



St. Mary's Episcopal Church
Bridgeville, Delaware
"The Little Church with a Big Heart"

A Prayer for the Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 10, 2020

COLLECT

ALMIGHTY GOD, whom truly to know is everlasting life: Grant us so perfectly to know your Son Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, and the life, that we may steadfastly follow his steps in the way that leads to eternal life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

FIRST READING -- Acts 7:55-60

FILLED WITH THE Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16

(REFRAIN – *You have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of Truth*)

¹ In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; *

deliver me in your righteousness.

² Incline your ear to me; *

make haste to deliver me.

³ Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold; *

for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.

⁴ Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, *

for you are my tower of strength.

⁵ Into your hands I commend my spirit, *

for you have redeemed me, O LORD, O GOD of truth.

¹⁵ My times are in your hand; *

rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.

¹⁶ Make your face to shine upon your servant, *

and in your loving-kindness save me."

SECOND READING -- 1 Peter 2:2-10

LIKE NEWBORN INFANTS, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

“See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner”, and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

THE GOSPEL – John 14:1-14

JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES, “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

SERMON

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I know that travel during this sheltering proclamation has been difficult but if we could remember back when we were able to travel with the family how many times did we hear “are we there yet?” It got to the point that you just wanted to stop the car and put them out and let them find the way. That brings us back to the Gospel reading today. Do you know the way? The way or the lack of direction may seem confusing, lonely, or frightening at times. We keep looking for that GPS to help us out, to find the best direction.

We have that personal GPS and it is just on the nightstand right next to our bed. It’s that little book that may have dust on it. The Bible. That GPS gives us the way. From the prophets of the Old Testament to the ministry of Jesus as told in the Gospels and the Epistles as given to us by St. Paul and the other Apostles, we know the way. It gives us the direction and it shows us the way.

But how do we know that this book that was written over 2,000 years ago knows the shortest way? How do we know that this book will take us to our destination in a safe manner? How do we know that this book will bring us to our final destination of eternal happiness and comfort? We know because it is promised to us.

We all know about promises. Promises that we may have made to our Moms to be home by 8; promises to a friend that I’ll be there to help; a boss may promise you are next in line for promotion or raise; spouse, well maybe we don’t want to go there. Promises are made day in and day out and sometimes promises aren’t kept. That’s a reality. There are some that we meet that keep their promises and those may be few and far between.

This morning saw the greatest promise keeper we will ever know. God always keeps his promises.

We have seen descriptions of Jesus appearing to the disciples and the upper room conversation over past weeks. Jesus delivered this message on the night of the Last Supper and the night of his betrayal. This was not one of the greatest moments in the lives of the disciples. Judas was betraying Christ, Peter was told he was going to deny Christ, Jesus told them he was going away to prepare a place and you can’t come to me until I come to you. Thomas reacted “Jesus you have got to be kidding.” The Apostles had put all their eggs in one basket and now He was telling them he was going to leave? Many had given up everything that they thought was important to follow him and now? Needless to say, that would have been one tension filled late night and the environment they find themselves in.

Jesus reinforces that he is going away but will still be with them. He told them he is not going to leave them alone. He tries to reassure them that they have seen the Father and they do know the way. They just have to open their eyes. The works that Jesus has done, they are told, will be done by them and even greater acts will be done, by them, if they believe. It is hard for them to grasp that they will have that recognition, that ability to perform the miracles that Jesus performs.

We set back today and wonder how we can do the works of Jesus. Can we do the miracles that Jesus did. On a day to day basis, probably we can't. But we can show the works that Jesus performed of love, compassion and forgiveness to each and every one that we meet. It is through the teachings and direction that the Bible gives us that we know how to do the works of God. It is through the Bible that we know that by doing the works that God will give us the strength and power to accomplish those things which are most pleasant in his sight.

There's power in the Christian life, but it's found in the Person in the very Spirit of the Christ who has given us a friend, a counselor, an advocate, as a helper. Will you walk and live the Christian life the way God intended, with a friend walking beside you to help and to guide you? When you accept Jesus Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit within you. To be your counselor, your advocate, your helper, your guide, your own personal GPS. We all should strive to let him in.

God bless and stay safe, stay healthy and continue to walk in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Fr. Carl+