

Sunday 19th May 2019

Fifth Sunday of Easter

White



Collect

Almighty God, who through your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ have overcome death and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant that, as by your grace going before us you put into our minds good desires, so by your continual help we may bring them to good effect; through Jesus Christ our risen Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Acts 11:1-18 English Standard Version (ESV)

Peter Reports to the Church

11 ¹ Now the apostles and the brothers^[a] who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party^[b] criticized him, saying, ³ “You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.” ⁴ But Peter began and explained it to them in order: ⁵ “I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ ⁸ But I said, ‘By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, ‘What God has made clean, do not call common.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven. ¹¹ And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea. ¹² And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man's house. ¹³ And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’ ¹⁵ As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit.’ ¹⁷ If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord

Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"¹⁸ When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."

Footnotes: a. or *brothers and sisters*. b. or *Jerusalem, those of the circumcision*

COMMENT: In response to the challenge of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem Peter testified about his conversion to the Gentile mission. Several important aspects of the Jewish-Gentile controversy stand out in Peter's report to the church in Jerusalem. As the late Professor George Caird noted in his study of the Apostolic Church that Jewish orthodoxy was more a matter of practice rather than belief. They did not condemn the Christians for any beliefs they held about the Messiah, the Resurrection, or the Age to Come. That would not incur any charge of religious disloyalty as long their beliefs did not affect their obedience to the Law. Judaism was regarded as more than a religion; it was a nationality. The Torah was religious precept, social custom, and civil law all rolled into one. Even though the religious centre of life had shifted from the Torah to Christ, Jewish Christians could not abandon the Torah as a national way of life without becoming denationalised. All this is eminently true in this passage from Acts 11. The crucial moment for Peter came when the Holy Spirit fell on the assembled household in the home of Cornelius, the Roman army officer in Caesarea. The Holy Spirit rather than Peter was the driving force behind the change of mind in the Jerusalem community; and in the Apostolic Church's subsequent change of strategy in the succeeding vss. 19-30. In verse 16, Peter recalls words that Jesus had spoken (Acts 1:5). In the Gospels Jesus had promised to send the Spirit as his living presence with the Apostles as they carried on his ministry. The history of the Christian Church from the very beginning is the story of how the Spirit continually challenges the faithful to carry the Gospel to the world. We are still being challenged to live and witness in that historical environment.

John 13:31-35 English Standard Version (ESV)

A New Commandment

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³² If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

COMMENT: John recalls the new commandment to love one another as the Lord has loved us, as a challenge to his own community. At the end of the 1st century, John's community (probably Ephesus) might still have been a very mixed group of Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free Roman citizens from many backgrounds. A

sense of community could only come about through love for one another despite their great diversity and natural inclination to remain separate from one another. This call for love within the Christian fellowship sounds across the centuries to us. Christians not only demonstrate their discipleship in the world where they remain after the resurrection; they also reveal the risen Christ to the world. Indeed, Christ may not be known in any other way. But the revelation is conditional: “if you love one another.” Because of this condition, Christians have often hidden Christ from the world. Because of this, the world has every right to reject us and him, no matter how much we babble his name or thunder from pulpits that every word of scripture is literally true. As a wise man once said, “The only gospel some people will ever read is the way we live.” Our living the Word glorifies God.

Psalm 148 *Laudate Dominum*

℟ Your glory fills all heaven and earth.

1 Alleluia!

Praise the Lord from the heavens,
praise him in the heights.

2 Praise him, all his angels,
praise him, all his host. ℟

3 Praise him, sun and moon,
praise him, shining stars.

4 Praise him, highest heavens
and the waters above the heavens. ℟

5 Let them praise the name of the Lord.

He commanded: they were made.

6 He fixed them for ever,
gave a law which shall not pass away. ℟

7 Praise the Lord from the earth,
sea creatures and all oceans,

8 fire and hail, snow and mist,
stormy winds that obey his word; ℟

9 all mountains and hills,
all fruit trees and cedars,

10 beasts, wild and tame,
reptiles and birds on the wing; ℟

11 all earth's kings and peoples,
earth's princes and rulers,

12 young men and maidens,
old men together with children. ℟

13 Let them praise the name of the Lord
for he alone is exalted.

The splendour of his name
reaches beyond heaven and earth.

✠ Your glory fills all heaven and earth.

14 He exalts the strength of his people.
He is the praise of all his saints,
of the sons of Israel,
of the people to whom he comes close.

Alleluia! **✠**

**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: All creation and all people are summoned to praise the Lord in this third of five Hallel or Praise Psalms (Psalms 146-150 - a selection of recited as the introduction in the daily morning service) which end the whole collection with a resounding “Alleluia!” or “Praise the Lord!”

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

Eternal God, whose Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: grant us to walk in his way, to rejoice in his truth, and to share his risen life; 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.**