

Sixth Sunday of Easter May 21, 2017

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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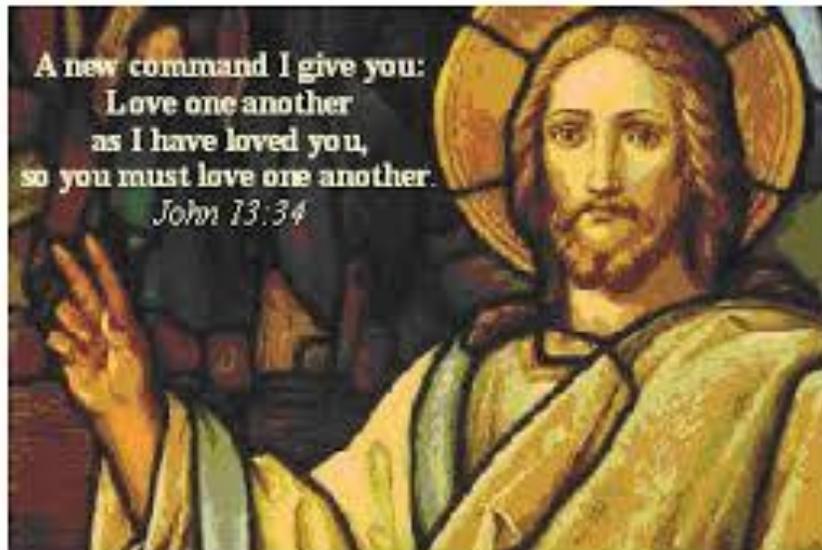
**through Facebook at either “Living the Lutheran Lectionary”,
“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

May 18, 2017 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44130

*Presented as a part of the bible study/worship weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church
setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site and used by Lutherans in Africa.*

E-mail puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.



<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/justandsinner/john-1415-21/>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 556 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 387

“Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice ”

This is primarily a Lutheran hymn. Martin Luther and Richard Massie are both authors of this hymn.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y6F3GxcQXWE> “Finally, I am getting around to my most requested hymn, and as a Reformation special, it is a Lutheran Warbler duet with my mom!”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4tft11D2qol> Organ – Paul Manz, Volume 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arDWLWVfv0w> A modern accompaniment. Branches Band, “Drawn to the Cross”

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by [Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Acts 17:16-31; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Acts 17:22-31 (Next Week: Acts 1:12-26; RCL, Acts 1:6-14)

“Paul was the chosen instrument to carry Christ’s name to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15).

Yet only twice in Acts is Paul’s missionary preaching aimed at an exclusively Gentile audience: in Paul’s address to the residents at Lystra (Acts 14:15-17) and in Paul’s Areopagus speech delivered in Athens (17:22-31).

To understand the rhetorical and cultural strategies of Paul’s Areopagus speech, we must take into account the passing note made by Luke in Acts 17:21: “Now, all the Athenians and the foreigners living among them spent their time in nothing other than (trying) either to say or to hear something novel.” Despite the Athenians’ insatiable appetite for “new things” (well known in antiquity: Demosthenes, Oration 4:10; Aristophanes, Eq. 1260-63), Paul demonstrates that the true identity of the “unknown God” is anything but new...” (Continued after the reading)

Paul in Athens

¹⁶ Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the devout persons, and in the marketplace every day with those who happened to be there. ¹⁸ Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, “What does this babblers wish to say?” Others said, “He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities”—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ For you bring some strange things to our ears. We wish to know therefore what these things mean.” ²¹ Now all the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there would spend their time in nothing except telling or hearing something new.

Paul Addresses the Areopagus – *“earliest aristocratic council of ancient Athens. The name was taken from the Areopagus (“Ares’ Hill”), a low hill northwest of the Acropolis, which was its meeting place...”*

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Areopagus-Greek-council>

²² So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: “Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription: ‘To the unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ^[a] ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for

“‘In him we live and move and have our being’; ^[b]
as even some of your own poets have said,
“‘For we are indeed his offspring.’” ^[c] [Job 12:10](#); [Dan. 5:23](#); [\[Heb. 2:11\]](#)

²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

- a. [Acts 17:24](#) Greek *made by hands*
- b. [Acts 17:28](#) Probably from Epimenides of Crete
- c. [Acts 17:28](#) From Aratus's poem “Phainomena”

“...The Areopagus sermon is the fullest and most dramatic speech of Paul’s missionary career. Anticipated by the shorter address in Lystra (14:15-17) and consistent with the kerygma Paul presents to the Gentiles in his letters (cf. Romans 1-3; 1 Thessalonians 1), this address provides a window into how Paul dealt with the Gentiles in other places. The speech may be outlined as follows:

- A: Introduction -- Evidence of the ignorance of pagan worship (17:22-23)
- B: The object of true worship is the one Creator God (17:24-25)
- C: Proper relationship between humanity and God (17:26-28)
- B’: The object of false worship are the idols of gold, silver, or stone (17:29)
- A’: Conclusion -- The time of ignorance is now over (17:30-31)...

Paul’s Areopagus speech is sometimes unfairly criticized: 1) for lacking explicit citations to Scripture, which led 2) to the speech’s failure to win converts among the Athenians. But as we have seen, Paul’s argument is thoroughly grounded in the thought world of biblical Judaism (and Christianity) despite its lack of scriptural citations. And a peek at the very end of the story suggests that while some of Paul’s audience did mock him (17:32a), others promised to hear him again (17:32b), and still others “joined him and believed” (17:34). So goes the proclamation of the Gospel!”

Material adapted from *The Acts of the Apostles. Paideia Commentary Series*. Eds. Mikeal C. Parsons and Charles H. Talbert. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic (a division of Baker Publishing Group), 2008. Used by permission. http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2068 **Mikeal C. Parsons** Professor and Kidd L. and Buna Hitchcock Macon Chair of Religion, Baylor University
Waco, Texas

Psalm 66:8-20; RCL, the same reading (Psalm 68:1-10; RCL, Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35)

“I recall from Sunday School days in a small Minnesota church that it was always one of my favorite songs. Somehow our group assembled for "opening exercises" always got cranked up singing the refrain: "I love to tell the sto-ry, 'twill be my theme in glory." I was disappointed when the "green book" (Lutheran Book of Worship, 1978, 390) left out that word, "'twill" replacing it with "I'll sing this theme in glory)". But now I'm happy to see that "'twill" is back in the 2006 red book, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, 661)...” (Continued after reading)

- ⁸ Bless our God, O peoples;
let the sound of his praise be heard,
⁹ who has kept our soul among the living
and has not let our feet slip.
¹⁰ For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us as silver is tried.
¹¹ You brought us into the net;
you laid a crushing burden on our backs;
¹² you let men ride over our heads;
we went through fire and through water;
yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.
- ¹³ I will come into your house with burnt offerings;
I will perform my vows to you,
¹⁴ that which my lips uttered
and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.
¹⁵ I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals,
with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams;
I will make an offering of bulls and goats. Selah
- ¹⁶ Come and hear, all you who fear God,
and I will tell what he has done for my soul.
¹⁷ I cried to him with my mouth,
and high praise was on^[a] my tongue.^[b]
¹⁸ If I had cherished iniquity in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened.
¹⁹ But truly God has listened;
he has attended to the voice of my prayer.

²⁰ Blessed be God,
because he has not rejected my prayer
or removed his steadfast love from me!

- a. [Psalm 66:17](#) Hebrew *under*
- b. [Psalm 66:17](#) Or *and he was exalted with my tongue*

“..Twice the singer of this Psalm invites the congregation to pay attention to a story he has to tell. First, the psalmist invites listeners to "come and see what God has done," (verse 5) and then he tells what God has done for God's people. Second, the psalmist invites the congregation to "come and hear...and I will tell what God has done for the psalmist (verse 16). In what follows I will outline the movement of the psalm and then make some comments about preaching on this text.

Calling Planet Earth (66:1-4)...With Psalm 66 the psalmist continues the "earth" theme but now addresses the inhabitants of this beautiful blue planet, *all* of them! ("all the earth" occurs twice, for emphasis, verses 1 and 4). The psalmist invites all citizens of the planet to praise God. God's people respond to this invitation with joy, while God's enemies cringe in fear...

Telling the Story: What God has Done for God's People (66:5-12) After a general declaration about the awesome-ness of God, recognized by all the "children of Adam" (Hebrew), that is, all "mortals" (NRSV), the psalmist gives a specific example of what God has done for Israel. Here he refers to the exodus and the crossing of the river Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17). Since both events are well-known to the congregation, the psalmist only alludes to both stories. The difficulties of the time of the exodus and the testing in the wilderness are recalled in verses 9-12. But the bottom line, says the psalmist, is that "you have brought us out to a spacious place." (verse 12)

Telling the Story: What God has Done for Me (66:13-20)... Part 2 of the psalm recalled God's *awesome* deeds on behalf of Israel (verses 5-12). And now the psalmist makes it all personal. First, he reports that he has made certain offerings that he promised to make (verses 13-15).

Then he issues an invitation, similar to the one made in verse 5. There it was "come and see." Now it is "come and hear." ...” https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=875
James Limburg Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

1 Peter 3:13-22; RCL, the same reading (1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11; RCL, the same reading)

“The trumpets, the fanfare, and the antiphonal shouts of “He is risen! He is risen, indeed!” have receded into the background.

It is now the sixth Sunday of Easter; by now it may be somewhat difficult to sustain the excitement and positive outlook that only a few short weeks ago seemed so ready at hand. By now we have begun to settle in once again into the drudgery, the lack-luster, the “same-old, same-old” of the mundane daily tasks and worries that characterize life in the real world.

If we recognize any of those sentiments or feelings, then perhaps we can understand in some way what must have been the experience of the recipients of the letter of Peter, living as they were toward the end of the first century. Our distance from the celebration of Easter, even though only a few weeks away, may offer a glimpse of what must have been the experience of this people...” (Continued after the reading)

¹³ Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, ¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. ¹⁷ For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered^[a] once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, ¹⁹ in which^[b] he went and proclaimed^[c] to the spirits in prison, ²⁰ because^[d] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹ Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

- a. [1 Peter 3:18](#) Some manuscripts *died*
- b. [1 Peter 3:19](#) Or *the Spirit, in whom*
- c. [1 Peter 3:19](#) Or *preached*
- d. [1 Peter 3:20](#) Or *when*

“Living now some seventy years after that first Easter event, they can perhaps be forgiven for having difficulty keeping alive the freshness of that first Easter announcement of our Lord’s Resurrection and the accompanying promise of new life in him. But their distance from Easter and the accompanying delay of Christ’s return are not the only problems they face.

The letter makes clear that this community, as it seeks to remain faithful and to live lives that befit a good conscience, is constantly beset by the antagonism and outright persecution of those among whom they live. The double whammy of a fading sense of the resurrection and the very real experience of daily suffering are almost more than they can bear. To such a setting and people the writer addresses a word of encouragement through the restatement and assurances of the promissory implications of Easter...

...So it is both instructive and effective that the letter opens with a beautiful assertion of the blessing of God’s mercy accomplished in the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead and now bestowed on the believers through their “new birth into a living hope.”...

...Still, in the midst of all this talk of “hope,” the presenting issue remains the “suffering” that stalks this community. That the author recognizes suffering to be an overwhelming issue for this community is clear from the repeated references to suffering in this letter (twelve explicit uses of the verb suffer out of a total of only forty two in the whole New Testament)... The implied complaint is compelling and painful. If God has raised Jesus from the dead, and Jesus Christ is Lord, then why living in the season of Easter do we keep suffering, and especially even when we are “doing what is right.” How can this be justice? Where is the hope in that?

These are not easy questions to answer any more for 1 Peter's readers than they are for us. The author offers at least two responses. **First** is the reminder that righteous suffering was modeled in Christ's own death... The **second** is the encouragement, then, to bear this suffering and to continue to do good by not repaying evil treatment with evil. In the midst of suffering you may not be able to control the evil, but you can control how you respond by continuing to do good even in the midst of suffering..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2089 **James Boyce**
Emeritus Professor of New Testament and Greek, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

“The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 14th Chapter”

“Glory to You, O Lord”

“This passage picks up where last week's reading left off. Jesus continues to deliver his Farewell Discourse (chs. 14-17), preparing his disciples for his departure and their receipt of the Holy Spirit.

*In this brief but powerful passage, Jesus reiterates his favorite theme: **love**. He also promises the **Holy Spirit**. Finally, Jesus emphasizes the **intimate unity** of Jesus, God, the Spirit, and the believer...”*

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=69 **Jaime Clark-Soles**
Professor of New Testament, Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas You might wish to read her who article and the idea of a “quatrinity”.

John 14:15-21; RCL, the same reading (John 17:1-11; RCL, the same reading)

Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

¹⁵ “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,^[a] to be with you forever, ¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be^[b] in you.

¹⁸ “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

²⁰ In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you.

²¹ Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”

1. [John 14:16](#) Or *Advocate*, or *Counselor*; also [14:26](#); [15:26](#); [16:7](#)
2. [John 14:17](#) Some manuscripts *and is*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“ Have you ever seen the Holy Spirit? (No, that's not a trick question.) Seriously, then: have you seen the Spirit? No, of course not. The best we get in the Bible are descriptions of tongues of flame (Acts 2) or a freely blowing breeze (John 3). I think that's what makes preaching on -- or for that matter even talking about -- the Holy Spirit so difficult. We don't know what the Spirit looks like.

Except....

Except that in this week's reading we get two insanely helpful clues that, together, offer a pretty good picture of just what the Holy Spirit looks like.

Clue #1: the Holy Spirit looks like an Advocate --the one who stands up for you when you need it; the one who speaks on your behalf; the one who lends you a helping hand, takes your side, and won't leave you while you're down.

Clue #2: the Holy Spirit looks like Jesus. The Spirit is "another advocate" because Jesus is the first. The Spirit, Jesus goes on to say, will abide with us just as Jesus the Word made flesh has abided with us. The Spirit is sent in Jesus' name and reminds us of what he taught (14:25). In a very real way, the Spirit mediates Jesus presence and helps to keep his promise that he will not leave us orphaned and will come to us.

In summary, then: the Holy Spirit is an advocate that looks a whole lot like Jesus. Which means that we've actually seen the Spirit lots of times. Anytime, in fact, someone stands up for another... Anytime someone acts like Jesus... Anytime someone bears the love of Christ to another... we've seen the Holy Spirit.

No wonder, then, that Jesus says, "you know him." Because, as it turns out, the Holy Spirit at one time or another has probably looked a lot like you, even a lot like me, and definitely a lot like each and all of us when we do these things..." <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?post=1573>
David Lose President, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Penn.

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3243 **Samuel Cruz** Assistant Professor of Church and Society, Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, New York, N.Y. Professor Cruz offers thoughts on how John's gospel has a different approach than the others. Read his article and the suggestions he has if you agree with his approach.

"Here at *Agnus Day Central*, we're defending the doctrine of grace one sin at a time."



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