

## LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS - EASTER 6A 2020

Bishop Susan Haynes

**Acts 17:22-31**

**Psalm 66:7-18**

**1 Peter 3:13-22**

**John 14:15-21**

### **Acts 17:22-31:**

As we continue to make our tour of the Acts of the Apostles during Eastertide, we are treated time and time again to the various preaching styles of Paul and Peter. In this selection, Paul is in Athens, Greece at the Areopagus, the Supreme Court of the time. This is the place where Truth is sought and debated. He is in the midst of a culture which prided itself on its quest for Wisdom, Beauty and Truth; they will not receive him well if he patronizes or condescends. So Paul does a brilliant thing. He spends time in the culture getting to know Athens before he begins to evangelize to Athens. First he says, "For as I went through the city and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I found among them an altar with an inscription, 'To an unknown God.'" He then goes on to proclaim to them that the God they didn't know, the God they were seeking, is the one God who made Heaven and Earth for whom Paul is an apostle. Perhaps to this day the Athenians have not been able to discover this God, but Paul can point him out; and he uses the very words of a Greek poet (which the Athenians will surely know) to direct them: "In him we live and move and have our being." And there, in front of the Areopagus, where Truth is discerned and known, Paul points to the ultimate Truth – Christ, raised from the dead.

***Does the idea of evangelism frighten you?***

***Would proclaiming the Good News be easier for you if you took the time to get to know the people to whom you want to proclaim it?***

***Perhaps relationship must precede evangelism. What are some important things in our own culture that would be important to "hook in" as we seek to tell others about Jesus?***

### **Psalm 66:7-18:**

The Psalmist is proclaiming good news! God attends to our voices and to our prayers and He does not reject us. We are never left alone. However, his attending to our prayers is predicated upon our keeping our hearts pure and free of evil. Constant awareness of our motives and intentions seems like a good idea. Self-examination, confession and the seeking of absolution for sins is a good way to keep the path to God open.

***What are ways that you examine your heart, mind and soul in order to keep them clear of debris?***

***Do you make use of the Sacrament of Reconciliation? While it is not required in the Episcopal Church, some find it a helpful resource for the spiritual life (BCP p. 447-452).***

### **1 Peter 3:13-22:**

This selection from Peter is one of my favorite Scripture lessons from the Epistles. It speaks of Christ's descent into Hell to preach to those who were lost in the flood of Noah – certainly evidence of God's

ever-encompassing love! Peter also exhorts all of us to live our lives boldly and not to fear suffering, particularly if we suffer while trying to do the right thing. In fact, Peter says, if we suffer for doing what is right, we will be blessed. Such suffering will bring others closer to God. This, of course, does not mean that we should seek suffering; but we should certainly not be afraid if suffering finds us. God redeems such suffering.

***Reflect on a time in your life where you have suffered. Ask the Holy Spirit, if you do not already see, to show you where God has been or is even still working to redeem that suffering.***

**John 14:15-21:**

Jesus's Farewell Discourse, his final instructions to his disciples, continues. He speaks to them of the Spirit of Truth which will soon come to them. Truth is in short supply these days. I hear many folks complaining that they are tired of being lied to and that they don't know whom they can trust to tell them the truth. Jesus says that the world does not see or know him, the Truth. But, he adds, we know Him because He abides in us. We are not left alone. "I will not leave you orphaned," Jesus says. You will never be bereft of truth or of me, He says. When we want to know the Truth, the task is to connect with that God who abides in us.

***How do you connect with the God who abides in you and who does not leave you orphaned?***

***How do you know when the Truth has found you and you have found the Truth?***

**COLLECT:**

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding: Pour into our hearts such love towards you, that we, loving you in all things and above all things, may obtain your promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.