

## April 2024 Lectionary and Sermons

**April 7th, 2024**

*Second Sunday of Easter · White*

- [Acts 4:32-35](#)
- [Psalm 133](#)
- [1 John 1:1-2:2](#)
- [John 20:19-31](#)

Online prelude This Joyful Eastertide <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J7TFuqp97cs>

1 “Now the Green Blade Rises” Hymnal # 311 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-5Bi2jM40E>

2 313 O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2OqNj6xXlg>

3 301 Hallelujah, What a Savior <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voWjukxVCHI>

Online postlude We Remember <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H8UwHf9yy3k>

**Acts 4:32-35**      **ESV**    **They Had Everything in Common**

<sup>32</sup> **Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul,** and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and **great grace was upon them all.** <sup>34</sup> There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold <sup>35</sup> and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**1 John 1:1-2:2**      **English Standard Version** **The Word of Life**

**1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— <sup>2</sup> **the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—** <sup>3</sup> that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup> And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

**<sup>5</sup> This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.** <sup>6</sup> If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But **if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.** <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

**2** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. **<sup>2</sup> He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.**

#### John 20:19-31    ESV    Jesus Appears to the Disciples

<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. **As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.**" <sup>22</sup> **And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit.** <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." <sup>24</sup> Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. <sup>25</sup> So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." <sup>26</sup> Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>27</sup> Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." <sup>28</sup> Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

**<sup>30</sup> Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; <sup>31</sup> but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.**

**Sermon.** In this period between Easter and Pentecost we drop the Old Testament reading in favor of a reading from Acts. But, the outline of the book of Hosea is relevant today. Hosea was told by God to take a prostitute as a wife, and then live out the tribulations he experiences with that arrangement. It is an example of a **visible demonstration of a message that God** is conveying to the Hebrews. As we delve into the texts today we have to appreciate that, **just as Hosea was a means of conveying the Divine message, so, too, is Jesus the Christ as he serves as both our redeemer and as our best – and perfect – example of what God wishes in mankind. It is Divinely inspired experiential learning.**

Our Gospel text for today draws our attention to the story of Doubting Thomas. If you consider the totality of the post Resurrection discussion, the other ten disciples were not particularly insightful and immediately faithful regarding the Resurrection either. Remember that the women told the disciples and Peter and John then ran to the tomb to confirm what the women had told them. The others, perhaps, were too afraid to venture out. You remember that our text last week recounted how, that same day of the Resurrection, Jesus came to the disciples, less Thomas (who was, unfortunately for him, not present). What that means is that the 10 disciples who witnessed Jesus come into their room and eat with them were privy to a physical proof. That seems to be the only difference between them and Thomas – they saw the risen Jesus and he didn't. So, notwithstanding our focus on Doubting Thomas, I don't think that is the point of today's Gospel text. **Just as we discussed last week, I think that the point this week is the same as last week – Jesus challenged the disciples when he came to them. He gave them a task and he gave them authority. This is underscored by how John concludes this chapter and the book – telling us that the whole purpose of the book is to share the Gospel so that the world may know.**

**Our epistle lesson is a follow on to the Gospel. John has taken up the challenge from Jesus and is testifying of God's grace** to his audience. The bottom line that he provides is that Jesus the Christ is the fulfillment of the promise of grace and that we should live accordingly.

Our Acts reading takes us to the early days of the church, when its adherents enthusiastically embraced the message of living justly as demonstrated in the example of the Christ – experientially learned by the early church through the disciples who were the students of Jesus.

I think that it is a mistake to assume that this lesson is that giving was to be exceptionally sacrificial – selling off your assets in order to provide for the congregation. Now, I do think that sacrificial giving is appropriate and I would be happy to talk further about that in a non-worship venue. We know that early believers were certain that Jesus was going to return soon. Indeed, over the centuries we have seen countless groups with the same conviction. When your horizon comes close to you, then you have a different perspective than if it is at some unknown distance. **I think that the point for today is not the amount of giving, but the fact that the early church members actually were thinking of others** – indeed, perhaps thinking of others first. We Yankees tend to be a very private group. In our world I think that we assume that if someone has a need they will articulate it and then we can provide or solicit help. The Acts message is different – it is one of being proactive. **It appears that the early congregations did not wait for stewardship appeals, but, rather, assumed that there were unmet needs and that we, as God’s people, should be concerned with them.**

**On an individual basis, this means being tuned into each other** – difficult when we tend to privacy. **That can be as simple as just talking with someone. Or considering their feelings before your own.** Or being alert to needs of others. But, **back to the point of the text – the early church reflected very much the experiential example of Jesus** and his ministry.

Jesus’ appearance to the Eleven, including Thomas, is all about the challenge to take the Good News further. To not be afraid, to be empowered and to get the Good News out to everyone. John’s epistle takes up that Divine mandate and challenges John’s readers to walk in the light that Christ provides and not the darkness that we otherwise live in. Acts is an example of how some of the early believers were trying to walk in the light. God has saved and redeemed them and their response is to care for each other, sacrificially. It is all about the Good News of grace and what that grace frees us – enables us – empowers us – to do. Spread the Good News. Translate that Good News into your own actions.

Sometimes we revert to our Jonah personalities – keeping the Good News locked up as if for our own benefit. Sometimes, I suspect, we take the same view toward

helping others – why help those people? For sure, none of us and no entity, such as this church, can help everyone with all of their needs. That is not the point. The point is that God has provided richly for us. Atonement for our countless sins. Fellowship with Him and each other. The practical wherewithal to live on this planet in this place. Given all of our blessings, what else can we do other than to follow the example of the early church? Our God given responsibility is to share the Good News in every way possible so that the world will know of His goodness and outreach to us. A starting point for this is to grasp what those blessings are to each of us personally. Not an academic question, but a very real one of our own personal experience. Where is God in your life? Exactly how do you reflect Him in how you live? In your actions. Your priorities. Glorify God in your living so that the world may know of Him and what He has done and is doing.

By His grace alone. In faith alone. In Christ alone. Through the guidance of Scripture alone. That we may, in all that we do, give all glory to God alone. Solideogloria. Amen.

## April 14th, 2024

*Third Sunday of Easter · White*

- [Acts 3:12-19](#)
- [Psalm 4](#)
- [1 John 3:1-7](#)
- [Luke 24:36b-48](#)    [John 16: 16-22](#)

• Our readings in this third week of Easter invite us to think about our own reactions to the death and resurrection of Jesus and the implications for our ethics, concerns, and lifestyle. What does it mean to us today to witness to Christ's love and power in the world?

- Online prelude We Give You Thanks  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tiOixBxDIVQ>
- 1 #307 Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RowlQil0jTU>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGhuSdbyq3Y>
- 2 #357 All I Once Held Dear <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxJUT0vhBLc>
- 3 Easter Alleluia <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgbBXEZUDCs>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvbt4VZinVE>
- Online postlude Jehovah Tsidkenu <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1XY-3eFTR8>

[Acts 3:12-19](#)      English Standard Version

<sup>12</sup> And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?" <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. <sup>17</sup> "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But **what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.** <sup>19</sup> **Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,**

1 John 3:1-7 English Standard Version

**3 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.** The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, **we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.** <sup>3</sup> **And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.**

<sup>4</sup> Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> **You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.** <sup>6</sup> No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. <sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

John 16: 16-22 **Your Sorrow Will Turn into Joy**

<sup>16</sup> "A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me." <sup>17</sup> So some of his disciples said to one another, "What is this that he says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me'; and, 'because I am going to the Father'?" <sup>18</sup> So they were saying, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We do not know what he is talking

about.”<sup>19</sup> Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’?”<sup>20</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, **you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy.**<sup>21</sup> When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.<sup>22</sup> **So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.**<sup>23</sup> In that day you will ask nothing of me. **Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.**<sup>24</sup> **Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.**

**Sermon.** Our Gospel text for today is on the final day before the Passion of the Christ. Jesus is talking to the disciples, knowing that it is the wrap up of their preparation for the new ministry that will be given to them within days, if not hours. They are talmidim – students – and, unknowing to them, are about to graduate and undertake ministry without the physical, earthly presence of the man they know as rabbi Jesus and sometimes acknowledge as the Christ. Other than their distrust of the temple authorities, the disciples have been portrayed as more or less bullish on and engaged in the ministry of Jesus. We have seen the Transfiguration Day apostolic debate as to which disciple will have which portfolio or task in the new kingdom that Jesus keeps speaking of. Today’s text has Jesus warning them of what is about to happen and the impact it will have on them.

About this time in my senior year in high school I knew that I was going to the Naval Academy and had some image of what that would be. My 17 year old self was sufficiently aware of reality to know that the catalog did not tell the full story. So, when a cadet from the Coast Guard Academy came to school during his spring break I signed up to talk with him. He had graduated from my high school two years earlier, and I figured that he would be candid with me. He was. He explained the nature of discipline at the Federal academies and that the first year would be difficult and that part of preparing would be practical (I needed to get the phys ed teacher to teach me how to box), but the greater part of it was mental. I needed to grasp that the future always lay ahead. The relative bliss of

being a high school senior was going to end. I was about to go from a high peak to an abyss that would seem to be bottomless for some period of time, but ultimately would be worth the difficulties.

**I think that Jesus is doing something of this with the disciples. They have spent much of their time in the Galilee where the people were relatively ready for the Gospel message. They have had a modest taste of life outside of Galilee when Jesus evicted the merchants from the temple and they were well aware of the dangers to Jesus that the temple authorities posed. But, just as with my meeting with Cadet Engdahl, intellectually understanding and experiencing are two very different levels. Jesus is warning them of all the adversity they would face, the sorrow they would experience, but promising that joy would come. They were about to face the fundamental question that every Christian faces: "What do I do today? Tomorrow? While waiting for the return of the Messiah?"**

**Peter takes a shot at this as he addresses a Jewish crowd in our Acts text.** A miracle of healing has been performed in the name of Jesus the Christ by Peter. There is a crowd and he speaks to them. He explains exactly what their leadership has done, but then counsels them **to repent. To have faith. To believe. That they do not need to be prisoners of sin.**

In his epistle, **John** undertakes similar counselling. What are the believers to do now - **follow Christ in their behavior.**

**Jesus is trying to prepare his followers for what they will need to do the next day, and the day after that, and the next and so on. We live in that same world of distractions and challenging priorities.** So, what do we do? The epistle text is a start. Put in today's vernacular, measure what we do by the example of Jesus. Is what we are contemplating Christ-like. Or otherwise? I think it fair to say that there will be lots of decision points where it may not be clear what the Christ like thing to do is, even though in most cases I think that the path is straight forward. **Think about it this way – try to list the times that Scripture tells us that Jesus was judgmental and rejected people. How about when he put himself first? How long is your list?**



If we step back for a moment and consider the **Westminster** catechism, the response to the first question is that **our chief end** – our chief aspiration – is to glorify Him and enjoy His presence forever. **Perhaps it really is that simple.** Does what we undertake glorify Him? Now, when I consider my own daily life, I confess that I am not trying to make a theological statement at every turn. I suspect that all of us are like this: we get up in the morning with plans for tangible activities – the stuff that needs to be done. How we are going to pay the bills. We go about those tasks. At the end of the day we consider what has been completed, what remains to be done, and what we need to do the next day. And then repeat the process. Sometimes adding in something we do simply for the pleasure of it. Sometimes we add in social activities that we either long to do or consider necessary parts of our community life. This is all, I think, normal human life. Live your day. Repeat.

**What transforms life to something more is where God fits into our scheme.** The disciples are going to have a long and tough road in their work and lives. The work is and will be worthy of them, but they will have to deal with the realities of life in a fallen world. The people whom Peter and John address must **wake up and redirect themselves from the shallowness of what our lives can devolve to and the richness that God intends and has provided. Each moment does not need to be statement of theology, but perhaps it is when we live seeking to reflect the grace of God.** This does not require a seminary degree, but, rather, the simple realization that God has richly blessed us and that our living needs to reflect that. It is up to us to sort and what that means each day, and then do it.

Alone we are not capable of this. But, we are through God's grace alone, in faith alone, in Christ alone, through the guidance of Scripture alone. So that we may, in our daily lives, give all glory to God alone. It is His Kingdom and we are our very best when we live to that.

Solideogloria. Amen.

## **April 21st, 2024**

*Fourth Sunday of Easter · White*

- Acts 4:5-12
- Psalm 23
- 1 John 3:16-24
- John 10:11-18

- #277 My Savior's Love <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zmt5VNnrJIM>

## **April 28th, 2024**

*Fifth Sunday of Easter · White*

- Acts 8:26-40
- Psalm 22:25-31
- 1 John 4:7-21
- John 15:1-8