

May 24, 2020 - 7th Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:6-14 (NRSV)

⁸“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. . . .
¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying, Peter, and John, and James, and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of^[a] James. ¹⁴All these were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with certain women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, as well as his brothers.

What did the early disciples need – and what do we need – in order to be able to face the challenges of life and in order to be faithful followers of Jesus?

Verse 8 – The power of the Holy Spirit

Verse 8 – The power of a clear direction and a clear sense of mission

Verse 14 – The power of prayer

Verse 14 – The power of unity and Christian fellowship

I believe this is the last time in the Bible that Mary, the mother of our Lord, is mentioned. How much she must have rejoiced that Jesus’ brothers had become believers.

1 Peter 4:12-14; 5: 6-1 (NRSV)

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ’s sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory, which is the Spirit of God, is resting on you.

⁶Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. ⁸Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. ¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹To him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

Verse 12 – Are you surprised at the fiery ordeal? – cf. 2 Corinthians 11: 23-28

Verse 12 – How is the fiery ordeal testing you?

Verse 6 – How are you doing at humbling yourself under the mighty hand of God?

Verse 6 – How is God exalting you? Cf. song, “You Raise Me Up”

Verse 7 – How are you doing at casting your anxiety on God?

Verse 8 – How are you doing at disciplining yourself and keeping alert?

Verse 8 – What do you think of the image of the devil as being like a roaring lion? Are you sufficiently aware of the fact that the devil is your enemy?

Verse 9 - How are you doing at resisting him?

Verse 9 – How aware are you of the suffering of other Christians around the world?

See The Voice of the Martyrs website (www.persecution.com)

Verse 10 – When have you experienced God’s restoring, supporting, strengthening, and establishing you after a time of suffering? Cf. Mark 1: 13 – “He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; He was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on (ministered to) Him.”

John 17:1-11 (NRSV)

John 17 contains what is often called the High Priestly Prayer

It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible

It is remarkable whom and what Jesus prayed for and about after the Last Supper on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane

Verse 1 – Father, the hour has come (cf. John 13: 1 – Jesus knew that His hour had come)

Verse 3 – This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent

Verse 4 – I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do

Verse 5 – Glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed

Verse 11 – I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world

Holy Father, protect them in your name . . . so that they may be one, as we are one

Verse 14 – The world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world

Verse 15 – I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one

Verse 18 – As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world

Verses 20-21 – I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word

On the night of His betrayal – on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane – Jesus was praying for you!

Verse 21 - As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us

Verse 22 – So that they may be one, as we are one

Verse 23 – I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me