

The Lectionary with Vicar

The appointed readings for this upcoming Sunday are taken from Acts 2:14a, 36-41; I Peter 1:17-25; and Luke 24:13-35. I encourage you to open your Bibles and read through these passages with me.

Acts 2:14a, 36-41

Today we read a portion of Peter's sermon at Pentecost. Peter gives a specific takeaway from His Sermon – know that God has made the crucified Jesus both Lord and Christ. After He says this, we read about the reaction of the crowd.

First, the crowd is cut to the heart. They recognize their sin and their guilt in Jesus' death. For this crowd in Jerusalem, many of them were present in the crowd that called for Jesus' crucifixion, but a lesson we can take from this is that we also re responsible for Jesus' death. Our sins led to His crucifixion just as much as the sins of this crowd. Second, they hear the good news that they can receive forgiveness of sins – Peter tells them to repent and be baptized and receive both the forgiveness of sins and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Third, they follow through because of the Spirit at work in their hearts. We are told that three thousand souls were saved that day.

This passage demonstrates to us two powerful means of grace. The first is the Word of God as it is preached to the people. When Peter has finished His sermon, the people are struck with the Law and in dire need of forgiveness. When Peter explains to them how to be saved, He is delivering the Gospel to the people, because of which they are saved. The second, the focus of this passage, is Baptism. Peter tells the people that in Baptism, God will forgive their sins and give them the Holy Spirit.

I Peter 1:17-25

Peter continues his letter with a description of the Christian life. The first half of this section describes our justification – how we are saved. Only after that does Peter describe our sanctification – the result of being saved. The order here is important. Peter does not even try to tell his audience how to live a Christian life until after he has made it clear that they are only in the faith because God's work in Jesus.

In line with our other readings, I want to draw your attention to the final three verse (23-25). In this, Peter emphasizes the importance of the Word of the Lord. He tells them that the Word of God is both responsible for their justification and for the new life that they will live as a result. He also compares the works of man with the Word of God. Anything that mankind does will fail, but God's Word is eternal and will accomplish what it sets out to do. We see here powerfully proclaimed the means of Grace that God has given us in His word. Peter explains that it is the Word of God that saves us and gives us new life.

Luke 24:13-35

Finally, in our Gospel reading, we read the story of Jesus appearing to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. We get to see here how the disciples told the story before they knew that Jesus was resurrected. To this doubt filled story, Jesus responds with the truths of the Scripture. Many have wondered why Jesus chose to trick the disciples like this. Why not just appear to them alive? Although I cannot say with certainty why Christ chose to do it this way, perhaps He wanted to show that the Scriptures speak for themselves. Rather than prove His resurrection with His physical presence, He wanted to demonstrate that the Word of God was sufficient. This is a powerful message for those of us who were not privileged to see Jesus in the flesh.

Then, when do they see Jesus? He appears to them in the breaking of the bread. This is certainly literal. Until that point, the disciples did not recognize Him and after that point, they do recognize Him, but it is also helpful for us today. When we look to see where Jesus is, we are told that we will find Him in the breaking of the bread. So in this passage, we learn that Scripture alone is enough to tell us what we need to know about Christ, and that we can find Christ in the breaking of the bread – communion.

Again, this reading points us to the means of grace. The focus here is first on the Word of Scriptures, through which Jesus demonstrates His resurrection to the disciples. They learn the power of the Word of God, because here Jesus chooses not to rest even on His own authority, but rather on the authority of the Scripture. Then, significantly the focus moves to the communal meal, where Jesus appears to His disciples, reminding us of the promise He has made in the Lord's Supper.

A Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You have chosen to super-abundantly pour out Your grace on me. In this time where we face a famine from Your Holy Supper, remind me of all the promises You have made through Your Word, in the waters of Baptism, and in confession and absolution, that I may be assured of Your grace until I can once again come with all the church to Your table, to eat the feast You have laid before me. In Your name I pray it. Amen.