

This Week's Scripture - Sunday 18th April 2021

Acts 3.12-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 3.1-7; Luke 24.36b-48

Acts 4.12-19: In Acts 3, soon after Pentecost, Peter and John were going to the temple at the hour of the afternoon prayer and encountered a man, who couldn't walk from birth, being carried in. He would beg from the temple gates every day, because in that time, if you were disabled, the only way you could survive was to beg. However, Peter called out to the man and told him to look at him and John, then told him in the name of Jesus to stand up and walk. The man leaped up, praising God, and all the people recognized him and were amazed. In vs. 12, Peter addressed the people, declaring they didn't heal the man, but it was Jesus. He continues sharing that Jesus was the servant of the God of their ancestors, the very one rejected by the people and crucified by Pilate, while a true criminal was released. Peter assures the crowd that they can repent and turn to God so their sins may be wiped away, for God fulfilled what had been foretold through the prophets about the Messiah, according to Peter.

Psalm 4: The psalmist cries out for God to answer their prayer in Psalm 4. The psalmist addresses the ones who have spoken against them, who have gossiped and lied. God is with the faithful, the psalmist sings, and God hears the psalmist's prayers. They instruct their enemies to turn to God's ways instead. The psalmist knows that the faithless are still seeking, but as a faithful one, the psalmist rests assured in God's presence and safety.

1 John 3.1-7: The writer of 1 John speaks of the love God has for all of us who are faithful, all of us called children of God. We are God's children now, but are to become something new, something yet to be revealed. We live into this hope, so we live into God's ways. Everyone who lives into God's ways is righteous, for that is right-living. Sin, however, deceives us, leading us astray; but in Christ there is no sin, for Christ removes our sin. Instead, we are called to flee from sin, and live into God's ways.

Luke 24.36b-48: The resurrection account continues in Luke in 24:36b-48. Jesus appeared before the disciples, and they were frightened. Jesus shows them his hands and feet (*similar to John 20:19-31*). The disciples, while full of joy, continue to struggle with their doubts and disbelief, but Jesus asks them for something to eat, and has some broiled fish (*similar to John 21*). Repeating the discourse with the two travellers on the road to Emmaus in 24:13-35, Jesus goes through the scriptures with the disciples, to understand that the Messiah was to suffer and die, and on the third day rise again. The disciples are witnesses of his death and resurrection, and the proclamation of repentance of forgiveness of sins in Christ's name. They are called to go forth from Jerusalem to proclaim what they have seen and heard.

Reflection: How do we witness to the resurrection of Christ in our lives? How do we experience the risen Christ? Peter declares the risen Christ in every good act he accomplishes, even if it gets him into trouble. Stephen, participating in the ministry he was appointed to, boldly declares who his saviour is, even if what he says defies what others teach to the point of his own death. Jesus, in Luke's account, appears to the disciples, and though he asks them why they still have doubts in their hearts, he understands that they still harbour some unbelief and questions, even in the midst of their joy. Instead, Jesus leads them through the scriptures, to connect his own death and resurrection with the greater narrative of God's story. This is how we live out our witness: declaring that new life is available, here and now, as Peter did to the man begging at the temple gate. We live out the new life, here and now, by serving the most vulnerable among us like Stephen did. We live into the new life, here and now, despite our doubts and questions, by assurance through the scriptures of who Jesus is and the faith that our sins are forgiven.

Praying with others or alone...

Call to Worship

The Good News is proclaimed to the world!

We are witnesses of these things.

Hope is Alive, in the acts of kindness we share with one another;

We are witnesses of these things.

Joy is palpable, in the celebration of the Risen Christ!

We are witnesses of these things.

Your sins are forgiven, and you have new life, now and always—

We are witnesses of these things.



Lord, let your face shine on us

Prayer of Brokenness / Confession

Holy One, we confess that we lose faith.

We become comfortable with the things wrong in this world.

We become content with systemic sin when it benefits us.

We accept that there are things we cannot change without striving for justice.

Forgive us. Call us back into right-living: to remember the commandments,
to work for justice in loving-kindness, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Remind us that Your way of life is not simply a ticket to heaven
but a transformation of our very selves.

Forgive us of our sins, and love us into Your way.

In the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness / Blessing

Repentance and forgiveness of sins
have been proclaimed in the name of Jesus throughout the world.

Hear the good news! Your sins are forgiven. Yes, you too!

You are very much loved by God,

and God desires for you to live into the way exemplified by Christ, to become last of all,
servant of all, and to love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Repent, and turn back to God, and know that you are forgiven, loved, and restored.

Amen.

Prayer

God of Holy Wisdom,

guide us in this season of Easter to proclaim Your Good News in all we do, as well as what we say.
Lead us in the ways of Your loving-kindness.

Remind us to ponder the scriptures and reflect on Your teaching.

Open our hearts to receive what You have to share with us.

Show us how to live into Your ways of justice and mercy.

May Your wisdom be apparent in our lives,

living into the Gospel as a way of life,

rather than simply what we preach.

Spirit of Wisdom, remain in us, now and always.

Amen.