

The Sixth Sunday of Easter YEAR C May 1, 2016

Last week the Lectionary challenged us to bring life to others through following Christ's example of love. This week, that love gets practical as the readings call us to embody God's hospitality. If anything expresses the life that is unleashed through the Easter event, it is when we learn to see Christ in the stranger, and welcome them into our lives and hearts.

May your worship be a home for you and for the strangers among you this week.

INTRODUCTIONS

For use by lectors, in order of service, parish bulletins and magazines

The First Reading - Acts 16: 9-15 : In response to Paul's vision, he and his companions go to Macedonia, where they preach to a group of women in Philippi. Lydia, from Thyatira (thus, a foreigner) is one of those who receive the Gospel message, and she immediately offers hospitality to Paul and his friends.

or Joel 2: 21-27

The Psalm - Psalm 67 : An invitational psalm encouraging all the nations to praise God, to enjoy God's mercy and receive God's provision.

The Second Reading - Revelation 21: 10, 22 - 22: 5 : John's vision of the New Jerusalem, where the gates are never closed, but no evil can enter. God's security and hospitality are offered to the nations.

The Gospel Reading - John 14: 23-29 : Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit – God making God's home within those who love God. or

John 5: 1-9 : Jesus heals the sick man at the pool of Bethesda.

[Click here to view the readings](#)

http://bible.oremus.org/?show_adj=no&passages=Acts%2016:%209-15%0A%2BOR%0AJoel%202:%2021-27%0A%20Psalm%2067%0ARevelation%2021:%2010,%2022%20-%2022:%205%0AJohn%2014:%2023-29%0A%2BOR%0AJohn%205:%201-9

COLLECTS OF THE DAY

Collect One

O Lord,
from whom all good things do come;
Grant to us thy humble servants,
that by thy holy inspiration
we may think those things that be good,
and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same;
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Collect Two

God our redeemer,
you have delivered us from the power of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of your Son:
Grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life,
so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Presider or deacon

Jesus came into the world to give us peace.
Let us offer prayers to God for all whose hearts are troubled and afraid.

Deacon or other leader

For this holy gathering and for those who enter our circle of faith.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For *NN* and the newly baptized illumined by the light of Christ.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the leaders of the nations and for all who seek peace.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the suffering peoples of the world.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For all those in danger and need, the sick and the suffering, prisoners, captives, and the families, the hungry, homeless, and oppressed, and for those who feel remote from God.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For the dying and the dead.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

For ourselves, our families, and those we love.
Glory and praise to you, O living God.

Remembering our most glorious and blessed *N*, and all the saints,
let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.
To you, O Lord.

Presider

Blessed are you, Lord of heaven and earth, who gives us the water of life. Hear our prayers for all peoples and bring us at last to your holy city Jerusalem; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

POST COMMUNION

God our Father,
whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life:
May we also thirst for you,
the spring of life and source of goodness,
through him who is alive and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

PRAYERS

Mighty God,
in whom we know the power of redemption,
you stand among us in the shadows of our time.
As we move through every sorrow and trial of this life,
uphold us with knowledge of the final morning
when, in the glorious presence of your risen Son,
we will share in his resurrection,
redeemed and restored to the fullness of life
and forever freed to be your people. Amen.

Living God,
long ago, faithful women
proclaimed the good news
of Jesus' resurrection,
and the world was changed forever.
Teach us to keep faith with them,
that our witness may be as bold,
our love as deep,
and our faith as true. Amen.

Creator of the universe,
you made the world in beauty,
and restore all things in glory
through the victory of Jesus Christ.
We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured
by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed,
the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace,
to the glory of your name. Amen.

O God, your Son remained with his disciples after his resurrection,
teaching them to love all people as
As his disciples in this age,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the universe
in which we are privileged to live
and our neighbours with whom we share it.

Intercessions may be said concluding with:

Open our hearts to your power moving

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around us and between us and within us,
until your glory is revealed in our love of both friend and enemy,
in communities transformed by justice and compassion,
and in the healing of all that is broken. Amen.

Holy God,
you have called us to follow in the way of your risen Son,
and to care for those who are our companions,
not only with words of comfort, but with acts of love.
Seeking to be true friends of all,
we offer our prayers on behalf of the church and the world.

Intercessions may be said concluding with:

Guide us in the path of discipleship,
so that, as you have blessed us,
we may be a blessing for others,
bringing the promise of the kingdom near
by our words and deeds. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ,
God invites us to bring our doubts and fears,
our joys and concerns, our petitions and praise,
and offer them for the earth and all its creatures.

Intercessions may be said concluding with:

Receive these prayers, O God,
and transform us through them,
that we may have eyes to see and hearts to understand
not only what you do on our behalf,
but what you call us to do
so that your realm will come to fruition in glory. Amen.

Gracious God,
through a vision you sent forth Paul to preach the gospel
and called the women to the place of prayer on the Sabbath.
Grant that we may be like Paul
and be found like Lydia,
our hearts responsive to your word
and open to go where you lead us. Amen.

God our redeemer, you have delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of your Son: grant, that as by his death he has recalled us to life, so by his continual presence in us he may raise us to eternal joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. *Common Worship*

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Risen Christ, by the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples: help us to obey your command and draw the nations to the fire of your love, to the glory of God the Father.

Common Worship

God of mercy, as we rejoice in the resurrection of your Son, the Bread of Life, feed us with your plenty and increase in us compassion for the hungry; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Methodist Worship

Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear than we to pray, and give more than either we desire or deserve. Pour down upon us the abundance of your mercy, forgiving us those things of which our conscience is afraid and giving us those good things which we are not worthy to ask save through the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ your Son our Lord; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen *Methodist Worship*

LECTIONARY NOTES 1

Acts 16:9-15:

- + I am particularly interested in the description of Lydia in this passage, one often overlooked by those who insist the Bible directs women to submissive, secondary roles.
- + Note the changing voice/narration in this section. Luke becomes first person narrator instead of third. People have speculated on why - poor editing? Was he particularly passionate about passages where he slips into first person? Food for thought.
- + Lydia has her whole household baptized. We don't hear anything of a husband, or his position on all this. Interesting.
- + "If you have judged me to be faithful . . ." How do you judge the faith of another? We are not supposed to 'judge others' in some senses, but when are we called to judge, in what ways and situations? By what criteria? I thought this an interesting criterion she sets for them - if I am faithful, share my home.

Psalm 67:

- + "Let the people praise you, O God." Amen!
- + Asking for God's blessing. Do you ask God to bless you? Part of the Prayer of Jabez phenomenon I found troubling - so much prayer for more for ourselves, so little prayer for others. But sometimes we go to extremes, and don't pray for God's work in our own lives. We just have to remember to be thankful to God as well when we are indeed blessed.

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- + Switching of voice. Notice changing from directly addressing God to referring to God in the third person. I really like this - it gives me the sense that the psalmist just had to address God directly - wanted it to be close and personal, hence the flip-flopping. Just a thought!
- + "You judge the peoples with equity." Not something you would think of offhand to be thankful for, but indeed, even today, or maybe especially today, we can be glad that God can make sense of our worldwide messes even when we cannot.

Revelation 21:1-10, 22 - 22:5:

- + Note that the first part of this text is a repeat of last week's passage from Revelation - so check out those notes as well for more details.
- + No sun, no moon, new earth, new heaven. I don't know - I guess we have indeed messed up what we have. It's tempting, like John of Patmos, to want new everything, wiped clean everything - more than that - torn down and recreated everything. But sometimes I think it would be more rewarding to renew, refresh, rebuild than to wipe out and start from scratch. I think of God's Old Testament act of destroying the earth with a flood, and when it's all done, God says - "Nah - not gonna do it that way again" - almost like the starting from scratch wasn't all it was cracked up to be after all. Instead, next time, God tried something new, and sent Jesus. Not from scratch, but certainly earth-changing enough for me!

John 14:23-29:

- + Love - all about love
- + "We will make our home with them." Compare to Revelation: "See, the home of God is with mortals."
- + "I am going away, and I am coming to you." I like this verse. Jesus is going away - being crucified, resurrecting, ascending, not going to be there in the way they have been used to. But Jesus is also coming to them - in a new way, a constant always-with-them way that will shape the rest of their lives.
- + This is the around-in-circles talk from John that can be - overwhelming? confusing? annoying? hard to make sense of? Take your pick.
- + All this stuff provides some fodder for Trinitarian theology as well.
- + Notice the tense (at least in my NRSV - I'm too tired to look up Greek today!) of verse 28b - "If you loved me, you would rejoice" (emphasis added). What does Jesus' wording say about what he believes to be the position of the disciples?

By Beth Quick

LECTIONARY NOTES 2

Acts 16:9-15: In response to Paul's vision, he and his companions go to Macedonia, where they preach to a group of women in Philippi. Lydia, from Thyatira (thus, a foreigner) is one of those who receive the Gospel message, and she immediately offers hospitality to Paul and his friends.

Psalm 67: An invitational psalm encouraging all the nations to praise God, to enjoy God's mercy and receive God's provision.

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5: John's vision of the New Jerusalem, where the gates are never closed, but no evil can enter. God's security and hospitality are offered to the nations.

John 14:23-29: Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit – God making God's home within those who love God.

OR **John 5:1-9:** Jesus heals the sick man at the pool of Bethesda.

REFLECTIONS ON THEME:

Taking last week's vision of inclusivity even further, the Scriptures this week offer us a vision of hospitality as the model of God's work in those who love God, and of the life which flows from it. In Acts, Lydia, the new convert, immediately understands that a life of following Christ is a life of hospitality – and offers hospitality to Paul and friends. In Psalm 67, all nations are invited into God's mercy, security and provision – a vision of adoration for God's hospitality. In Revelation, the vision of the New Jerusalem is one of God's hospitality offered to all nations, providing security, healing and food. In the Gospel, the vision is beautifully reversed – God, by God's Spirit, seek to enjoy the hospitality of the human heart, coming to indwell us, and then lead us into lives of obedient love. In the alternative Gospel reading, the outworking of this love or hospitality of God is dramatically revealed in the healing of the sick man – who has, perhaps, become too "at home" with his illness.

CONNECTING WITH LIFE:

GLOBAL APPLICATION: A vision of a hospitable world is a vision of hope, and also a challenge to the ways in which we fall short of this ideal. In so many ways, our world has developed a culture of suspicion and inhospitality. But, arguably the primary characteristic of Jesus' first followers as they sought to live out the Gospel was hospitality, reflected in feeding the hungry (current equivalent: global debt relief and removal of unjust trade restrictions?), inviting strangers into their homes (current equivalent: humane and just immigration laws?), and serving and praying for the sick, the widow and the orphan (current equivalent: equitable health care and social care and upliftment systems?). For those of us who seek to follow Christ, our vote, and our voice in public dialogue, on these key issues are a significant influence in creating a more hospitable world.

LOCAL APPLICATION: Hospitality is the essential challenge of the Gospel. Matthew Fox, in his book *Original Blessing*, suggest that the true meaning of "holiness" is hospitality. Hospitality is, essentially, the offer of safety, comfort, nourishment and friendship to both friend and stranger. The Scriptures show that this is a high ideal in God's purposes. What this means for us is, initially, an opening of our hearts to welcome the stranger and friend, offering safety, comfort and love. Then, this must overflow into practical hospitality,

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opening our 'homes' – our communities, our churches, our neighbourhoods and, yes, even our literal homes, to those who need shelter, safety, nourishment, acceptance and friendship. How, in your church and its worship, can you become more welcoming and more hospitable to those who are homeless and friendless?

SERMON OUTLINE

John 14:23-31 Peace I leave with you... Scene set on evening before the arrest - key thoughts - *let not your hearts be troubled* - trust in me - *I am the way, the truth, the life...* Jesus continues that wonderful address...

1. The Promise of God the Spirit - v16 *the Father will give you another counsellor - the Spirit of truth* - the HSp...

a) the Counsellor - one who advises/gives counsel...

b) the Comforter - comforts/encourages..

His role? v26 *will teach you all things... will remind you of everything I have said to you....* New Testament witness..

2. The Provision of God the Father - His gifts of

a) Life - eternal life - new life - v19 *becos I live ye shall live also..* His risen life is the pledge/guarantee of ours...

b) Love - one of the keynotes of Jn's Gospel - v23 *if anyone love me, he will obey my teaching. My father will love him*

3. The Peace of God the Son - v27 *Peace I leave with you* - available to all who trust in Jesus - *my peace I give unto you* - inner spiritual peace & tranquillity –

ct PAX ROMANA - kept in being by fear & force of the Roman Army!!

cf a) what the earth offers - pain, problems, prejudice....

b) eternity - peace, perfect peace...

Christ offers us His peace - what is our reaction?

trusting or troubled hearts?

faithful or fearful minds?

peaceful or perplexed souls?

The choice is ours!

By Norman Porteous

ONLINE SERMON SOURCES

"A Home to Long For," the Rev. Charles Hoffacker, *Sermons that Work*

<http://episcopaldigitalnetwork.com/stw/2013/04/06/6-easter-c-2013/>

"The Grace of the City of God," Dr. Jan Love, *Day 1*

http://day1.org/1941-the_grace_of_the_city_of_god

New Kid Deep Stuff

<http://newkiddeep.blogspot.co.uk/2007/05/sermon-for-easter-6-year-c.html>

The New Belfast -

A London based writer reflects on a list and the "Leaves of the Tree...for the healing of the nations. Good use of Geddes stained glass illustrations.

<http://www.politicaltheology.com/blog/the-new-belfast-easter-6-year-c-revelation-22-1-5/>

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CHILDREN

[Worshiping with Children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/year-c-sixth-sunday-of-easter-may-5-2013.html), Easter 6C, Including children in the congregation's worship, using the Revised Common Lectionary, Carolyn C. Brown

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.co.uk/2013/03/year-c-sixth-sunday-of-easter-may-5-2013.html>

"Let Me Tell You Again..." On the Chancel Steps, children's resources by Frances Woodruff,

<https://onthechancelsteps.wordpress.com/2013/04/21/tellyou/>

"[Sermon of the Week](http://www.sermons4kids.com/)," Sermons 4 Kids, Charles Kirkpatrick, Object Lessons & Children's Sermons, Colouring Pages, Puzzles. Sermons4Kids.com.

<http://www.sermons4kids.com/>

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Where Cross The Crowded Ways Of Life

I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord

O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go

Jesus, United By Thy Grace

You Are

All Who Are Thirsty (YouTube video)

Always Forever (YouTube video)

Creator King (YouTube video)

Jesus My Desire

Awesome God (Your Voice) (ouTube video)