

Year A

Acts 7:55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

8am - Fifth Sunday of Easter

Good morning everyone,

It is always nice to see you all!

When I was a kid, there was a song that was not played frequently, but every time it was played it gripped me. It stopped me in my tracks and got me thinking.

The song is called “Let the praise begin” and it’s by a gentleman named Fred Hammond.

And the song poses a simple, yet profound question.

“Are you ready for your blessing?”

“Are you ready for your miracle?”

And for the rhythm of the song is a call and response, because if you are ready for your blessing and your miracle, then let the praise begin.

And while I was doing what I could to remember the words of the song, I was forced to pause and think about the ways that I had been, or had not been, preparing myself for God to bless me.

I may have just been a kid... but

I knew that I was not preparing myself in a way to best receive a gift from God. This morning’s gospel reading has me thinking about how I am preparing myself, for the place that Jesus has prepared for me.

And this is a very common funeral passage, it's understandable for the mind to go to Heaven, that place where there is neither crying, nor weeping, nor gnashing of teeth.

What I also want to highlight for us today is the way in which this place that is prepared for us is not limited to something that we have to wait to participate in.

We are not excluded from the place of peace with Christ here in this life.

Thy Kingdom Come  
They will be done

God has prepared a place for us and we have not been left to wonder about this world on our own.

Not only is there a place prepared.  
Not only is there a way to get there.

We have a guide who'll take us.

A guide who understands when we don't have it all together and when we make mistakes.

A kind and gracious guide who welcomes questions and gives us true answers.  
A guide who will walk with us as we continue on our journey.

This week in the Easter season, we don't hear this text because it fits perfectly in the narrative. We hear this as a reminder because of where we are in the narrative.

Because we are also on this side of the resurrection with Steven and the rest of the disciples, and we need this reminder of not letting our hearts be troubled as the world continues to spin.

We need this reminder on this day at this time, because it can be easy to get distracted by what's going on.

Which is why preparing our hearts and minds for the blessing of God every day is so important.

Because as we do that, we will come into an understanding of blessing and peace that is beyond what is sold to us.

We will live lives that affirm that it is in fact a blessing to be a blessing to others. That blessing is not about what you have or what you drive but it's about your generosity, your upliftment of another,

the life that can be found in the truth of the proclamation that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive.

It is then that we come into a new understanding of Jesus being the way, the truth and the life. Where we participate in doing the works that Jesus does we feel the fullness of life that we are invited into.

And so the invitation to pray to God, in the name of Jesus, with the assurance that whatever we ask for in the name of Jesus will be done, is not permission for us to pray for the winning numbers for the mega millions.

It's not a comment on a transactional prayer life with God.

The whole bottom half of the gospel reading is focused on continuing to do the works of Jesus for others.

That is a statement of assurance for us! It is an invitation for us to uplift others and ask for God's blessing on others.

And in our blessing of others, we participate in the life of God the Father who first ushered in the life of the cosmos.

And when we do that, we will come into a renewed understanding of what Jesus means when he says "that those who believe in him will continue His works, and do even greater works than these."

Because as we live on this side of the resurrection with the disciples, we may need the reminder that we are called to continue the ministry of Christ.

Walking on water is great  
Feeding others is even better

But participating, in new life, in resurrection through blessing others

That is what is greater than the works that had been done previously.

Someone asked me to sit down with them at breakfast last week, and told me about the conversation they had with someone as they gave them a blessing bag.

It was all about how the individual now had the items they needed to begin their new job in a few days. And the person telling me this was on fire.

You could see the way in which the life of God was filling them as they recounted this story to me. They were astonished at their own ability to assist others as they grow towards new life with Christ.

This is how we participate in the resurrection. This is how we participate in doing greater works than what Jesus had done up unto that point in the gospel.

So do not let your hearts be troubled, for it is God's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. TO invite you into the place of peace prepared for you, and for others.

And there is new life in the name of Jesus.

An easy life, not always. Not by the world's standards.

A meaningful life, full of love and joy.  
One of assurance and grounding.  
Of community and blessing.

Absolutely.

So are you ready for your blessing?

Have you been making the space in your life for God to guide you into the place that he has promised you? To bless you?

Sure it's not Lent or Advent, but the question remains for us every day.

And Jesus stands ready to continue to guide us into the place that he has prepared for us. And as we go, we live lives that show others the truth to the reality that Jesus is the way to a place of peace.

We become living examples of the ever living Christ for our neighbors, for our family and friends. We attest to the resurrected Christ, who is still ushering in new life that we can participate in.

And thanks be to God for that.

Amen.

Year A

Acts 7:55-60

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Fifth Sunday of Easter

10:30 - YOUTH SUNDAY

Good morning everyone,

It is always nice to see you! Happy Sunday. I hope the allergy season hasn't been too hard on you already.

Tonight, I will have the last youth gathering until we start the school year back up again in September.

So I figured now was a great time to ask for a little extra help and to have them remind us what it means for Jesus to be the way, the truth, and the life, for one's entire life.

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I am so thankful for the opportunity to walk with the youth on their faith journey. God is doing incredible things all around us as Jesus guides us to that place of peace that has been prepared for us.

And Thanks be to God for that.

Amen.