

Sunday, April 23, 2023 – Third Sunday of Easter

First Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41

14a, 36 - Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed (the crowd):
"Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

37-38 - Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

41 - So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Acts 1: 15 speaks of a crowd of about 120 believers. 1 Corinthians 15: 6 says that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred at one time. What do you think it was like for the early church to go from 500 members to 3500 members in one day?

Psalm: Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

1-2 - I love the LORD, who has heard my voice and listened to my supplication,
for the LORD has given ear to me whenever I called.

When has the Lord heard your voice, listened to your supplication, and given ear to your call?

3 - The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me;
I came to grief and sorrow.

What has been your closest brush/encounter with death?

What was it like? What affect did it have on your faith and your relationship with God?

4 - Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I pray you, save my life."

12 - How shall I repay the LORD for all the good things God has done for me?

15 - Precious in your sight, O LORD, is the death of your faithful ones.

There are two possible meanings to the Hebrew word translated "precious" – costly and highly valued.

How is the death of God's faithful ones costly for God? How is it highly valued?

Revelation 21: 4 – He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 1:17-23

17 - Live in reverent fear during the time of your exile.

1 Peter 1: 1 – To the exiles of the dispersion.

As followers of Jesus we should not expect to fit in to the values of the world. We are in exile.

18-19 - You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish.

Cf. Martin Luther's meaning to the Second Article of the Apostles Creed – (He) has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.

20-21 - He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

Cf. Acts 2: 23 – This man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.

Long before –

Jeremiah 31: 31 – When God said that He would make a new covenant with His people

Isaiah 53: 5 – When the prophet spoke of one who would be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities

2 Samuel 7: 16 – When God told David that his house and his kingdom would be made sure forever

Exodus 12: 7 – When God told Moses to instruct the Israelites to put the blood of the Passover lamb on their doorposts

Genesis 22: 13 – When a ram caught in a thicket was sacrificed instead of Isaac ("His Only Son" movie)

Genesis 3: 15 – When God told Adam and Eve that the wounding of the serpent's descendant would be greater than the wounding of their descendant

Long before any of those and even before the creation of the world, God knew how He would save us

23 - You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Cf. 1 Peter 1: 3 – By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Cf. born again or born from above language in John's Gospel – new life-giving power of a seed.

Gospel: Luke 24:13-35

The two followers of Jesus recognized Jesus not in His suddenly appearing along the road and not in His teaching them from the Old Testament, as only He, the Master Teacher, could do. Instead it was when He took common, ordinary bread and broke it that they knew who He was. He became known to them in the breaking of the bread.

What was it about that moment of the breaking of the bread that made it so special and so revealing for them?

I think they recognized Jesus in this simple act of breaking bread because it was just so much like Jesus to break bread.

As long as the loaf remained whole in His hands, no one was fed.

It was only after He had broken it and distributed it that people were fed.

In the same way Jesus came to earth to be broken. He makes us whole by His being broken.

And so it is with us, His people – "The Wounded Healer" by Henri Nouwen.

We cannot really help heal other people until and unless we ourselves have been wounded.

It is only as we ourselves are broken that we have the grace and the power and the compassion to help others who are wounded and broken to become whole.