

GRACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Second Sunday of Easter (A)

Acts. 2.14a, 22-32

Psalm 16

1 Peter 1.3-9

John 20.19-31

From Easter through Pentecost the Old Testament lesson is replaced by a lesson from the Acts of the Apostles. The readings from Acts focus on the birth of the Church in Jerusalem (reporting, *e.g.*, the sermons of Peter and Stephen). The gospel readings focus on the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus to His disciples.

Acts. 2.14a, 22-32

1. This lesson is taken from Peter’s sermon delivered after the Holy Spirit has just come upon the Church at Pentecost, *i.e.*, its hearers have just witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, and the disciples speaking in “tongues”.
 - a. The disciples do *not* speak in tongues in the sense of “glossolalia” (ecstatic speech that is not intelligible), but in “xenoglossy” (speaking in intelligent languages that are not their own, but those of other nations).
2. Peter’s sermon at this point contains the central “Jesus *kerygma*”.
 - a. *Kerygma* is a technical term for “proclamation,” used in the sense of a herald proclaiming a new ruler.
 - i. That is what Peter does here. He proclaims that Jesus, the risen one, is Lord of all.
 1. This is the central message of the Gospel!
3. Peter’s sermon frames the *kerygma* with a call to repentance. Here, he continues his discourse by setting forth the historical and Scriptural arguments for Jesus being Lord.
 - a. When Peter speaks there is no “New Testament”. His sense of Scripture (and that of all the early Church) is what we now call the Old Testament.
 - b. He argues that Scripture points to and is fulfilled in Jesus.

Psalm 16

1. A song of trust.
 - a. Structure:
 - i. vv. 1-5: A confession of faith in the LORD alone.
 - ii. vv. 6-11: An expression of confidence, based on the blessing of the LORD.
2. Each part of the psalm ends with a description of God’s providence.
3. The reference to other gods in v. 3 is a reference to pagan “gods” to whom the unfaithful offer sacrifice.
4. In v. 10 the word “Pit” (Hebrew = *šahat*) can mean “grave” or “underworld”. The connotation is of the place of the dead.
5. The “path of life” (v. 11) is a common theme in Wisdom literature, referring to a proper way of living (Prov. 2.19; 5.6; 6.23; 15.24).

1 Peter 1.3-9

1. Scholars have disputed the Petrine authorship of this work, but the majority opinion is that Peter actually wrote (or dictated) this letter, with his scribe adding certain specifically Greek expressions.
 - a. As such, the letter was probably written just before Peter died in the persecution under Nero.
2. Peter also here proclaims the *kerygma*. His message is that this lordship makes the present trials (*e.g.*, under Nero) of secondary importance.
 - a. In making this proclamation, Peter uses a Jewish form of blessing, noting the initiative of the Father in electing believers to salvation.
 - i. The true inheritance of election lies in heaven.
 - ii. The Father is revealed and does all things through His Son, Jesus.
3. Peter has seen Jesus. He writes to those who have not, giving thanks for their faith. (Is this an echo of Jesus' words to Thomas?)

John 20.19-31

1. All four Gospel accounts of the resurrection report of the women finding the tomb empty.
 - a. John corroborates many of the details contained in the other Gospel accounts:
 - i. The tomb is found empty.
 - ii. The emptiness of the tomb is confirmed by Peter.
 - iii. Jesus appears, risen, to His disciples.
2. The appearance of Jesus to the disciples here follows His appearance to Mary Magdalene in the garden.
 - a. The promises of Jesus' return are fulfilled in the "hour" of His exaltation/glorification (*cf.* Luke 24.36-43, 47-48).
 - i. The disciples' joy fulfills the promises of renewed joy.
3. He shows the disciples His hands and side to confirm that He is the risen One.
 - a. The resurrection is of the *body*. Jesus was not, as a man, a mere appearance, and as the risen One, He is not a mere appearance.
 - i. This passage specifically refutes the heresy of "Docetism" (the word is derived from the Greek verb *dokein*, "to appear, or seem"), which argued that Jesus was spirit only and not flesh.
4. "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20.22): Earlier in John, the Spirit is characterized as divine indwelling (14.17), which flows from the exalted Jesus as a source of eternal life (7.39).
 - a. The word for spirit, *pneuma*, is the same as that for breath or wind.
5. In Luke, the Spirit is received at Pentecost (Acts 2), commissioning the disciples as witnesses.
 - a. The power of forgiveness here described is not limited to the named disciples, since John refers to the disciples in general.

- i. The power is granted to the believing community as a whole. This power is the bestowing of forgiveness on those who believe as a result of the witness of the believing community.
6. Thomas' confession of the Lord reflects the "highest" Christology found in the Gospels. Elsewhere, Jesus is referred to by titles which include "Lord," "Son of Man," "Judge," "Teacher or Master," even "Son [of the Father]," and is equated with the Father as "one," but Thomas here makes a very explicit statement: "My Lord and my God!"
 - a. Again, Jesus' physical reality, the reality of His risen body, is emphasized.
 - b. Jesus concludes this encounter with a blessing (v. 31): Those Christians who believe without having seen have the same faith as those disciples who saw.
 - i. Their faith is grounded in the Lord through the presence of the Holy Spirit.