

**Pericope Study for Sunday, April 12, 2015 – Easter 2B**

Presented Tue 4/7/15 by Richard Burgess

**Collect / Prayer of the Day (ELW)** Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the day of our Lord's resurrection. By the grace of Christ among us, enable us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**General Thought Question for Low Sunday**

In some of our churches there will be fewer people in the pews than the previous week. How would you deal with it if that happened in your congregation? Could it be turned into an opportunity? Consider the likely nature of such a clientele and the presumed residue from the holy week before.

**Possible Sermon Titles for Easter 2B**

As usual, use at your own risk.

|   | <b>Acts</b> | <b>1Jn</b> | <b>Jn</b> |
|---|-------------|------------|-----------|
| A New Commandment – Share   | X           |            |           |
| One in Christ – One Heart, One Soul, One Wallet                       | X           |            |           |
| From Each According to Their Ability, To Each According to Their Need | X           |            |           |
| We Have Seen the Lord   |             | X          | X         |
| You're a Sinner - Get Over It   |             | X          |           |
| Make Our Joy Complete – Join Us in Fellowship                         |             | X          |           |
| We Proclaim What We Have Seen & Heard & Touched – Life                |             | X          |           |
| No Darkness Here, Only Light  |             | X          |           |
| Jesus Isn't Just for Christians – He's for the Whole World            |             | X          |           |
| Odd, Thomas   |             |            | X         |
| Have Doubts? You're in Good Company                                   |             |            | X         |
| Peace Be with You   |             |            | X         |
| As the Father Sent Jesus, So God Sends You                            |             |            | X         |
| Receive the Holy Spirit   |             |            | X         |
| Blessed Are Those Who Have Not Seen                                   |             |            | x         |
|   |             |            |           |
|   |             |            |           |
|   |             |            |           |
|   |             |            |           |

**Attached Articles (paper edition only)**

I am attaching the first page of a couple articles rather than print out the whole thing (Stewardship of creation, compassion on innocent trees, burnt out pastor after Holy Week, etc) and all the pages of three one page articles. If you are interested in the whole articles, there are links to them on my web page:

[http://www.richardburgess.com/easter\\_2b\\_-\\_sun\\_41215](http://www.richardburgess.com/easter_2b_-_sun_41215). There are also a number of other links there, mostly, but not entirely, articles also appearing on The Text This Week.

## **Lesson I: Acts 4.32-35 (NRSV)**

<sup>32</sup>Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. <sup>33</sup>With great power the apostles gave 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 owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. <sup>35</sup>They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

## **Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:**

Acts 4.32 How realistic is it for *the whole group of those who believed* to have common ownership of everything? What would be the benefits? Possible problems? How might a partial vision of this be realized in our congregations? Our denomination? What kind of support is needed to be able to make common ownership of property work, or even get people to consider it? How can we help our people appropriate this aspect of "the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do" (POD)?

Acts 4.34-35 Note that property was not shared directly but rather through the apostles. This prevented recipients of help from becoming obligated to donors, a problem with the more conventional system of patronage.

## Lesson II: 1 John 1.1 – 2.2 (NRSV)

<sup>1</sup>We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—<sup>2</sup>this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—<sup>3</sup>we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>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 there is no darkness at all. <sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the light as he himself 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 that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>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>and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

## Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

1Jn 1.1 *We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands*, How can we help our people declare what they have experienced? What does *what was from the beginning* have to do with it?

1Jn 1.1-2 What is the *word of life* that was *revealed*? What needs to be done to make the move from that revealed word to the action it requires in the world in response?

1Jn 1.4 What do we need to do so that *our joy may be complete* in our congregations and lives?

1Jn 1.5 How do you reconcile *God is light and in him there is no darkness at all* with Isaiah 45.7 “I form light and create darkness, I make weal and create woe; I the Lord do all these things.” (NRSV) (If only theodicy would go away, our lives would be so much easier.)

1Jn 1.8-9 These words are of course familiar to our people from the confession in our liturgy. Does anything need to be done to help them hear it freshly, ie, in the context of this scripture passage instead of in the context of their weekly confession? On the other hand, what can actually be taken advantage of from our familiarity with these lines?

1Jn 2.1 *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin*. Is this a joke? I don't remember for sure, but I think it was either Augustine or Luther who said that when our sins are forgiven, we sin again before we can even leave the room.

1Jn 2.2 *he is the atoning sacrifice . . . for the sins of the whole world*. What can we do to make this accepted and lived out of for “the whole world”? How does this relate to the Germanwings crash, the abducted girls in Nigeria, the John Rowland saga, etc? Messy sin situations in your parish?

**Gospel: John 20.19-31 (NRSV)**

<sup>19</sup>When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup>After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup>Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." <sup>22</sup>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 retain the sins of any, they are retained."

<sup>24</sup>But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, 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 the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

<sup>26</sup>A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, 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. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt 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 come to believe."

<sup>30</sup>Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. <sup>31</sup>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.

**Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:**

Jn 20.19 *for fear of the Jews* Does anything need to be done to de-anti-Semitize "the Jews"?

Jn 20.20 *he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.* Compare to Jn 20.26 (Mary Magdalene recognizing Jesus after he called her by name) and Lk 24.30-31 (Emmaus and Jesus recognized only when they did Eucharist). Can you cite similar happenings from your

life or ministry? What are the practical implications of what it takes to see Jesus?

Jn 20.21 *Peace be with you.* Why does Jesus say this a second time? Compare the three peace givings (20.20, 21, 26) in this Gospel lesson. Could a sermon be built around these?

Jn 20.22 What is the significance of this giving of the Holy Spirit in relation to other appearances / givings / manifestations of the Spirit? Some refer to this giving of the Spirit as John's "Pentecost". What is to be made, or not, of this comparison?

Jn 20.22-23 What is the connection between the giving of the Holy Spirit and the ability to forgive & retain sins? Is this ability ontological or can it be acquired and later lost? Is it individual or communal? What is its purpose, ie, to what end is it to be used? How can that most effectively be encouraged?

Jn 20.25b How "reasonable" do you think Thomas' objection / reservations are? How would you have given Thomas pastoral care? What comparable "doubt" have you encountered in modern believers?

Jn 20.27-28 Note that Thomas didn't actually poke Jesus as he had demanded. Significance (or not)?

Jn 20.29 *Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.* How can this actually be used pastorally to encourage / give faith to people today?

Jn 20.30-31 This is frequently considered the end of the original John. Notice that if that is true, the 4 gospels conveniently have 16, 20, 24, and 28 chapters each, ie,  $12 + 4n$  where  $n = 1, 2, 3, 4$ . How tidy. There has got to be some great numerology in there. Homiletical possibilities?

Jn 20.30-31 *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.* This is a summary of the purpose of John's Gospel. How does it shape your use of John? Your approach to preaching, pastoral care, etc in general? How can it be preached by itself?