

LECTIONARY REFLECTIONS EASTER 7A 2020

The Rt. Rev. Susan B. Haynes

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 33-36

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11

John 17:1-11

With regard to today's Eucharistic lectionary readings, we are in an in-between place. In a sense, we are hanging in limbo. We are in that time between the disciples' witnessing the ascent of Jesus into Heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. What does one do in such an in-between place? One waits and one prays.

Acts 1:6-14:

Luke and Acts, more than likely written by the same author is actually one book, but canonically presented in our Bibles as two. In the selection appointed for this Sunday, we read the only other account of the Ascension besides what is written in the 24th chapter of the Gospel of Luke. In this account, Jesus ascends into Heaven before the disciples' eyes and they witness two men in white robes (probably angels) who tell them that Jesus will return in the same way they saw Him leave. The good news is that when Jesus ascends into Heaven, He ascends as fully human, fully divine. This means that He takes our humanity with Him into the presence of God. Everything that we encounter as human beings is known to God and is in His presence. There is never a place in our human experience that God does not exist. But that is not all. We are promised something. We are promised a Holy Spirit, an Advocate, a Comforter, a Paraclete. Until that Spirit comes, the church waits and it prays.

When are you tempted to think that God might not be present?

In your human experience, is it helpful to imagine that God is infused throughout, working to create a holy place for you?

What encourages you to wait and to pray?

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11:

In his letter to the dispersed Jews in exile, Peter is reminding them that even though they imagine their trials to be a "fiery ordeal," their trials are nothing out of the ordinary; and they should embrace them as an opportunity to share in "Christ's sufferings." Such sharing is an opportunity to shout for joy. To prepare for the glory of God that is about to be revealed, Peter counsels them to do five things:

1. Humble themselves under the mighty hand of God.
2. Cast all their anxieties on God because God deeply cares for them.
3. Discipline themselves.
4. Keep alert.
5. Resist the attempts of the enemy to get them off course.

In the end, Peter promises them that Christ will "restore, support, strengthen and establish" them.

When you find yourself in the midst of troubles and ordeals, can you apply the five directives above? Can you come humbly into God's presence, cast your cares upon him, discipline yourself (in the study of Scripture and in prayer) and keep alert for the temptations to stray off course? What would it look like for God to restore, support, strengthen and establish you?

John 17:1-11:

This lovely pastoral prayer is an intimate conversation between Jesus and His Father. He is pleading on behalf of his disciples for their protection, wanting for them what He enjoys with the Father – unity. Recognizing that He will soon be returning to the Father, Jesus wants God to protect what He has given Him (i.e., the disciples, i.e. us), because they ultimately belong to Him. He wants them to be one with Him even as He is one with the Father. The intimacy in this prayer is profound – the kind that might be shared between two people who have known each other for an eternity. Jesus speaks of the glory that He had when He was in the presence of the Father “before the world existed.” Jesus, along with God, has always been. That kind of existence creates an intimacy that knows no separation. That’s what Jesus wants and prays for us.

What would it be like to be so in union with God, that you sense no separation? Can you trust that Jesus wants that for you and is praying to God even now for that for you?