

# Scripture Readings and Sermon

*April 28, 2019 by Rev. Mark Brechin*

## **Commentary on Acts 5:17-18, 25-32** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The old Sunday School song tells the story of Peter and John who went to Temple to pray and "met a lame man on the way". What the song doesn't say is after the man went "walking and leaping and praising God", people started crowding around the apostles looking for healing. It gets so bad that people began laying the sick "on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by." Not only was the Gospel message being lost in the enthusiasm for the "new healer" but the Jewish leaders saw a repeat of the problem they saw with Jesus. Peter and John were immediately arrested by the Lord opened the prison doors and the apostles went right back to preaching. This is where today's story picks up. Despite Peter's bold words, however, records of Peter preaching in Jerusalem end. This may be due to the fact that the council had decided to ignore Peter rather than make him a martyr or it could be because Peter became frightened after Stephen's execution by stoning is in the next chapter. Either way, after this speech by Peter and the execution of Stephen, the Book of Acts moves beyond Jerusalem with the story of Saul's conversion to Paul.

## **Commentary on Revelation 1:4-8** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

The seven churches in "Asia" refers to the churches along the western side of modern day Turkey across the sea from Greece. John introduce invokes the divine name of God given to Moses. The word often written as Yahweh is the Hebrew verb "to be" in its past (was), present (is), and future (is to come) perfect tense. The consonants used in the word are soft meaning the correct pronunciation is made by breathing in and out with one's mouth open. In Latin, the "Y" was written as a soft "J" which is where the word Jehovah comes from which is a mispronunciation base on a English reading of a Latin word. The term "seven spirits" in numerology means "perfect" or "holy" spirits since seven means completion or holy. This is another way of saying Holy Spirit. John then lists the names of Jesus Christ: faithful witness (was), firstborn of the dead (is), and ruler (is to come). After praising the Trinity, John then places this later as a future epiphany or revelation of Christ when Jesus returns. The passage ends with the total Trinity saying "I am the Alpha and Omega" meaning God is everything from the first to the last.

## **Commentary on John 20:19-31** (Youtube [Lectionary Study Video](#))

This passage is often called "Doubting Thomas" but was Thomas the only one who doubted? Even after the women had proclaimed Jesus' resurrection and, according to Luke, two of their own had encountered Jesus on the road, the disciples where still "locked" in a room because of fear. When Jesus comes, he doesn't just say "Peace be with you" once but twice. At this point the disciples become apostles when John records a "pre-Pentecost" event where Jesus tells them to receive the Holy Spirit and go. Disciples are student of a teacher where Apostles are those who are literally "sent". The only problem is that "a week later" the disciples who were no supposed to be apostles were still behind the same shut doors. Jesus once again for a third time has to tell them "Peace". When Jesus said "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe", is he talking to Thomas or everyone else in the room as well. The only successful "apostles" at this point in the story are the women who were the only ones to spread the good news even though some did not believe.

## **Sermon Summary** (Youtube [Sermon Video](#))

Even after the women testified that Jesus had risen and, according to Luke, two men had

encounter Jesus on the road to Emmaus, the disciples were still hiding in fear. They simply could not believe the good news that Jesus was risen after they witnessed his torture and execution. When Jesus appeared, it must have been too good to be true for they had to touch Jesus to make sure. Jesus gives them the peace of God not once but a total of three times. People usually focus on the doubt of Thomas, but it should be pointed out that even after Jesus had given the other disciples peace, proved he was risen, and sent them in the power of the Holy Spirit, they were still in behind locked doors a week later. It is not just Thomas who is admonished but all the disciples.

Today, many are still hiding behind locked doors. Some, like the disciples after Jesus' death, are in locked rooms because they are afraid and hurting. In order to survive in the world, people learn to hide their brokenness. People post pictures on Facebook or chat with their friends and all the while a part of themselves is locked away in an upper room. Jesus, however, goes past our pretense and enters into our most broken places. He cries out that he loves us and fills our void with his peace. This encounter can be as dramatic as the one John recorded in Revelation or it can be a still small voice in the midst of our chaotic life. Either way, when you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you will have an upper room moment. Great or small, these moments are not just for us but are meant to be shared. Jesus did not just give them peace but sent them out in power.

Sometimes people are behind locked doors not because of their brokenness but because they are afraid. Afraid that people will not listen or worse not care when they share their experience with Jesus. Afraid that in telling the story they have to also admit how broken they were. Peter was also afraid but when he accepted the Holy Spirit, he began to proclaim Jesus even after being arrested. Why? Peter felt compelled by God to share the good news. When he saw people hungry for wholeness, he could not pass them by. Today, there are people who need to hear your story. They need to know that they are not alone in the upper room. Maybe you are one of those people. If you are, then know that Jesus is there not just because of the stories in the Bible but because he was there for me and hundreds of others I have spoken with over the length of my ministry. Jesus is risen - let us go tell the world!