathering served as host and began the meal by blessing the bread and the wine. The English translations of those blessings are, "Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe who brings forth bread from the earth." And, "Blessed are you, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth the fruit of the vine." After the host blessed the bread, he breaks it in half and sends each half around the table for each person to break off a chunk and hand it to the next person. Because Jesus was the rabbi and leader of the disciples/apostles, he was always the one who blessed the bread and the wine at the beginning of the meals. It makes sense then, that these two disciples finally recognized Jesus as he performed this sacred duty. The words used to describe it are almost identical to those describing the Last Supper bread and wine a few chapters earlier.

When they arrive back in Jerusalem that night, they are told that Jesus had also appeared to Peter, affirming Peter's primacy as head of the apostles.