

REFLECTIONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER, YEAR A 2020  
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**Acts 2:14a, 22-32**

In this section from the Acts of the Apostles, we get a glimpse of Peter's preaching style. For context, the Holy Spirit has just descended upon the Church at prayer on the day of Pentecost; and those who observed this accused the gathered of being drunk. Peter stands up to defend them and then proceeds to preach the Good News. Our selection this morning follows a brief reminder from the prophet Joel proclaiming a pouring out of the Spirit so that young men shall see visions and old men dream dreams...all leading to salvation for those who call upon the name of the Lord. In today's section from Acts, Peter is speaking to Israelites. He briefly summarizes the life of Jesus and reminds the Israelites that they had a hand in Jesus's Crucifixion, This is not so much to accuse the Jews, but to show them that they were part of the story intended and prescribed by God, all for the glory of God and the salvation of human beings. He tells them that Jesus is the Messiah, as evidenced by the fact that he could not be held a prisoner of death, but rose from the dead. As many preachers do, Peter then references another selection from Scripture, **Psalm 16**, which foretells of God's promise of a Messiah, descended from King David, who will never see death. For Jews, King David is an ancient hero. In his sermon, Peter reminds the Jews of David's life among them, of his burial, and of the presence of his tomb as evidence that he died. I remember from one of my first trips to the Holy Land, visiting the tomb of King David. As we gazed on the tomb, draped in blue and gold, around which devout Jews knelt to pray, our Jewish tour guide explained to us that, for Jews, the site of the tomb of King David was as holy a place in Israel as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the traditional site of the crucifixion of Jesus) was for Christians. In linking Psalm 16 with the reminder of the tomb of King David, Peter links David's words to Jesus – to a foretelling of the coming of a Messiah who will save the world. Then Peter confidently asserts that Jesus is the one who was raised up and is no longer held as a prisoner of Death.

*In this artful sermon, Peter is linking the death and resurrection of Jesus to the larger salvation history of the world that includes those of Jewish descent. What does it mean to you to be part of such a larger story? What does it mean to be connected to people all over the world by God's saving grace?*

### **1 Peter 1:3-9**

In this selection from 1 Peter, Peter is addressing Jews who are exiled in the Dispersion. He is talking to people who have been forced from their homes and are scattered in the regions of Pontus, Galathia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. He reminds them that they are people, chosen of God, who are destined for salvation. As an Apostle of Christ, he reminds them that he is a spokesperson for Christ and that the words he is writing should be received as if from Christ Himself and should be read in churches all over the region. Peter is speaking to a group of people who are suffering – enduring trials in their dispersion. He reminds them of the saving grace of Jesus Christ and exhorts them to endure these trials and to think of them as burnishing and polishing of fine metal, which is an experience that will lead to glory.

*In many ways, the Church in today's world is in exile. Particularly in this time of pandemic, we may feel scattered and disconnected. What is it about the Resurrection and the work of Jesus Christ that unites us? How can we understand that what we are experiencing will ultimately lead to victory and to greater, more abundant life in Christ?*

### **John 20:19-31**

We love this story! We identify with frightened disciples who are hunkering down in fear behind closed, locked doors following the death of their beloved Lord by violent means. They imagine that perhaps they are next in line for that treatment. They have lost everything familiar and hopeful and are perhaps paralyzed in their fear and longing for a return to normalcy. Jesus seeks them out where they are. He comes through those locked doors in bodily form (don't ask me how) and appears to them bringing peace. In this account he seems to give a preview of the Pentecostal experience by breathing the Holy Spirit on them. Thomas, as we know, was not among them when this happened. He proclaims his need to see some of the incarnational manifestations of the Risen Lord – the holes in his hands, the hole in his side. Rather than chastising him, Jesus meets him where he is and offers those signs to Thomas's touch. How wonderful that the Lord is willing to meet us where we are in our needs! There have been many sermons preached on this Gospel lesson, often focusing on the one called “doubting Thomas.” However, the point of the story is summed up in the final two verses:

*“Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.”* All throughout John’s Gospel, the author is concerned with showing signs that Jesus is the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. The first sign, as you might recall, is Jesus’s changing of the water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. Here in the final chapters of John, we see some of his final signs. The author of the gospel of John wants to present these signs so that readers will believe.

*What signs have you seen or are you seeing that help you to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? Do you have an experience of Jesus meeting you where you are in your doubt, fear and confusion? Behind what locked doors are you hiding? Does it help you to know that others are there also?*

**COLLECT FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER:**

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*