

Notes for Next Sunday

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Point of this Week's Readings

Old Testament (Acts 4:1-12). This reading gives evidence that the power of the Resurrection lives on after the resurrection in the lives of Christians. Peter and John had healed the beggar and were now teaching the people about the resurrection of Jesus. This had cause quite a stir, and many were brought to faith. The religious leaders did not want this to go on. They brought Peter and John before them to explain by what power they had done this miracle. Peter and John us this etting to witness to Christ and His resurrection.

Epistle (1 John 3:16-24). Our heart condemns us when we look at our brother, see his needs, and yet excuse ourselves from acting in love. However, in Christ we know that we have passed out of death into life; that is, we have true saving faith, because we love our fellow Christians. Jesus laid down His life for us. His love for us has covered all our sins. God is greater than our heart, and His sure and certain promises of salvation give us confidence to come before Him.

Gospel (John 10:11-18). Jesus declares Himself as the Good Shepherd. Jesus then goes o to give the many reasons for why He is the Good Shepherd. The reason He can make this claim is that He lays down His life and takes it up again (resurrection). Jesus points out that He knows His sheep life He and the Father know each other. There is no closer relationship than that. Jesus also points to the inclusion of the Gentiles (other sheep) which includes us.

For more in-depth commentary on each reading, read the notes found after each text below.

FIRST READING – Acts 4:1-12

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand. ⁵The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. ¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

4:1 captain of the temple guard. Chief of temple police, a Levite second only to the high priest in the temple hierarchy. (TLSB)

4:1 Sadducees. A Jewish sect whose members came from the priestly line and controlled the temple. They did not believe in the resurrection or a personal Messiah. (CSB)

4:1 Sanhedrin. Was made up of seventy (or seventy-two) rulers, elders, and teachers of the law. The rulers were those who supervised the temple with its priests and administered the temple treasury. The elders were laymen of mature age, respected for their piety and wisdom. In the gospels they are usually mentioned last and may have been the least influential. Many of these were Pharisees. The teachers of the law were professional interpreters of the Scriptures. Many of these, also, were Pharisees. The Jews still recognized Annas as high priest, although the Romans had deposed him 15 or 16 years before. Annas' son-in-law Caiaphas was the officially recognized high priest from A.D. 18 to 36. (PBC)

4:4 five thousand. The result of this clear preaching of the Law and the Gospel? Exactly what the Lord intended. Without the Word the Holy Spirit doesn't work, but give Him the bridge of the Word to walk into people's hearts and watch out! (LL)

4:8 filled with the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gave him courage as an unlearned fisherman to speak to these rulers. There was no question, no doubt, and no hesitation. Openly and frankly, Peter explained that the cripple was healed by the power of Jesus' name. He was unafraid to blame them for the crucifixion, and he was certain that Jesus rose. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 2)

EPISTLE – 1 John 3:16-24

¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. ¹⁹This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence ²⁰whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. ²¹Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God ²²and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. ²³And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. ²⁴Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

3:16 Jesus Christ laid down his life. Jesus showed God's love when He laid down His life for all people. So, as Jesus laid down His life for our salvation, Jesus wants us to use our lives—to lay down our lives—that our brothers and sisters might be blessed and saved. (TLSB)

3:18 dear children. Means “my beloved children,” this is a very affectionate greeting by a father to children whom he tenderly loves. His darlings.

3:19 we belong to the truth. This means absolute truth. This truth is closely connected to Jesus and is always the same because Jesus does not change. It is the truth about our salvation. When we know this there is absolutely no doubt in our hearts.

3:20 hearts condemn us. To find fault with or to blame and condemn. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. Our consciences are over-active because we continue to live under the burden of the Law when God has already freed us from that load. When this happens we live defensively hoping not to make mistakes rather than boldly serving the Lord.

3:20 God is greater than our hearts. An oversensitive conscience can be quieted by the knowledge that God himself has declared active love to be an evidence of salvation. He knows the hearts of all—whether, in spite of shortcomings, they have been born of him. (CSB)

3:20 He knows everything. This word has the meaning that there is absolutely nothing that is excluded. Perfect knowledge which only God can have.

3:24 *He lives in us.* This happens when we are baptized. Then we can obey his command to believe and if we have faith we can do great things for God. It is really not us doing them but Christ who lives in us.

GOSPEL – John 10:11-18

¹¹“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.”

10:11 lays down his life. A Palestinian shepherd might risk danger for his sheep, but he expected to come through alive. Jesus said that the good shepherd will die for his sheep. (CSB)

10:12 hired hand. Shepherding was often dangerous work. Wild animals of every kind could attack at any time. It was the shepherd’s job to protect the sheep from these animals even at the expense of his own life. Those who did not own the sheep but only did to earn some money might well run away during that time. (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

10:16 other sheep. Gentiles, people not descended from Abraham and not part of Israel, who would be integrated into the one flock. Cf Rm 11:17–18. Hus: “Other sheep he had by virtue of predestination, which are not of this fold and of his church according to present righteousness, which sheep of his grace he brought to life” (*The Church*, p 25). (TLSB)

10:16 one flock. The one flock is the holy Christian church, the sum total of all believers, which we will see in all its unity when it enters heaven with the Good Shepherd. For now it is invisible to us, because true faith lies in the hearts of people. (PBC)

10:17 lay it down and take it up again. If He would have died and not risen His shepherd functions would have ceased. In retaking His life, He is able to continue perfectly the shepherding of His people. (PC)