

Notes for Next Sunday

Second Sunday of Easter

The Point of this Week's Readings

First Reading (Acts 5:29-42). Since Pentecost the disciples, especially John and Peter, have been under fire from the Jewish leaders. There also had been through some inner turmoil with Ananias and Sapphira lying about their contribution to the group. Now the Jewish leaders again put the disciples in jail for teaching in the temple and when they bring the disciples before the Sanhedrin they demand that the disciples cease their teaching. At beginning of our text Peter, speaking for the apostles, does not back off one iota. The Jewish leaders are ready to put the apostles to death but the highly respected Pharisee Gamaliel points out that others have failed because they did not really have God's will in mind. He reminds the leaders that if something is from God no human being can be successful in stopping it. When the Jewish leaders set the disciples free, the disciples go out and teach with more vigor than ever before.

Epistle (1 Peter 1:3-9). The apostle knew that the Christians to whom he was writing needed encouragement. These Christians were experiencing a good deal of persecution. Rather than dwelling on all the problems they had, Peter lists the many blessing the Lord had given them to face any and all trials and come out a winner here on earth and have eternal life in the here-after.

Gospel (John 20:19-31). Today's lesson begins on the evening of Easter day with the disciples locked in a room in fear of the Jews. When Jesus appears to them, their initial reaction is greater fear still. But their fear begins to give way to the peace that Jesus brings them. Instead of scolding them for their cowardice during His time of suffering, Jesus does, what to us might seem unfathomable, He commissions them for their work and equipping them with the Holy Spirit to forgive the sins of those who repent. This is a huge blessing and honor. A week later the disciples are once again found behind locked doors, implying that they remained fearful. Big fears go away slowly and require much encouraging. Thomas's doubting was a symptom of his fear.

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

FIRST READING – Acts 5:29-42

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men! ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. ³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” ³³ When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. ³⁴ But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ Then he addressed them: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. ³⁶ Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. ³⁷ After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. ³⁹ But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” ⁴⁰ His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. ⁴² Day after

day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

5:34 a Pharisee named Gamaliel. The most famous Jewish teacher of his time and traditionally listed among the “heads of the schools.” Possibly he was the grandson of Hillel. Like Hillel, he was moderate in his views, a characteristic that is apparent in his cautious recommendation on this occasion. Saul (Paul) was one of his students (22:3). (CSB)

5:40 flogged. Beaten with the Jewish penalty of “forty lashes minus one” (2Co 11:24). (CSB)

5:41 rejoicing. They regarded these disgraceful welts as badges of honor, glorying in the fact that they had been “counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”

EPISTLE – 1 Peter 1:3-9

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. ⁷ These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1:3 living hope. Not a pious wish but a solid promise of God. This hope gives life. Luther: “Peter ... exhorts them to be steadfast in faith and to increase through all kinds of suffering and good works.... He strengthens their faith through the divine promise and power of the salvation to come” (AE 35:390). (TLSB)

1:4 into an inheritance. Believers are born again not only to a hope but also to the inheritance that is the substance of the hope. The inheritance is eternal—in its essence (it is not subject to decay) and in its preservation (it is divinely kept for us). (CSB)

1:5 through faith ... by God’s power. † The perseverance of the Christian is shielded by God’s power through faith, a gift of God. (CSB)

1:7 that your faith ... may be proved genuine. As the true character of gold is seen in a refiner’s fire, so faith’s true character is revealed when tested. (TLSB)

1:8 though you do not see him now, you believe. Unlike Peter, we are not eyewitnesses of Jesus, but through faith, we believe in Him and love Him. Our eyes will see Him on the Last Day, but even now we encounter Christ through His Word and Sacraments as He gives us saving faith, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 20 19-31

¹⁹ On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending

you.”²² And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit.²³ If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

20:19 Peace be with you! The normal Hebrew greeting (cf. Da 10:19). Because of their behavior the previous Friday, they may have expected rebuke and censure; but Jesus calmed their fears (see note on 14:27). (CSB)

20:21 Father has sent me. apostello - *set apart*, that is, (by implication) to *send out* (properly on a mission). – Jesus was sent in a unique way for a unique mission.

20:22 breathed on them. Greek term used only here in NT. Jesus’ words, formed by breaths of air, delivered the Spirit to the disciples. (TLSB)

20:22 Receive the Holy Spirit. By giving the Holy Spirit, Jesus was equipping the disciples for the ongoing work assigned to them, including especially the exercise of the Office of the Keys. (TLSB)

All Christians exercise the Office of the Keys privately. The pastor by virtue of his call, exercises it publicly for the specific congregation to which he is called. (Exegetical Notes – Buls)

²⁴ Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.”²⁶ A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”²⁸ Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!”²⁹ Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”³⁰ Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book.³¹ But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

20:25 Unless I see ... and put ... I will not believe. Hardheaded skepticism can scarcely go further than this. (CSB)

20:27 put...see...reach. What patient, seeking love of the Savior! He condescends to Thomas’ requirement for both visual and physical proof of his resurrection, adding the plea, “Stop doubting and believe.” Here is one more example of Jesus conquering unbelief. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

20:29 those who have not seen and yet have believed. Would have been very few at this time. All whom John mentions had seen in some sense. The words, of course, apply to future believers as well. (CSB)

20:31 that you may believe...that by believing you may have life. John not only states the purpose of his Book, but summarizes succinctly its content. (TLSB)