

Dear Friends in Christ,

I would like to share some thoughts with you on The Resurrection.

I would not be a Christian unless I was convinced of the reality of The Resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Indeed, there wouldn't even be a Christianity, if there were no Resurrection! Stories of miracles by themselves, I do not find convincing. There are many stories in antiquity attributing miracles to holy men (and they are usually men) in many cultures. They are usually ignored today as mythical stories with some moral point to them. Similarly, there are many lawgivers, peace makers and gentle philosophers who have and still do try to tell us how to live our lives better. Most of us and all of them, did not think of themselves as gods let alone God even or especially if they had given rise to a religion.

But the Resurrection is so different, and its effect on those who witnessed the resurrected Christ was so profound that they went out to convert the world. And, what is even more profound, even astounding, the world listened. Now, by all accounts in the Bible, Jesus chosen were a pretty lame group. These are the sainted Church Fathers who walked with Jesus and yet all the records of them in the gospels, picture them as somewhat ego centric but essentially good hearted working stiffs who appear fairly clueless. They do not become heroic, thoughtful even nuanced until, as recorded in Acts of the Apostles chapter 2, they have the Pentecost experience. Then the movement, which was called The Way, started moving.

Now, with Jesus gone but The Resurrection in hand, attention starts being paid to the stories and words of Jesus. Only now do they see the profound wisdom of his words and the miracles are seen not a feats of magic but as signs. During the period between the death/resurrection of Jesus and 60-65 CE believers, no doubt, collected stories and quotations of Jesus and the literate my have written them down, although we have no documented record of them.

Then, almost suddenly, the earliest Gospel, Mark, was written down in about 65 CE, 35 years after Jesus was crucified and resurrected. This was deduced contextually as being written well after the Historic Jesus but before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. All the other Gospels were written after the fall of Jerusalem Johns gospel being last just before the turn of the of the first century. The Gospels are THE GOOD NEWS not history. Although there is a certain amount of historicity, they were written as testaments of faith that we might believe and not as objective history.

One more perspective, which I owe to C.S. Lewis. It is the very differences between the Gospels and their roughness that gives them the ring of truth. But don't believe me about differences, read the crucifixion/resurrection stories in all four Gospels. It should only take 20-30minutes. The Church Fathers, who cobbled together the official canon of Christian Scripture New Testament, were not stupid or illiterate. They saw the inconsistencies between the Gospels and could have gotten together a committee to clean them up and harmonize them so they would read like Virgil or Homer. To their credit, they didn't. They also purposely excluded a number of writings like the Gospel of Thomas, which includes the story on a very young Jesus making birds out of clay which became animated and flew away. They avoided magic like the plague.

Anyway, here are the readings for Sunday

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER Year A

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

This passage follows the Pentecost experience.

Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the multitude, "You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know-- this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.
You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

*This is from Psalm 16,
note some of the differences.*

"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that

he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying ,

`He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption.'

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses."

1. Is this the same Peter who denied Christ? _____
 - a. What happened? _____
 2. What was the function of Jesus' deeds of power (read miracles)? _____
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Psalm 16

A song of trust in God.

1. Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you; *
I have said to the LORD, "You are my Lord,
my good above all other."

2. All my delight is upon the godly that are in the
land, * upon those who are noble among the people.

3. But those who run after other gods *
shall have their troubles multiplied.

4. Their libations of blood I will not offer, *
nor take the names of their gods upon my lips.

5. O LORD, YOU are my portion and my cup; *
it is you who uphold my lot.

6. My boundaries enclose a pleasant land; *

indeed, I have a goodly heritage.

7. I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel; *
my heart teaches me, night after night.

8. I have set the LORD always before me; *
because he is at my right hand I shall not fall.

9. My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit
rejoices; * my body also shall rest in hope.

10. For you will not abandon me to the grave, *
nor let your holy one see the Pit.

11. You will show me the path of life; *
in your presence there is fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

1 Peter 1:3-9

Most scholars think this was written by disciple of Peter who felt heavily indebted to the Apostle.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith-- being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire-- may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1. What is the author trying to do in this letter? _____

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

1. So where are Jesus' chosen on the Monday after the crucifixion?

2. What is their state of mind? _____

3. What is the point of this passage? _____

4. So how is this sad little group of uneducated working stiff with no training going to get a movement off the ground? _____

(hint: read Acts chapter 2)