

PREGO PLUS: BACKGROUND NOTES

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER – YEAR B

Second Reading 1 John 2: 1–5

On this third Sunday of Easter, we continue to read from the first Epistle of St John (see the Prego Plus for the Second Sunday for further background information). The epistle as a whole emphasises the centrality of love.

Chapter 2 emphasises that there is one commandment: love one another. If we love one another, we are in the light; if we do not, we are in the dark. Those who deny that Jesus is the Messiah, and deny the true relationship of the Father to the Son, are themselves anti-Messiahs.

‘... if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ’

Though we are familiar with equating the ‘Advocate’, the one who will support us, with the Holy Spirit (John 14: 16–17), here it is Jesus himself who speaks for us to the Father. He died on the cross to ‘take our sins away’.

Sin itself (see also below) results from an indifference to the Lord’s commands. In the Gospel, John quotes Jesus himself: ‘If you love me, you will keep my commandments’ (John 14: 15).

Anyone who says, ‘I know him’ and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth.

John is writing against a background of a ‘gnostic’ view of religion. Gnostics held that salvation was based on a knowledge of God, but saw no link between the way a person behaves and their intellectual commitment to God. John, however, is at pains to state the opposite. The ‘knowledge’ of God that John advocates is not one concerned with facts, but based on close, intimate relationship, and living in accordance with God’s will.



‘If we obey
what he has said,
God’s love
comes to perfection
in us.’

Gospel Luke 24: 35–48

Today’s reading is the second part of the Emmaus story.

In a state of alarm and fright

Although they had heard the account of the Emmaus companions, and the rumours of Jesus appearing to some of the women in their circle, the disciples had not been expecting him to be with them at that precise moment.

‘Why are these doubts rising in your hearts?’

For the Greeks, the heart is the seat of reason and of emotions. Jesus needs to persuade them intellectually and emotionally of his presence among them.

‘Look at my hands and feet ... touch me and see for yourselves.’

It is important for Luke to show that Jesus is risen in body and soul. According to Greek philosophy (especially the philosopher Plato), the spirit of a person lived on once it had escaped from the dead body.

Although it is often assumed that Jesus is showing the disciples the scars made by the nails on his hands and feet, some theologians think that Jesus was simply offering his hands and feet as parts of his body they could touch. In his account of Jesus’s crucifixion, Luke never mentions the use of nails on the cross.

‘Have you anything here to eat?’

This is the second proof Jesus is offering the disciples. Meals of fish and bread were very much part of the everyday life of the disciples during Jesus’s three years of public ministry.

‘This is what I meant when I said ...’

The main point here is not to underline which passages are being fulfilled, but to show how Scripture finds its ultimate meaning in Jesus. He explains to them how ‘everything is written about *me*’.

Preaching to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem

Luke never shows Jesus at work among the Gentiles: he leaves this job to his disciples and the Early Church. They are to start locally and spread the good news outwards throughout the world. The core of the preaching of the disciples is that in the name of Jesus, they must encourage people to change their ways, to repent and so be forgiven.