

Seventh Sunday of Easter May 28, 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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“Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma” or “Harold Weseloh”**

May 25, 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.*

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<https://www.flickr.com/photos/paullew/albums/72157600733697164>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 539 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not Listed

“Christ is the world’s Redeemer”

“Saint Columba (*author*) (Irish: Colm Cille, 'church dove'; 7 December 521 – 9 June 597) was an Irish abbot and missionary credited with spreading Christianity in present-day Scotland. He founded the important abbey on Iona, which became a dominant religious and political institution in the region for centuries. He is the Patron Saint of Derry. He was highly regarded by both the Gaels of Dál Riata and the Picts, and is remembered today as a Christian saint and one of the Twelve Apostles of Ireland...” <http://hymnary.org/person/Columba>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a9DAIKsv2yQ> With a prelude from Concordia Publishing House.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOK59tedr18> “A song from ChurchFolk, at the October 2nd 9:30 service at College Church in Wheaton.” (with lyrics)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3OPBx4iEm4> The Priory Singers · Belfast, Hymns of Love, Hope and Joy

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

Acts 1:12-26; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Acts 1:6-14 *if Ascension not observed here (Next Week: (Pentecost) Numbers 11:24-30; RCL, the Numbers 11 reading or Acts 2:1-21)*

“The Ascension seems like the poor cousin among church festivals: often overlooked, passed over without being missed.

A few congregations will worship on the Thursday that comes 40 days after Easter. More congregations will observe the Ascension on the following Sunday, thus bumping the seventh Sunday of Easter from the calendar. Most, I suspect, will simply not observe it at all.

This seems like poor treatment for one of the great ecumenical feasts, and an event that the writer of Luke-Acts thought important enough to narrate twice. Perhaps the scene of Jesus ascending on a cloud is a bit too reminiscent of Peter Pan. Perhaps we just can’t tolerate too much worship spilling into the week. More likely, I suspect, we really don’t like good-byes, and we don’t know quite how to celebrate this one...”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1629 [Brian Peterson](#)
Professor of New Testament, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, SC

The Ascension

⁶So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” ⁷He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” ⁹And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰And while they were gazing into heaven as he went,

behold, two men stood by them in white robes,¹¹ and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

“First there were 12, then there were 11, and the Church was faced with a problem. The perfect number 12 (the number of the tribes of Israel, for example) was lost by the son of perdition who refused to stand in the mercy of Christ. Was the Church to enter Pentecost and the great mission of proclaiming Jesus and His resurrection now one man short? Something must be done... (continued after the reading)

Matthias Chosen to Replace Judas

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away. ¹³And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. ¹⁴All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.^[a]

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, ¹⁶“Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.” ¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong^[b] he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. ¹⁹And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) ²⁰“For it is written in the Book of Psalms,

““May his camp become desolate,
and let there be no one to dwell in it’; [Cited from Ps. 69:25](#)

and

““Let another take his office.’ [Cited from Ps. 109:8](#)

²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” ²³And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

- a. [Acts 1:14](#) Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated “brothers”) may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse [15](#)
- b. [Acts 1:18](#) Or *swelling up*

They come together and, as usual, for good or for ill, Peter is in charge. He stands up among the company of the 120 brothers and explains the problem (without sparing any of the gory details)...

Now comes the problem. Who wants to be the successor to Judas? No one would ever live down the memory of such a predecessor. It would be like following Bernie Madoff as president of the company that stole billions from trusting investors. I cannot imagine that they had many volunteers and those who would volunteer I would have thrown their resumes away. What about you?...

It seems that from the short list, they came down to a shorter list. Two, to be exact. Neither of whom we know anything about except that we know three times as much about the one who was not chosen as the one who was. He had three names and the one who was chosen had one.

And then they prayed. Joseph, called Barsabbas or Justus, and Matthias were praying that they would choose the other one... at least if they were smart.

Then comes the election. “You Lord know the hearts of all – you show us which one YOU have chosen to fill the open spot of minister and apostle from Judas who went his own way...” And nothing happened.

So they cast lots – give God some raw material to work with, I guess. It is the only time a successor is chosen and the only time he is chosen with lots. Short straw wins, I guess. And Matthias won, well that is not exactly what Scripture says: the lot fell on Matthias. Call that winning or losing? I do not know which.

And that is the last thing we ever hear about Matthias. Period....

The unremarkable Matthias is remarkable only to God... In history a footnote... in the memory of the Church a mystery ... in the mission of the kingdom anonymous... in the list of the saints, a name... only to God remarkable at all.

I dare say I am the same. Sure there are people who know my name while I am alive... and someday my kids will remember me... and maybe a grandchild or two... but then I will be done... the unremarkable Larry is remarkable only to God...

And you are the same... Is it enough for you? It appears it was enough for Matthias... I need to be remembered only by the Lord to be a success... And by the grace of God that is what He has made me... with Matthias... and with you. Amen”

<http://pastoralmeanderings.blogspot.com/2010/02/st-matthias-apostle.html> Pastor Peters “I have been a Lutheran Pastor for more than 36 years, serving in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod...”

Psalm 68:1-10; RCL, Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35 (Psalm 25:1-15; RCL, Psalm 104:24-34, 35b)

“While Psalm 68 is fraught with interpretive difficulties -- several one-of-a-kind words, obscure allusions, unknown geographical locations, and a less-than-clear structure -- its general character and movement are clear enough.

“As Konrad Schaefer helpfully suggests, Psalm 68 “is a hymn to God’s power and majesty ... The overall impression is of a triumphal parade which culminates in Zion.”¹

“The celebration of “God’s power and majesty” explains why the lectionary associates Psalm 68 with Acts 1:6-14 and the Ascension of the Lord; however, this association also invites careful attention to one’s interpretive conclusions and hermeneutical directions, so that this portrayal “of a triumphal parade” not be allowed to serve as warrant for an unfaithful triumphalism...” [Read more at:](#)

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2038 **J. Clinton McCann**

Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation, Eden Seminary (UCC), Saint Louis, MO

God Shall Scatter His Enemies

To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.

- 68 God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered;
and those who hate him shall flee before him!
- ² As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away;
as wax melts before fire,
so the wicked shall perish before God!
- ³ But the righteous shall be glad;
they shall exult before God;
they shall be jubilant with joy!
- ⁴ Sing to God, sing praises to his name;
lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts;
his name is the LORD;
exult before him!
- ⁵ Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
- ⁶ God settles the solitary in a home;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.
- ⁷ O God, when you went out before your people,
when you marched through the wilderness, Selah
- ⁸ the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,
before God, the One of Sinai,
before God,^[a] the God of Israel.
- ⁹ Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad;
you restored your inheritance as it languished;
- ¹⁰ your flock^[b] found a dwelling in it;
in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy...
- ³² *O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God;
sing praises to the Lord, Selah*
- ³³ *to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens;
behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.*
- ³⁴ *Ascribe power to God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
and whose power is in the skies.*
- ³⁵ *Awesome is God from his^[h] sanctuary;
the God of Israel—he is the one who gives power and strength to his people.
Blessed be God!*

- a. [Psalm 68:8](#) Or before God, even Sinai before God
- b. [Psalm 68:10](#) Or your congregation
- c. [Psalm 68:15](#) Or hunch-backed; also verse [16](#)

- d. [Psalm 68:24](#) Or *has been*
- e. [Psalm 68:26](#) The Hebrew for *you* is plural here
- f. [Psalm 68:28](#) By revocalization (compare Septuagint); Hebrew *Your God has summoned your power*
- g. [Psalm 68:30](#) The meaning of the Hebrew verse is uncertain
- h. [Psalm 68:35](#) Septuagint; Hebrew *your*

“God of Power, God of the People

Some of the psalms are among the easiest parts of the Bible to understand. The comforting message of Psalm 23, the expression of wonder at the night sky in Psalm 8, or the confession of sin in Psalm 51 are examples. These psalms speak directly and need no commentary.

Psalm 68, however, is not a part of this group. In fact almost every commentator comments on how difficult this psalm is to understand. For example, the notes in the *Jewish Study Bible* (New York: Oxford, 2004) say simply, "many consider it to be the most difficult psalm in the Psalter."

In reading through the psalm, however, it seems to me that these difficulties have been exaggerated. Parts of the psalm are quite clear and can in fact aid in understanding and bolstering one's Christian faith. In what follows, we shall concentrate on the two sections listed in the lectionary. But for an introductory access to the psalm note verse 19: This short verse could be at the start of one's daily prayer:

Blessed be the Lord,
Who daily bears us up; God is our salvation!

The Face of God (68:1-3)

Psalm 67 begins with a wish, "May God be gracious to us and bless us, and make his face to shine upon us." The language is reminiscent of the benediction in Numbers 6:24-26...

Sing to the Rider of the Clouds and the Rescuer of the Homeless! (68:4-6)

Now the script for the celebration is supplied. A worship leader calls the people to sing a hymn! This section follows the typical pattern of a hymn as exemplified in Psalm 113, with a *call to praise* (113:1-3) followed by *reasons* for praise (113:4-9)...

Drum Major for the People, Provider for the Needy (68:7-10)

The psalm continues to give reasons for praising God. The imagery shifts from God as Cloud Rider to the picture of God as leading a parade of his people as they march through the desert! To use an image that Martin Luther King liked, God is a Drum Major!...

Power Move (68:32-35)

This closing section again follows the pattern of a hymn. Two imperatives "Sing...sing" *call* all the kingdoms of the earth *to praise* God, the Lord (verse 32). This time the *reasons* for praise are all about power. The Hebrew word for power is 'oz, occurring here four times...

God of Power, God of the People

The God of whom this psalm speaks is a God of power. This is a God who rides on the clouds and whose power is not limited to the earth but extends to the entire universe (68:34, "in the skies"). This God acts with power in history, driving away enemy armies (Psalm 68:1, 11-14, 21-23, 30-31 and in nature, through earthquake, thunder, and rain (Psalm 68:8-10).

This God, however, is not power hungry. God gives power to the people of God (68:35). And God watches over the powerless: the orphans, widows, homeless, and prisoners (68:5)..."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=876 [James Limburg](#)
Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

1 Peter 4:12-19; 5:6-11; RCL, the same reading (Acts 2:1-21; RCL, the Acts 2 reading of 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)

“Talking about the “fiery ordeal” they were suffering (1 Peter 4:12), this passage opens with strong words which are not easily reconciled with the experience of the Church in the 21st century, especially in Europe and in North America.

The Church and Suffering

At the time of Peter, Christ-believers could experience this fiery ordeal in a variety of ways. They could be mocked because their practices were considered strange. They could become isolated from their families because of their decision to join the Christ-believers movement. Or at a deeper level (if one dates 1 Peter during the rule of Domitian [81-96 CE] when organized persecutions of Christ-believers did take place), they could suffer at the hands of the state...” [Valerie Nicolet-Anderson](#) Maître de Conférence (Assistant Professor), Faculté Libre de Théologie Protestante, Paris, France

Suffering as a Christian

¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³ But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. ¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory^[a] and of God rests upon you. ¹⁵ But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. ¹⁶ Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And

“If the righteous is scarcely saved,
what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”^[b]

¹⁹ Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.

- a. [1 Peter 4:14](#) Some manuscripts insert *and of power*
- b. [1 Peter 4:18](#) Greek *where will the ungodly and sinner appear?*

Shepherd the Flock of God

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God

of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. ¹¹ To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

“...As readers and hearers who stand now at the last Sunday of Easter, it is perhaps fitting to take a few moments to reflect on Christian faith and life from the perspective of the end time. Even in the midst of waiting, and even in the midst of a world that seems so contrary and adversarial to the commitments and attitudes that belong to the people of God, there is reason for confidence in God’s promises. We are still an Easter people who are sustained and encouraged by the hope that, whatever comes, God has joined us to the suffering and victory of Christ, whom God has raised from the dead...

As in last Sunday’s reading the last word is about power. In the end the power of God has the last word. The concluding words, “To him belongs power forever!” (5:11), sounds much like the familiar doxology of the Lord’s Prayer. They commend themselves in much the same way as perspective and framework for the living of each of our days. Whatever happens in this life, God’s promises revealed in the glory of Christ and his resurrection are sure. God will continue to restore with creative gifts, to establish us firmly when we stumble, to give strength in times of weakness, and to build us up on the firm foundation of the community of faith (5:10)...”
http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2091 **James Boyce**
 Emeritus Professor of New Testament and Greek, Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN



“The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 17th Chapter”

“Glory to You, O Lord”

John 17:1-11; RCL, the same reading (John 7:37-39; RCL, John 20:19-23 or the John 7 reading)

“Most of you preachers out there already know this, but it never hurts to be reminded of a perhaps well-known fact because maybe this time around it will mean and preach something different.

In this case, our Gospel-comparison detail is that Jesus' prayer to the Father before his arrest in the Gospel of John is not off alone somewhere with clutched hands praying on a big rock while the disciples nap. It is sitting around a table, after a meal and an extended conversation, with the disciples hearing every single word that Jesus says..."

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1996 **Karoline Lewis**

Associate Professor of Preaching and the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

The High Priestly Prayer

17 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

⁶ "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷ Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. ⁸ For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰ All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

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

"Chapters 14-17 are known as Jesus' Farewell Discourse.

In it, he takes his disciples aside and prepares them for his departure, instructing them, warning them, and equipping them. The Discourse ends with his Farewell Prayer in which he directs his speech not to the disciples, but to God. Three themes are prominent and none is new in John: **glorification, knowledge, and unity.**

Glorification

Whatever the relationship between Jesus and God entails, *glorification* is a substantial part of it...

It's an interesting feature of John that the passion, resurrection and ascension are all considered as one moment rather than individual, linear, discrete events. Whereas they often call chs. 1-12 The Book of Signs, scholars usually designate chapters 13-21 The Book of Glory. Glory (*doxa*) and glorify (*doxazo*) appear forty-two times in John, most of them in 13-21. More than one-third of all NT occurrences of the verb "glorify" occur in John...

God's glory in John is more like being at the very heart of a fireworks display rather than watching it on TV. One sees the light, feels the thunder of it, finds oneself breathless, is caught up in the majesty and power and wonder and extraordinary transcendence of it all

Knowledge and Eternal Life

Eternal life is defined in this passage it may surprise those more familiar with Matthew or Revelation. How does John define *eternal life*? Is it escaping fiery flames of hell or singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" with the cherubim and seraphim at some future glorious appointment? No, it's being in relationship with God and Christ, what John calls "*knowing*" and it's available in its entirety now...

Unity

A cord of three strands is not easily broken, Ecclesiastes insists, so how much more so a cord of four strands: believers are unified with God, Christ, the Spirit and one another. Therefore, we are strong and equipped to do greater works than Jesus. There's no reason we can't just as effectively demonstrate and reveal God's love for everything in God's cosmos as did Jesus. This is an empowering word, to be sure; it's also a challenging word because we cannot pretend to be waiting for something God has yet to provide before we get on with the work at hand; we can't wring our hands and say, "If only..." To be sure, the road will be rough enough that Jesus feels the need to offer prayers for our protection as we go; we know, then, that we are in good hands. We have all we need to testify to God's love in ways that will bring abundant, eternal life to all of creation. So, rise, let us be going (14:31)."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=70 **Jaime Clark-Soles**
Professor of New Testament, Altshuler Distinguished Teaching Professor, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas



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