

Easter Sunday

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April 20, 2003

Prayer of the Day

O God, you gave your only Son to suffer death on the cross for our redemption, and by his glorious resurrection you delivered us from the power of death. Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Acts 10:34-43

{34} Then Peter began to speak to them: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, {35} but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. {36} You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ--he is Lord of all. {37} That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: {38} how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. {39} We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; {40} but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, {41} not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. {42} He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. {43} All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Peter traveled from Joppa to Caesarea in response to the request of the centurion Cornelius for instruction in the faith. Although Peter was not comfortable with Gentiles he had a vision in which God showed him that no one should be called "common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

"The discourse (10:34-43) is another missionary speech, which repeats a bit of the kerygma. It has, then, affinity with the missionary speeches already addressed by Peter to Jews. Now, however, it is addressed to a Palestinian Gentile, a Jewish sympathizer and Godfearer, and those whom he has invited to be present. even though it is the last great missionary speech that Peter delivers in Acts, it is the beginning of apostolic testimony being borne to Gentiles without insistence on the obligation to obey the Mosaic law. In Peter's activity in Caesarea the mission to the Gentiles is thus formally inaugurated. In its kerygmatic section the speech presents the fullest formulation of the early proclamation about Jesus in Acts. The speech, however, included another important element of apostolic testimony, viz., an explanation of God's impartiality: the Word sent to Israel is now preached to others." [1]

The conclusion of the story will wait until Easter 6 to find a place in the lectionary. Is this intended to make a connection between the beginning of the season of Easter and its ending?

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

{1} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! {2} Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever". {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.

The Psalm is a song of thanksgiving by one who has been close to death, but who has survived to thank and praise God for caring for him/her.

17-21. The Psalmist has been brought to the point of death, he/she has been severely punished, but Yahweh has answered his/her prayer and relieved the punishment.

22. *the stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone*: "Verse 22 is very likely a proverb that emphatically bears witness to the wondrous change wrought by Yahweh (v. 23). One who was despised has been brought to honors. One who was consigned to death is allowed to see life (v. 17a)◆. That v. 22 is in the NT applied to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is implicitly intelligible on the basis of the intention of the OT text (cf. Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; but cf. also Isa. 28:16 and 1 Peter 2:6f.). The early church read Psalm 118 as a prophetic witness to the passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. [2]

24. *This is the day that the Lord has made*: A festival day. For the Christian, "This◆ day" is the day of resurrection

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

{1} Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, {2} through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you--unless you have come to believe in vain. {3} For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, {4} and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, {5} and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. {6} Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. {7} Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. {8} Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. {9} For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. {10} But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them--though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. {11} Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

3-5. *what I◆ had received*: "the traditional confession of faith, recognized without question both by Paul and by the Corinthian community◆." [3]

4. *he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures*: The reference is to Hosea 6:2, "After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him."

5. *he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve*: "The first appearance, to Cephas◆, is not recorded in the Gospels and only alluded to in one passage, Lk 24:34. Historically speaking, it was the reason for the status of Peter in the primitive church and probably for the founding of the circle of the Twelve. The latter is then legitimized by a further appearance." [4]

6-8: The confession has ended. The extended list of appearances provides an opportunity for Paul to include himself among the witnesses to the resurrection, though his witness is very different from the others.

6. *five hundred*: Some commentators think the reference is to Pentecost.

some have died: "the accent apparently lies not on the fact that the majority are still alive, but on the fact that some have already died◆. we are now living in the intermediate period between the resurrection and the parousia of Jesus. And by pointing out that even witnesses of the resurrection have died, Paul provides in advance an argument for his thesis that believers who die during this period attain to life." [5]

7. *he appeared to James, then to all the apostles*: The status of James, and of the "apostles," possibly different from "the Twelve," is grounded in having received an appearance of the risen Lord.

8. *he appeared also to me*: Paul's status and authority are also based on Jesus' appearance. His opponents may not have enjoyed that validation.

untimely born {9} *least of the apostles, unfit* *persecuted the church*: Paul summarizes what must have been the substance of the objections to his authority.

10. *by the grace of God*: Paul's authority does not depend on his "fitness" or worthiness, but on God's grace.

For Paul the gospel is grounded in the death and resurrection of Christ, and particularly in the resurrection. Some in Corinth denied the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-13). Albert Schweitzer proposed that they are "advocates of the old ultraconservative eschatology which Paul has to deal with in 1 Thessalonians: that salvation is attained only by those who are still alive at the parousia" (1 Thessalonians 4:12-17).^[6] If this is the case Paul counters it in 15:6.

Mark 16:1-8

{1} When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. {2} And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. {3} They had been saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" {4} When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. {5} As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. {6} But he said to them, "Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. {7} But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you." {8} So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.

1. *Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome*: Each of the gospels indicates a different group of people who first went to the tomb. Mary Magdalene is common to all the resurrection accounts, and is the only woman in John. Matthew 28:1, "the other Mary;" Luke 24:10, "Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women."

5. *a young man, dressed in a white robe*: In Luke 24:4 Mark's young man in a white robe becomes two men in dazzling apparel. We are reminded of the clothes of Jesus on the mountain of the Transfiguration which were "dazzling white."

8. *they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid*: The abrupt ending of Mark's Gospel has been a problem from the beginning. The "Long Ending" is an effort to deal with the problem. We have the Gospel as it is given, and it is authoritative for us in its given form, so we must deal with the end in verse 8. In Mark 9:9 Jesus told his disciples to tell no one what they had seen until after the resurrection. Now, after the resurrection, the women are afraid to tell anyone what they had seen. For a discussion of the textual questions related to Mark 16:9ff. see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, Corrected Edition. New York: United Bible Societies, 1975, pp. 126-128.

The beginning, middle and end of Jesus' life in the Gospel of Mark are connected by several motifs. At his baptism the heavens are torn apart, Elijah is present in the person of John (Mark 9:13), a voice from heaven addresses Jesus as "my son," the Spirit descends on Jesus in the form of a dove. At the Transfiguration, Elijah and Moses are present, a voice from heaven addresses the disciples and identifies Jesus as "my son," the cloud descends. At the crucifixion, the crowd thinks Jesus has called for Elijah, a centurion says, "Truly, this man was God's son," Jesus "gave up the ghost (spirit)", the veil in the Temple is torn. At the baptism no one saw or heard what was going on, so there was nothing to tell. At the Transfiguration Jesus tells the disciples not to tell. At the resurrection the women are told to tell and do not. The dazzling clothes of Jesus at the Transfiguration are mirrored in the white clothes of the young man in the tomb.

These connections make clear Mark's certainty of Jesus' identity as the Son of God, and

in consistent present of God's power with him throughout his life and death. Jesus' cry of desolation on the cross only serves to emphasize the reality that God has not abandoned him. [7] Although the women were afraid to tell others what they had seen, clearly they, or others did tell, and so Mark's Gospel was written to tell what they had seen.

Reflection

"Make us die every day to sin, so that we may live with him forever in the joy of the resurrection." So, we pray this Easter Day in the Prayer of the Day. Death and life touch in the resurrection of Jesus. His death becomes our life; his life becomes the death of sin in our lives. Even though we die, yet we shall praise God for our eternal life. This is the hope and the promise of Easter.

God's gift of life is not to be lived for ourselves alone. Peter risked his life in order to preach an unpopular Gospel. Paul left what was familiar and sound to bring the Gospel to an unpopular audience. The women who went to the tomb were told to tell the disciples and though they were afraid to speak, the word was spoken.

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Hymns [8]

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

145--E--Thine Is the	130 --G--Christ the Lord is
134--D--Christ Jesus Lay	137 --G--Christians, to the
144--D--Good Christian Friends,	678v --G--Christ Has Arisen
701v --I--What Feast	672v --G--Christ Is Risen
789v --I--Now the Feast	692v --G--For All the Faithful
710s --P--Psalm 118: This	151, 154, 147, 135, 673v, 677v
747v --P--Christ Is Made (819s)	

Prayers of the People [9]

A: There is good news in the graveyard. Christ is risen. It is ours to say, "O Lord, the shroud of death is gone." It is ours to respond, C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

A: For the baptized made new in Christ we ask, make their witness to be true. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

A: For nations in travail and under the cloud of war, we plead, let the peace and power of the Resurrection shine through and bring comfort. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

A: For congregations which have known death in this season, we pray that they may know the comfort of the Resurrection by which you have brought immortality to light in Jesus. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

A: For the catechumen(s) initiated by baptism into the company of the believing, look upon _____, with love and leading. By your Spirit refurbish, restore, and renew. Let the compass of faith include the knowledge that you make all things new. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

A: For the people of the world who languish under injustice without hope and clamor to be heard and relieved, we call for your help. Give us the courage to take up their cause and be agents of healing. Let our acts be the acts of the resurrected community that bring fulfillment and promise of good to come. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

When the Brief Order for Confession and Forgiveness is not used, the following may be said:

A: We have become part of the resurrection family that has said, "We have seen the Lord."

Forgive us when our performance before the world has been weak and our message indifferent and unconvincing. Let the full truth of Christ's rising empower us to be, to do, and to bring life by his word. O Lord, the shroud of death is gone. C: O Christ, the grace of life is come.

P: O Lord who brings life, let us leave off that which marginalizes and diminishes the triumph that is yours in Jesus Christ alive. C: Amen.

Or [10]

Presider or deacon

Joined by those who are newly baptized in Christ, and filled with joy on this queen of feasts, let us offer prayers to God who fills the darkness of the world with the light of Christ.

Deacon or other leader

For the holy churches of God, *N* our bishop, the presbyters and deacons, our new brothers and sisters, this holy gathering, and 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.

That our Savior may grant us triumph over our visible and invisible enemies.

That with Christ we may crush beneath our feet the prince of darkness and all evil powers.

That Christ may fill us with the joy and happiness of his holy resurrection.

That we may enter the chamber of the divine wedding feast and rejoice without limit with the angels and saints.

Remembering our most glorious and 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 destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Hear our prayers which we offer in the hope of eternal glory, and grant that we who have received new life in baptism may live for ever in the joy of the resurrection.

Glory to you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and always and unto the ages of ages.

Notes

[1] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 1998, p. 459.

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

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 249.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 258.

[6] Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975, p. 262.

[7] For further discussion of the connections between the baptism and transfiguration see: S. Motyer, "The Rending of the Veil: A Marcan Pentecost," *New Testament Studies* 33(1987)155-157; David Ulansey, "The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic *Inclusio*," *JBL* 110(1991)123-125.

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

[9] http://www.worship.ca/text/inter_b1.txt

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