

# Easter 3

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## Prayer of the Day

O God, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world, rescuing us from the hopelessness of death. Grant your faithful people a share in the joys that are eternal; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

## Acts 3:12-19

{12} When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? {13} The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. {14} But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, {15} and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. {16} And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. {17} "And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. {18} In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. {19} Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.

12. *When Peter saw it:* Peter saw a great crowd gathering because of the healing of a man, lame from birth. Peter denied that the healing was the consequence of the power or piety of John or himself. The gathering of the crowd provides an opportunity for Peter to preach

13. *the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors:* See Exodus 3:6, 15. The God whom Peter proclaims is not a new god, but the God of the fathers.

*Pilate had decided to release him [Jesus]:* Luke 23:4; 14-16; 22-24.

14. *you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you:* Luke 23:18-19.

15. *the Author of life:* "Basically, *archegos* [author] means "pathfinder, pioneer" and was used of patrons, founders, and eponymous heroes. Here it must mean something like *originator*, author. The title will appear again at 5:31; cf. Heb 2:10; 12:2. In 26:23 Luke will identify Christ as *the first to rise from the dead*, and that notion explains the title used here." [1]

16: The awkwardness of the verse reflects the awkwardness of the Greek. The point however is clear: the man was healed through faith in Jesus.

17. *you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers:* Does this reflect Jesus' prayer for the forgiveness of his crucifiers (Luke 23:33f.)? In any case, Peter says that even the rulers, that is, the religious authorities, members of the council, acted in ignorance of who Jesus was and what he was doing. Paul acted in ignorance in persecuting Christians and received mercy (1 Timothy 1:13). See also 2 Corinthians 2:8. Ezekiel 45:20; Leviticus 4; Numbers 15:22-29, unintentional sins. "Jesus's death, explained in Acts as a misunderstanding on the part of Jews, leads to a peculiarly Lucan idea of the soteriological value of that death. Luke never speaks of Jesus' death as expiation, atonement, reconciliation, and only once as justification. This motif of the ignorance of the Jews, excusing them from guilt in the death of Jesus, appears in three speeches: 3:17; 13:27; 17:30." [2]

18. *foretold through all the prophets:* No individual citation is intended; the whole of the

prophets is treated as a unity.

## Psalm 4

{1} Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer. {2} How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? Selah {3} But know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for himself; the LORD hears when I call to him. {4} When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Selah {5} Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. {6} There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O LORD!" {7} You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound. {8} I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O LORD, make me lie down in safety.

Although Yahweh has acted for the psalmist when (s)he was in trouble, enemies continue to dishonor him/her. The Psalmist is confident that Yahweh will continue to protect him/her, and calls on the persecutors to accept Yahweh's intervention. The singer will sleep in peace because Yahweh will protect him/her.

## 1 John 3:1-7

{1} See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. {2} Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. {3} And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. {4} Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. {5} You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. {6} No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. {7} Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

*1. children of God:* Jesus is God's Son, and we, too, are God's children.

*it did not know him:* Here John picks up the theme of ignorance that Luke expresses in the first lesson, and expands it to include "the world." The world does not know us because it did not know Jesus.

*2. what we will be we will be like him we will see him as he is:* Our future is not known. What is known is that it is our future to be like Jesus, to be pure as he is pure (verse 3), without sin as he is without sin (verses 4-6), to be righteous as he is righteous (verse 7). All of this is from the love of God (verse 1).

*3:* Jesus called on his followers to "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." They become pure by holding fast to their hope in God's promises.

*4. sin is lawlessness:* "Apart from the law sin lies dead." *Anomia*, "lawlessness" is not being without the law, but not obeying the law.

*5-6:* The purpose for which Jesus was revealed was to take away sins. Those who abide in Jesus are sinless in the sight of God. Those whose sin has been taken away and who are sinless will not sin. Release from sin does not free us to continue to sin, but to refrain from sinning

## Luke 24:36b-48

{36b} Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." {37} They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. {38} He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? {39} Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." {40} And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. {41} While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" {42} They gave him a piece of broiled fish, {43} and he took it and ate in their presence. {44} Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you--that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled." {45} Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, {46} and he said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, {47} and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. {48} You are

witnesses of these things.

[36a. *While they were still talking about this:* They were still talking about the events reported by the two disciples concerning "what had happened on the road" (to Emmaus).]

37. They thought they were seeing a ghost: "This sense of *pneuma* ["spirit"], as the bodiless independent being of a person after death is not used elsewhere by Luke, but it does occur in 1 Pet 3:19; Heb 12:23." [3]

38-43: Jesus offers several tests of his reality, finally eating a piece of fish. See John 21:9, though that passage does not report that Jesus ate any of the fish. "Only Luke among the evangelists indulges in this sort of realism about the existence of the risen Christ." [4]

44-46: The instruction Jesus gave the two in Emmaus (24:26-27) he now repeats for the Eleven.

47-48: "This passage is remotely related to the finale of the Matthean Gospel (29:19-20a) and to the Marcan appendix (16:15-16) in that like them it preserves an early tradition about an appearance of the risen Christ in which he commissioned disciples to carry out a future mission in his name. However, strikingly enough, the commission in each case is made *in its formulation* to suit a major theme in the theology of the Gospel. In the Marcan appendix not composed by Mark himself, but echoing in part some Marcan themes the commission is worded thus:

16:15-16: Go into the whole universe and preach the gospel to every creature. The one who believes (it) and is baptized will be saved; the one who does not believe will be damned.

In this Marcan commission the disciples are to preach the gospel a theme that Luke has studiously avoided in his Gospel.

Matthew does not express the final commission in terms of gospel either, but phrases it to express his own concerns thus:

18:19-20a: Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

In contrast with the two foregoing commissions, the Lucan formulation of the charge stands out; it is also the beginning of a theme that will be important in the rest of the Lucan writings. It runs thus:

24:47-49 In his name repentance for the forgiveness of sins shall be preached to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem! You are my witnesses of this! Now take note: I am sending upon you what my Father has promised. You are to remain here in the city until you are invested with power from on high.

What is striking is the way the Lucan Christ relates this function of the disciples to the OT Scriptures. They tell not only about the suffering Messiah who is to rise, but they become the basis for the testimony that the disciples are to bear and the preaching that they are to carry out in his name." [5]

This is Luke's version of the appearance in John 20:19-31. "Verses 36-53 are really a literary unit, for they recount but one appearance of the risen Christ. The real recognition of Christ does not come until v. 52, where, having been instructed by him from Scripture, they finally worship him." [6]

## Reflection

In the prayer of the day we praise God for rescuing us from the hopelessness of death by the humiliation of the Son, and we pray that we may share eternal joy through Christ.

Because of ignorance people have failed to acknowledge Jesus as the Author of life and God's Son God continues to reach out and invite them into his kingdom. It is not because of what we have done but by grace that we have become God's children. We have been rescued from death; our sins have been taken away. When Jesus returns we know that we shall be "like him" because of God's love.

What the Gospel promises is true: we purify ourselves as he is pure, we will be like him, those who are in Christ have no sin, we are righteous as he is righteous, and so on; but while all that is true, it is true by anticipation. Our perfection is an eschatological reality, which God assigns to us even now. It is not ours, but God's righteousness in Christ.

## Hymns [7]

*With One Voice* (e.g. 762v), *Hymnal Supplement* 1991 (e.g. 725s) and *LBW* (e.g. 32).

E=Entrance; D=Hymn of the Day; I=First Lesson, P=Psalm; II=Second Lesson; G=Gospel

153 --E--Welcome, Happy

152 --D--Look, Now He

340 --I--Jesus Christ, My

729v --P--Christ, Mighty (787s)

211 --II--Here, O My

323 --II--O Lord of Light,

674v --G--Alleluia! Jesus

672v --G--Christ Is Risen

743v --G--Stay with Us

154, 145, 300, 743s, 136

## Prayers of the People [8]

A: Believing the risen Christ to be present as we gather for worship, we pray, "Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture." We respond, C: Hear us O Lord.

A: That the church forever in transition might not lose its way, we pray, Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us O Lord.

A: That nations experiencing the grief of ethnic cleansing might find refuge and deliverance, we pray, Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us, O Lord.

A: That the debtor nations of the developing world might not lose heart before deficits that seem insurmountable, but find courage to work toward solutions that mean life for their people. Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us, O Lord.

A: That those yet unreconciled in the community of believers may see themselves in the light of the resurrection. Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us, O Lord.

A: That the newly-baptized may find strong support from their sisters and brothers in Christ. Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us, O Lord.

*When the Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness is not used, the following may be said.* A: Forgive us, God of the light, the truth, and the way, when we begin any day and conclude the same without the sense of Christ risen and truly present. Son of God, open our minds to understand the Scripture. C: Hear us, O Lord.

P: Praise to your Name, who has given us hope and has come gently among us in the Eucharist. C: Amen.

## Or [9]

> *Presider or deacon*

In the flesh and bones of the risen Christ, the invisible God stands among us.

Let us pray to God for the needs of all believers and of all peoples everywhere.

*Deacon or other leader*

For the holy churches in every place, and for the unity of all.

For this holy assembly and for all who gather in Christ.

For *NN* and all illumined by the light of Christ.

For *N* our bishop and the presbyters, the deacons and all who minister in Christ, and for all the

holy people of God.

For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people.

For all those in danger and need, the sick, the suffering, and the oppressed, and for all the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Remembering the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ. **To you, O Lord.**

*Presider*

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who sent Christ to suffer and rise from the dead. Hear our prayers which we offer through his presence, and proclaim forgiveness of sins to all nations. Glory to you for ever and ever.

## **Notes**

[1] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1997, p. 286.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[3] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X-XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1985, p. 1576

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 1577.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 1578-1580.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 1572.

[7] <http://www.worship.ca/text/wpch0203.txt>

[8] [http://www.worship.ca/text/inter\\_b1.txt](http://www.worship.ca/text/inter_b1.txt)

[9] <http://members.cox.net/oplater/prayer.htm>