

Notes for Next Sunday

Fourth Sunday of Easter

The Point of this Week's Readings

First Reading (Acts 2:42-47). The particular events of the Day of Pentecost now give way to summary statements of the church's life. Verses 44-45 describe a most optimal church that may have ever existed here on earth. The reason this could be accomplished is because of the spiritual growth activities they engaged in on a daily basis. The "apostles teaching" meant being in the Scriptures on a most regular basis. For us it would mean attending worship, Bible study, devotions and even meditation. This includes the Lord's Supper and leads the caring for each other needs. The book of Acts emphasizes the importance of prayer in the Christian life—private as well as public. The Jews had liturgical-style prayers they memorized and recited, a practice continued in the Christian Church, as the use of the Lord's Prayer shows. All these are powerful life-changing gifts also available to each of us these days.

Epistle (1 Peter 2:19-25). The context of this reading is Peter talking to his audience about submitting to rulers and masters, specifically addresses household servants. It should be noted that slavery as practiced in the first century was far removed from the ugly racial slavery of the Americas. Roman slavery was not race-based – people wound up in slavery as captives of war or by hard economic choice. In fact, Roman slaves were often better educated than their masters, could acquire property, buy their freedom, marry whom they wished, and had certain legal protections. In some ways being a slave was economically preferable to being a free laborer, for Roman slaves were guaranteed clothes, food, and lodging. Peter is not endorsing slavery but is telling them they are to see their masters (even harsh ones) in light of the fourth commandment.

Gospel (John 10:1-10). Jesus' opening words, "I tell you the truth," binds this text to chapter 9 (the man born blind), where the Pharisees, who believe themselves to have perfect vision, are completely blind. Jesus points out that the Pharisees are really nothing more than "blind guides" (Mt. 15:14). Jesus directs their attention to the traits of a real shepherd which He demonstrates in His leading of His flock (believers). He leads the sheep and does not drive them as the spiritual leaders of that day did. In this reading we find the first of 7 "I am statements in the Gospel of John. This is the identification He used in working with Moses. Jesus caps of this script by promising His followers that He will give life to the full which means eternal life with Him in heaven.

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

FIRST READING – Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

2:44 everything in common. Preview and foretaste of the restoration of Paradise-like conditions in heaven. God gives us property and resources for our neighbor's benefit. The early Christians fully shared with one another, but not in the same way as the failed communist experiments of the twentieth century. Here there

is no compulsion or involvement of the State—only believers are affected, and only goods are shared, not their production. (TLSB)

2:45 gave to anyone as he had need. In so large a congregation, and given the speed with which everything happened (grew by 3000 in one day v. 41), it would only be natural that there would be those who found themselves without shelter and food. As these needs became known in these meetings, no questions were asked, no resolutions were passed, no committees were formed. Love acted. Those members who had material wealth had a new understanding of why they were so blessed, and a beautiful and spontaneous sharing and meeting of needs took place. (LL)

2:46 meet in the temple courts. They did this because it was the house of the Lord and they were the Lord's people. It was the Father's house and they were his children. They gathered there daily, perhaps at the hours of prayer. (PBC)

2:46 broke bread in their homes. Here the daily life of Christians is described, distinguishing their activity in the temple from that in their homes, where they ate their meals—not the Lord's Supper—with gladness and generosity. (CSB)

2:46 glad and sincere hearts. In our day, too, it ought to be possible for unbelievers to say of us, “Those Christians are helpful neighbors and good citizens.” Our lives cannot make believers of them, but the way we live might at least remove some hindrances to their faith. Our words and actions might convince some that they ought to give the gospel a hearing. (PBC)

2:47 enjoying the favor of all people. The respect they received from the ordinary folk contrasts with the spitefulness of the rulers (Chapter 4). (TLSB)

2:47 added to their number. No wonder that new believers were added daily! Life-style evangelism. Acts speak louder than words' either attracting or repulsing. And when actions attract, as they plainly did here, questions will be asked. Then, teaching the Word takes place naturally, and the Holy Spirit can and does create faith and growth happens. (LL)

EPISTLE – 1 Peter 2:19-25

¹⁹ For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. ²⁰ But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. ²¹ To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. ²² “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

2:19 Righteous living in the face of injustice demonstrates reliance on God's grace. Christians who suffer for the sake of the Gospel find favor with God, and they witness to His power. (TLSB)

2:20 for doing wrong. Their newly found faith does not give them license to act as rebels in their relationship with their masters. Verse 16 says “live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – volume 9, Part 2)

2:20 for doing good. Bearing a cross for the sake of the Gospel may be difficult, but it is a holy, precious, noble, and blessed calling. Christians face such sufferings with God's strength. (TLSB)

2:21 *To this you were called.* God calls Christians to live out their faith in the midst of suffering. (TLSB)

2:21 *Christ suffered for you.* Our sufferings pale in comparison to what Christ suffered for us. (TLSB)

2:23 *entrusted himself.* He relied on His Father, who will justly punish the wicked and reward the righteous. (TLSB)

2:24 *that we might die to sins and live for righteousness.* Because of Christ's crucifixion, believers are dead to sin, so they may live new lives and present themselves to God as instruments of righteousness. (TLSB)

2:25 *Shepherd.* The chief Shepherd calls His sheep back into His fold through His Gospel. With His Word, He feeds and cares for those who were perishing. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 10:1-10

“I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. ³ The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them. ⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

10:1 *I tell you the truth.* A solemn formula (twenty-five times in John) marking what follows as important. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 18, Part 2)

10:1 *sheep pen.* A court surrounded by walls but open to the sky, and with only one entrance. The walls kept the sheep from wandering and protected them from wild animals. (CSB)

10:3 *The watchman.* This was a watchman who guarded the entrance to the sheep pen. (TLSB)

10:3 *leads them out.* Sheep would usually recognize the voice of their shepherd and respond to his call. (TLSB)

10:7 *I am the gate.* Jesus was the way to reach the sheep and the way for the sheep to come for nourishment. (PBC)

10:8 *All ... before me.* “False shepherds” like the Pharisees and the chief priests, not the true OT prophets (see note on vv. 1–30). (CSB)

10:9 *the gate.* The one way into salvation. Inside there is safety, and one is able to go out and find pasture, i.e., the supply of all needs. – There are great blessing to those who believe in Jesus as their Savior.

10:10 *life and have it to full.* Everlasting life through faith in Jesus Christ (cf. 20:31), not through material goods or worldly success. (TLSB)