

Easter 2

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Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, with joy we celebrate the festival of our Lord's resurrection. Graciously help us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Acts 5:27-32

{27} When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, {28} saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." {29} But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. {30} The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. {31} God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. {32} And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

27. *they brought them*: The captain of the temple and the temple police (Acts 5:24-26) brought the apostles.

the council: Greek: *synedrion*, "the Sanhedrin," the religious council in Jerusalem. The apostles are brought before the council for the second time, see Acts 4:1-15.

28. *We gave you strict orders*: See Acts 4:18.

29. *We must obey God rather than any human authority*: Acts 4:18-19.

30. *The God of our ancestors*: Peter declares that he is not an apostate Jew, but rather that Jesus was raised up by Yahweh.

hanging him on a tree: See the notes on the first lesson for last Sunday.

32. *We are witnesses*: Peter tells the council that he and his fellow apostles are witnesses to the events which they are reporting.

so is the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is also a witness, and testifies to and through those who believe in Jesus.

Psalm 118:14-29

{14} The LORD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. {15} There are glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the LORD does valiantly; {16} the right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly." {17} I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the LORD. {18} The LORD has punished me severely, but he did not give me over to death. {19} Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD. {20} This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it. {21} I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. {22} The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. {23} This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. {24} This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. {25} Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! {26} Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD. We bless you from the house of the LORD. {27} The LORD is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. {28} You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. {29} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

For verses 14-24 see the notes for Easter of this year.

25. *Save us*: The Hebrew is *hoshi'a na*, "Hosanna." "In 2 Sam. 14:4 and 2 Kings 6:26 the

cry iywvh [*hwshy*‘, "hosanna"] is a petition for pardon. The same form as a cry for help occurs in Pss. 12:1; 20:9; 28:9; 60:5; 108:6. In the NT [*hosanna*] peculiarly has the character of a festal cry of praise: Mark 11:9f; Matt. 21:9." [1]

26-27: A liturgy of entry into the Temple for a festival. A blessing is pronounced by the priests on those who are about to enter.

The Lord is God: Some see the origin of this ascription in a festival of covenant renewal that goes back to Joshua 25:17-24. [2]

He has given us light: Literally, "and he shined on us." Perhaps a reference to the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:25), "Yahweh shines his face on you."

Bind the festal procession with branches up to the horns of the altar: A description of a solemn procession through the Temple courtyard up to the altar.

You are my God...: A single singer confesses Yahweh as God and invites others to give thanks to him as well.

Or Psalm 150

{1} Praise the LORD! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! {2} Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! {3} Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! {4} Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! {5} Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals! {6} Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise the LORD!

"The community assembled in the sanctuary praised God to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Psalm 150 is an exhortation to engage in the praise that was heard in the holy place.... The praise of Yahweh is intoned to music and dance." [3]

1. *Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament*: Praise to Yahweh offered in the temple is heard in the heavenly court, for temple and heaven are one.

2-6: Yahweh's mighty deeds are praised by everything that breathes with different instruments and with dance.

Revelation 1:4-8

{4} John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, {5} and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, {6} and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. {7} Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. {8} "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

4. *John to the seven churches that are in Asia*: "...the author of Revelation is a man named John who is otherwise unknown to us." [4] This is a general introduction to the letters to the seven churches in Asia in 2:1-3:22.

Grace to you and peace: A common, New Testament, Christian epistolary greeting: Colossians 1:7; Ephesians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Jude 2; Philemon 3; Philippians 1:2; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; 2 John 3; 2 Peter 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:2.

The greeting in Revelation is unique in coming from "the one who is..." the seven spirits, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

him who is and who was and who is to come: "...probably intended to be one word, an indeclinable noun, a paraphrase of the tetragrammaton, Y-H-W-H, "He who is." [5]

the seven spirits who are before his throne. The spirits are variously interpreted as 1) the Holy Spirit, 2) the seven principal angels of God, 3) in terms of ancient near eastern groups

of seven astral deities. Aune rejects the interpretation of the seven spirits as the Holy Spirit, and opts for the "seven principal angels of God." (see Revelation 4:5: 5:6; 8:2). [6]

5. *Jesus Christ...the firstborn of the dead*: This attribution occurs in Colossians 1:18.

the ruler of the kings of the earth: In 1 Timothy 6:15 Jesus is identified as the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (see also Revelation 17:14 and 19:16).

ruler of the kings of the earth: King of kings, see Revelation 17:14; 19:6

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins: a doxology is offered to Christ.

by his blood. "To the Hebrews blood was synonymous with life. The baptized person is spiritually immersed in the blood of Christ by which he is cleansed or freed from sin and given supernatural life." [7]

5d-6: A doxology praising Christ to freed us from sins by his blood.

6. *a kingdom, priests*: John paraphrases Exodus 19:6. If "we" are a "kingdom," it is Christ who is the King. Those who are made a kingdom and priests by incorporation into Jesus, who is priest and king, by baptism, "became also mediators of the new covenant." [8]

7: There are two prophetic oracles in this verse: 1) Jesus is coming with the clouds; 2) everyone will see him.

So it is to be. Amen.: Literally, "Yes! Amen!" "We have here the Greek and Hebrew forms of affirmation side by side.... Here Christ is represented as the personalized divine Amen, the guarantor in person of the truth declared by Him." [9] The expressions "are here purposely combined to express the same ideas as in xxii.20, 'It is so, Amen.'" [10]

8. *I am the Alpha and the Omega*: "Among the later Jews the whole extent of a thing was often denoted by the first and last letters of the alphabet, [aleph, tau].... Hence it is not improbable that "Alpha and Omega" is a Greek rendering of a corresponding Hebrew expression. See Isaiah 44:6, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no God."

who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty: Connects back to verse 4.

In Greek [*pantokrator*]; "ruler of the universe." It is used nine times in Revelation and once in 2 Corinthians 6:18. It is used "in contrast to the Roman Emperor's self-designation as *autokrator*." [11]

The reading is chiasmic in structure (chi-shaped):

Greeting from God and the seven spirits (4)

From Jesus Christ (5)

We are a kingdom, priests (6)

Jesus is coming with the clouds (7)

God speaks of himself in the same terms as verse 4 (8)

John 20:19-31

{19} 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." {20} After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. {21} Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." {22} When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. {23} If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." {24} But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. {25} 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." {26} 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." {27} 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." {28} Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" {29} 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." {30} Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. {31} 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.

The Sunday after Easter is traditionally "Thomas" Sunday. In the Revised Common Lectionary the same Gospel is used for this Sunday in all three years.

19. the evening of that day, the first day of the week: It is the evening of the day of the resurrection. Cf. John 20:1. With the resurrection comes also a new creation. The eighth day, the *ogdoad*, was an important concept in some forms of early theology. The eighth day participated in the quality of the first day, and therefore is the appropriate time for a new creation. With the death of the logos the old creation is in the process of dissolution. The new creation has already begun. Both are inexorably in process of reaching their respective goals.

the Jews: "This expression is to be explained on the grounds that the Jews are not regarded here as a people, but as a community hostile to Christians, from which the disciples (who are also of course Jews by birth) are to be basically distinguished. At the same time, this is an indication of the relationship of Jews and Christians towards the end of the first century CE." [12]

Jesus came and stood among them: Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene, and Peter and the beloved disciple had seen the empty tomb. Now Jesus, not bound by physical conditions, comes to be with the disciples (except for Judas and Thomas). Luke's account of the appearance (Luke 24:36-43) differs a bit from John. In both cases, Jesus' appearance is intended to overcome the doubt of the disciples that Jesus had risen.

I send you: Jesus commissions the disciples. "The disciples—and not just the twelve or an elite group or spiritual leaders—enter into the office and position of Jesus.... Power and service are joined." [13]

22. he breathed on them... "Receive the Holy Spirit": In Greek the words for breath and for spirit are from the same root. According to Acts 2:4 the gift of the Spirit was received by the disciples on Pentecost.

23: if you forgive the sins of any...if you retain the sins of any: Cf. Matthew 16:19; 18:19. The Christian community has the power to forgive sins or not.

24-29: Thomas received only what second-generation Christians received, namely the testimony of eye-witnesses. But he does not believe; indeed he consciously refuses to do so. He is finally convinced by a special appearance of Jesus. We should remember Jesus' comment of the power of the resurrection to create faith in Luke 16:31, "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." The Resurrection does not create faith; faith acknowledges the resurrection. "... for the Evangelist, the true Christians are those of a later generation, who never saw an earthly nor the risen Jesus, but only knew the message that had been transmitted to them, with respect to which they came to faith. As a consequence, they, and not Thomas are blessed." [14]

27. "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Jesus told Mary Magdalene, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father" (John 20:17). "The difficulties [of explaining what has changed between the two episodes for Jesus to encourage Thomas to put his hand in Jesus' side, while denying Mary to even touch him] disappear if one translates the passage more or less as follows: 'Touch me not, *although* I am not yet ascended to my father (i.e., you could still touch me, but at this particular moment I want you to do something else, that is:) go to my brethren and say to them....' This paraphrase makes sense of the passage. The idea is then that Jesus is tangible *until* he ascends to the Father." [15]

31. these are written so that you may come to believe: What is written is not intended to record what happened, or to satisfy curiosity, but to create faith, and through faith, life in

Jesus' name.

Reflection

The same Gospel is used on the Second Sunday of Easter in all three years of the RCL. The story of Thomas journey from doubt to faith is intended to encourage all who have difficulty believing in the resurrection of Jesus. At the same time it declares those who believe without proof to be especially blessed.

God has given us eternal life with Christ not to fill up the empty places in our lives, not an one more blessing among others. The resurrection is a totally new way of looking at life, and ourselves in life. If we believe in Jesus' resurrection, if it is not just empty words, then nothing in this life, wealth, recognition, security, even life itself is important. Only God's will, his purposes and intentions for us, his commandments for us have meaning, everything else is a distraction. Such a strong faith is important because we are expected to proclaim the Gospel in hostile situations and before hostile people.

May God truly " Graciously help us to show the power of the resurrection in all that we say and do."

Hymns [16]

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

132 --E--Come, You Faithful,

139 --D--O Sons and

154 --D--That Easter Day

543 --P--Praise to the

42 --II--Of the Father's

167 --II--Glory Be to

724v --G--Shalom

641v --G--Peace Came to Earth

774v --G--Dona Nobis Pacem

675v --G--We Walk by (806s)

156, 560, 557, 131

Prayers of the People [17]

P or A: We celebrate a new creation in Christ's resurrection. With the voices of the saints of every time and every place we joyfully declare that "Christ is Risen!" and respond, "Christ is risen indeed!"

A: God of every age, you have transformed your church into a new and holy creation, charged to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In its efforts to eliminate oppression, inspire your church to be a sanctuary for the world, and root all such efforts in the life-giving story of the risen Lord. Christ is Risen! Christ...

A: God, cornerstone of life, the world often embraces those things that shall pass away--glamour, excess, and selfish pleasure; it often rejects that which is the basis for righteous living--community, service, and devotion to you. Inspire the world's leaders to build policies and construct decisions upon the foundation that is you, that the world might reflect the just and egalitarian community which Is the vision of Christ's gospel. Christ is Risen! Christ...

A: God of heaven, Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. Let this truth be a source of hope and joy for your people rather than one of fear and dread. Fill us with your call to serve one another as we anticipate your coming, Christ is Risen! Christ...

A: God of the suffering, be a light to those who are in darkness. We think especially of the sick and the dying in our own congregation: _____. Let them, with us, hopefully declare that Christ is Risen! Christ...

A: God of our faith, you come into our lives though we often lock the doors of our hearts and cover the windows of our minds to you, fearful of your challenging presence in our

comfortable lives. Make us grateful that doors and windows are no obstacle to you as you boldly break into human lives with your love. Christ is Risen! Christ...

P: We lift up our prayers to the risen Lord, trusting in his grace and compassion. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Or [18]

Presider or deacon

Gathered as believers in Christ, with the living Christ among us, let us offer prayers to God for the life of all the world.

Deacon or other leader

For peace from on high and for our salvation. For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, and for the unity of all.

For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

For our new brothers and sisters 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 need, the suffering and the oppressed, travelers and prisoners, the dying and the dead.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed Virgin Mary, *N*, 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, our God and Father, who freed us from our sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. Hear our prayers which we offer this day, and breathe upon us with your Holy Spirit. Glory to you for ever and ever.

Notes

[1] Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989, p. 400.

[2] *Loc. cit.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 570.

[4] Adela Yarbro Collins, "Revelation, Book of," *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, (ed. by David Noel Freedman). New York: Doubleday, 1992, vol. 5, p. 702.

[5] J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: Introduction, Translation and Commentary*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975, p. 376.

[6] David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5*. Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1997, pp. 34, 40.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 378.

[8] *Loc. cit.*

[9] R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920, Vol. 1, p. 20.

[10] *Loc. cit.*

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

[12] Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7-21*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, p. 210.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 212.

[15] Willi Marxen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970, p. 61.

[16] <http://www.worship.on.ca/text/rclc0001.txt>

[17] http://www.worship.on.ca/text/inter_c.txt

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