

Pericope Study for Sunday April 30, 2017 – Easter 3A

Presented by Pastor Richard Burgess

Collect / Prayer of the Day (ELW)

O God, your Son makes himself known to all his disciples in the breaking of bread. Open the eyes of our faith, that we may see him in his redeeming work, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Thought Questions for Easter 3A

How are different encounters with the risen Christ unique to the people and situations involved? What is universal?

Acts 2.40 says “Save yourselves . . .” and 1 Peter 1.22 says “you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth.” Do we need to reconcile these statements with the traditional doctrine of justification by grace through faith”? How or how not?

Possible Sermon Titles for Easter 3A

As usual, use at your own risk.

	Acts	1 Pet	Lk
3000 New Members in One Day!	X		
Repent and Be Baptized	X		
Save Yourselves from This Corrupt Generation	X		
Sins Forgiven and Holy Spirit Received	X		
The Promise Is For Everyone	X		
This Jesus Whom You Crucified	X		
Genuine Mutual Love — From the Heart		X	
Live in Reverent Fear		X	
Not with Silver or Gold		X	
Purified by Obedience to the Truth		X	
Ransomed from Futile Ways		X	
Revealed for Your Sake		X	
The Living and Enduring Word		X	
A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Emmaus			X
But We Had Hoped . . .			X
Dinner with Jesus			X
Known in the Breaking of Bread			X
Now You See Him; Now You Don't			X
On the Road Again			X
Seeing Isn't Necessarily Believing			X
Some Women Astounded Us			X
Their Eyes Were Opened and He Vanished			X
Were Not Our Hearts Burning?			X

Lesson I: Acts 2.14a, 36-41 (NRSV)

^{14a}Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd],

³⁶“Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

³⁷Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers, what should we do?” ³⁸Peter 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. ³⁹For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.” ⁴¹So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

Outline / Structure:

- 2.14a, 36 introduction: Peter spoke – God made Jesus Lord & Messiah, and you crucified him.
- 2.37 audience’s question: what should we do
- 2.38-40 Peter’s reply
- 2.38-39 repent and be baptized so sins forgiven and receive the Holy Spirit
- 2.40 save yourselves from this corrupt generation
- 2.41 conclusion: about 3000 heard and were baptized, ie, added to the community

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

- 2.36 *this Jesus whom you crucified* Who is the “you”? Did they really crucify Jesus? What does this mean? How does it apply to “you” / us?
- 2.37 *cut to the heart* In what sense? ‘Got the attention of’? “Hurt”? “Convicted”?
- 2.36 *Lord* A Jewish euphemism, still used today, for the tetragrammaton, God’s personal name, Yahweh. After his resurrection Jesus is now equated with God. What kind of nuanced Christological or Trinitarian spin is needed in proclaiming this?
- 2.38 *Repent, and be baptized . . .so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* Are repentance and baptism necessary or sufficient for receiving forgiveness and the Spirit? The Greek for “so that” is *eis* “to the extent of”, “with a view to”, or “in the use or service of”.
- 2.39 *for you, for your children, and for all who are far away* The promise includes those who are far away in both time and space, ie, everyone in the most all inclusive sense possible.
- 2.40 *Save yourselves from this corrupt generation* What does it mean to be “saved” from a “corrupt generation”? Do we live in a “corrupt generation”?
- 2.41 *about 3000* Is this number significant or is it merely a historical fact?

Lesson II: 1 Peter 1.17-23 (NRSV)

¹⁷If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹Through 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.

²²Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.

Outline / Structure:

- 1.17a if worship God the Father,
- 1.17b then live “in reverent fear” during time on earth
- 1.18-19 because you have been saved from futile ways of ancestors by blood of Christ
- 1.20 and Christ was destined before creation, but revealed at this end of the ages for our sake
- 1.21 therefore we have come to trust in God, and thus our faith and hope are set on God
- 1.22 our souls have been purified, therefore we have mutual love and should love accordingly
- 1.23 because we have born anew through the living Word of God

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

- 1.17 *the time of your exile* Ie, our time on earth “in exile” from our heavenly home. What kind of future or eschatological view does this imply?
- 1.18 *ransomed* This refers to the practice of purchasing a slave’s freedom from their master. How does this dynamic work in the ransom “from the ways inherited from (our) ancestors”? What is paid to whom?
- 1.18 *the futile ways inherited from your ancestors* Original sin? The Law and its inability to save? Does this phrase imply Jewish or Gentile recipients of the letter? Are we in danger of passing on our “futile ways” to our descendants or doesn’t that matter now?
- 1.19 *a lamb without defect or blemish* Cf Ex 12.5 where the first Passover required lambs “without blemish”, though it may be either a sheep or a goat.
- 1.20 *the end of the ages* What is “the end of the ages”? Greek: *ep eschatou ton chronon*, “in last of the times”.
- 1.22 *you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth* Does this contradict the doctrine of justification by faith? How are purification of souls, justification, and sanctification involved here? What are the distinctions to be made?

1.22-23 A case could be made that justification by the living word (1.23) produces love for one another (1.23) and that the audience is being encouraged to build on and increase this love. What do you think?

1.22 *genuine mutual love, love one another . . .* The two loves here are different. The *genuine mutual love* is “brotherly love, *Philadelphian*, without hypocrisy” and *loving one another* is “agapēsate” (agape). Is there a significance to this distinction, perhaps an exhortation to make genuine love even deeper and more self-giving?

1.23 *not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God* How is God’s word “seed”? Compare this to the Parable of the Sower in Mt 4.1-9. Note the definition of “word” in 1.25: “That word is the good news that was announced to you.”

As is frequently the case, this passage is part of a semicontinuous reading of the book of 1 Peter during this Easter season and not necessarily always linked to the other lessons. Is this passage related to the material in Acts or Luke?

Gospel: Luke 24.13-35 (NRSV)

¹³Now on that same day [when Jesus had appeared to Mary Magdalene,] two [disciples] were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²²Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.” ²⁵Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. ³²They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” ³³That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. ³⁴They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Outline / Structure 1 – Miracle Story:

- 24.13-27 setting: post mortem of the Passion, with Christ's (unrecognized) guidance
- 24.28-31 miracle: Christ's presence made known in the breaking of bread
- 24.32-35 response: understanding and witness to Christ's presence

Outline / Structure 2 – Chiasm Surrounding Word & Meal:

- 24.13-14 disciples come from Jerusalem
- 24.15 Jesus comes to disciples
- 24.16 disciples don't recognize Jesus
- 24.17-30 words and meal with Jesus
- 24.31a disciples recognize Jesus
- 24.31b Jesus disappears
- 24.32-35 disciples return to Jerusalem

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

I have outlined this passage both as a miracle story and as a chiasm surrounding the words and meal. What is the significance of the form(s) to the content of the story? That it fits nicely into not one, but two forms?

24.13-35 David Tiede's summary of this passage in the *Harper Collins Study Bible*: "The story of the appearance of the risen Christ reveals the disbelief of the disappointed even when they hear." How / why are we inclined to not believe when we most need to?

24.16 *their eyes were kept from recognizing him* Cf Jn 20.14 where Mary Magdalene doesn't recognize Jesus until he speaks her name. Assuming Luke is using a divine passive, what is God's purpose in keeping people from recognizing Jesus when he is right there in front of them? Why is witnessing the resurrected Christ not enough? (Note that in 24.19-24 they also knew the right "words" about the resurrection, but the words weren't enough to point them to the resurrected Christ.)

24.20-21 *our chief priests and leaders . . . But we had hoped . . .* The actions of the leaders and the wishes of the people are out of sync.

24.23 *they had indeed seen a vision of angels* What kind of "seeing" is seeing "a vision"? "A vision of angels"? 2.24 *found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.* What kind of "seeing" was / wasn't this?

24.26 Theology of the cross: Christ must suffer in order to attain his glory.

24.27 *Moses and all the prophets . . . all the scriptures* Note the comprehensiveness of the scriptures about Christ.

24.30 Note the Eucharistic sequence: take, bless, break, distribute. (Compare to the similarity with our (ELCA) worship as presented in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*: Gathering, Word, Meal, Sending.)

24.31-32 Christ's presence here is not so much his physical presence as in the word (24.32) and meal (24.31). Note that he does not linger, but instead the witnesses are moved to share the good news with others.

24.31 Why did Jesus vanish as soon as the disciples recognized him? Was he ever really (not) there?

24.32 *Were not our hearts burning . . . on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?* Did they know this while on the road? Why is this now mentioned only in retrospect? What is the relation of "opening the scriptures" on the road and having their eyes opened at the meal?

24.32 "The *road*, or "way," to Jerusalem becomes symbolic of discipleship; . . . An early name for the Christian movement was "the Way" (see Acts 9.2; 18.25; 19.23; 22.4; 24.22)." (Harper Collins Study Bible note on Lk 9.57)

24.33 *that same hour* Note the sense of urgency. How can we instill that in our congregations? Ourselves?

If you were to dramatize this scene, how would you portray "Jesus" in different parts of the story?

What kind of a resurrection does this story imply? Physical? Spiritual? Metaphorical?

Note that full understanding of Jesus and his significance did not have to precede the meal, it came during it and because of it. Therefore, first communion should occur at age . . .

The progression of understanding Jesus' identity:

24.19 Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in words and deeds

24.26 Jesus tells he (himself) is the Messiah and needed to suffer and then enter into glory

24.34-35 Jesus is "the Lord", ie, God

"The road to Emmaus shows us that when the snares of death encompass us; when the pangs of Sheol lay hold on us; when we suffer distress and anguish, the Lord will indeed save our lives (Psalm 116:3-4), by walking the road with us, yes, but also, by asking us "what things?" which means that then the road might actually get us somewhere. And that somewhere, eventually, is the place where we recognize and start to live out the life-changing presence of the resurrected Christ." (Karoline Lewis, "Dear Working Preacher" for Sun 4/30/17, <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=4871>)