

Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018

## The Sixth Sunday of Easter

White

**Rogation Sunday**



### Collect

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**

**Acts 10:44-48** English Standard Version (ESV)

### The Holy Spirit Falls on the Gentiles

10<sup>44</sup> While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. <sup>45</sup> And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. <sup>46</sup> For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, <sup>47</sup> “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup> And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

**COMMENT:** This story reads like the story of Pentecost in Acts 2 and was intended as its sequel. Before Peter had finished preaching, the Holy Spirit came upon the household of Cornelius, a Roman military officer and a Gentile. Jewish Christians accompanying Peter were astonished that the Spirit had come to a gathering of Gentiles. With the baptism of Cornelius and his household a new phase of the church’s mission began in earnest.

**John 15:9-17** English Standard Version (ESV)

15<sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

<sup>12</sup> “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you servants, <sup>[a]</sup> for the servant <sup>[b]</sup> does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. <sup>17</sup> These things I command you, so that you will love one another.

**Footnotes:** a. John 15:15 Greek *bondservants*. b. John 15:15 Greek *bondservant*; also verse 20.

**COMMENT:** As in several other places in John’s Gospel, chapters 14 to 16 use a familiar literary device of the time, an extended and stylised discourse. The style is characteristic of John’s Gospel. These discourses were attributed to Jesus and through the centuries have been given literal authority. More probable, however, they contain profound theological affirmations of who Jesus is and what he means to the Christian fellowship and to the world. This is particularly true of the several places where John quotes Jesus as saying “I am ....” This discourse may well include some of Jesus’ most incisive teachings remembered by the church 60 or more years after the resurrection. The dominant issue for the church had changed from awaiting the imminent return of Christ to living in a world that showed no signs of readiness to believe or to follow the Christian way. The theme of this brief excerpt concentrates on self-sacrificing love (agapé) as the unique focus and life force of every Christian. Behind this passage stands the intense shadow of the cross and the sovereign power of God to raise Jesus from the dead and give the Holy Spirit to all who believe. So John takes us to the heart of the Christian discipleship: Love for others as God has loved us. We cannot begin to imagine how disturbing the cross must have been to those early Christians immersed and they were in Roman civilization and frequently facing Roman justice. As a means of execution, crucifixion was the ultimate in cruelty, indignity and violence. Despite all that, the apostolic church transformed it into the only credible symbol of living creatively in a world for which death on a cross was the ultimate punishment for criminal behaviour. Could this really be understood as the ultimate joy for Jesus and for those who had committed themselves to follow him (verse 11)? Yet this is a repeated affirmation of other New Testament writers (Hebrews 12:2; Galatians. 5:22; Romans 14:17; 15:13). Furthermore, as John has phrased this tradition, there can be no greater love for one’s friends than to follow in Jesus’ footsteps even to the point of death (verse 13). The emphasis on friendship has considerable significance. The Christian way of life exists only in effective human relationships. Every human institution – the church included – works best when relationships are firmly based on mutual respect and humanitarian values, at the root of which is love. As we move toward a global civilization no other value system will prove sufficient. The selfless relationships of agapé love have been proven in the divine-human gift to mankind which is Jesus Christ. This is what Jesus is saying throughout this passage.

**℟ The Lord has shown his salvation to the nations.**

<sup>1</sup> *A Psalm.*

Sing a new song to the Lord  
for he has worked wonders.  
His right and hand his holy arm  
have brought salvation. ℟

<sup>2</sup> The Lord has made known his salvation;  
has shown his justice to the nations.

<sup>3</sup> He has remembered his truth and love  
for the house of Israel. ℟

All the ends of the earth have seen  
the salvation of our God.

<sup>4</sup> Shout to the Lord, all the earth,  
ring out your joy. ℟

<sup>5</sup> Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp  
with the sound of music.

<sup>6</sup> With trumpets and the sound of the horn  
acclaim the King, the Lord. ℟

<sup>7</sup> Let the sea and all within it, thunder;  
the world, and all its peoples.

<sup>8</sup> Let the rivers clap their hands  
and the hills ring out their joy ℟

<sup>9</sup> at the presence of the Lord: for he comes,  
he comes to rule the earth.

He will rule the world with justice  
and the peoples with fairness. ℟

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit,  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This triumphant hymn may well have been used in the temple ritual for the Jewish New Year when Israel celebrated the enthronement of God as sovereign of the world. Scholars thus regard it, together with Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97 and 99, as a

group designated as “Psalms of Enthronement.” All of them envision the LORD seated on a heavenly throne exercising dominion over all of creation. The imagery may or may not have derived from a similar Babylonian religious tradition which enthroned their god Marduk at the beginning of each year. The reasons against such influence would be that Israel avoided having a King, as they saw the LORD as their King instead having a series of Judges. The shift came under the Judge Samuel, rejecting Samuel's wayward sons as Judges, and influence by surrounding nations Israel demanded a King (I Samuel 8:1-22). Yet still the idea of the LORD's kingship was a common theme among Old Testament authors. Israel's monarch ruled as the LORD's anointed representative. In post-exilic times, after the monarchy had disappeared and Israel suffered subjection to foreign domination, the concept of the LORD's as sovereign filled a deep spiritual need. It provided Israel with a distinctive national identity enabling them to survive as a people despite their political subjugation. The psalmist summoned not only the LORD's special people, Israel, but the whole earth and all of nature to join in the praise of divine sovereignty. As in all cultures, music from both stringed and brass instruments had a prominent place in the celebration (verses 5-6). One wonders if the phrase “a joyful noise” referred to a cacophony rather than melodious sounds. References to sounds of nature – the roaring of waves on the seashore or sudden floods in dry wadis; and the moan of wind whistling through the hills – vividly reflect the psalmist's powers of observation and imagination that these too sing their praise to the LORD who is the just judge whose decisions are equitable for all people (verse 9).

### **Short Preface**

But chiefly are we bound to praise you because you raised him gloriously from the dead. For he is the true paschal lamb who was offered for us, and has taken away the sin of the world. By his death he has destroyed death, and by his rising to life again he has restored to us everlasting life.

### **Post Communion**

God our Father, whose Son Jesus Christ gives the water of eternal life: may we thirst for you, the spring of life and source of goodness, through him who is alive and reigns, now and for ever. **Amen**

### **Blessing**

The God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the eternal covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**