

Opening Prayer

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit that, as the Scriptures are read and discussed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen.

Acts 10:34-43

^{10:34} 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."

Commentary

This passage is a bit like reading through a novel, in this case, Acts 10:1-11:18, where Peter had been preaching. Acts is the story of how the good news was spread, and that through Jesus' death and resurrection, God was bringing peace between God and humanity. The Acts narrative is not a cold, aloof retelling, however; it is a telling that came from an eyewitness whose own life had been transformed. Such personal testimony carried great impact and authenticity. It was made even more powerful by Peter's acknowledgement that he had been wrong. He now realized that God accepts not only Jews but those of all races and nationalities who honor God and live upstanding lives.

Reflection

Are multiple conversions or transformations needed in our Christian walk? What conversions can you recall in your lifetime? What new thing is God doing in you now?

Colossians 3:1-4

^{3:1} So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Commentary

In this reading, Paul uses the imagery of dying and rising to refer to what happens when a believer is baptized. Baptism is dying with Christ. The baptismal waters become a tomb in which the old self is buried. Leaving the water symbolizes our being raised to new life in Christ. In the process of this transformation, we look the same, but we do not think or behave or believe as we once did. Our minds are set now on Christ, not ourselves; on godly concerns, not selfish concerns; divine values, not those of this world. The Christian, being a new person in Christ, is now more interested in giving than receiving; serving than being served; loving than being loved. These become the Christian's priorities.

Reflection

If you had to name one thing that sets a Christian apart from others, what would it be?

John 20:1-18

^{20:1} Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ² So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³ Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹ for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes. ¹¹ But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³ They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to

her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher).
¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸ Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Commentary

This is John's account of the first Easter. Although Peter and John have a role here, the main character is Mary Magdalene—the same woman that was at the cross on Good Friday. Jesus came to her as a gardener. No longer could Mary cling to the old Jesus, to the way she had known him before. She must now learn to embrace him in a new way as the risen Lord who would return to God yet still be with them through the Holy Spirit. She was also to embrace a mission—to go and tell others that he is alive! Hers is the first Easter testimony: "I have seen the Lord."

Reflection

In the midst of your Good Friday days (days of sadness, disappointment, or loss), how has Easter (new life, hope, possibility) come to us? Where have we been surprised by the joy of Easter in our lives?

Responsive Psalter

Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

- ^{118:1} O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his steadfast love endures forever!
² **Let Israel say, "His steadfast love endures forever."**
- ^{118:14} 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.**

Closing Prayer

**Grant, O Lord, that what we have said with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and that what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**