Worship Resources for April 27th—Second Sunday of Easter

Revised Common Lectionary: Acts 2:14a, 22-32; Psalm 16; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:19-31

We begin this second Sunday of Easter reading in Acts (as we will throughout the Easter season). This passage in Acts has Peter speaking on the day of Pentecost. Skipping after his quotation of Joel, he goes into quotes from Psalm 16, assuming David as the author, and that David was referring to the resurrection of Jesus (vs. 31). Christians, be careful in reading this passage and taking it at face-value. The writer of Acts has Peter claiming that David was a prophet (something not claimed by the Hebrew Scriptures) and that David knew about the Messiah. Peter is claiming that all of them are witnesses of Jesus, who was raised, and that the events happening around them and to them are part of the signs and wonders of God to witness that Jesus is the Messiah, the Lord. We have to be careful in going back and reading Psalm 16 and understanding that Peter, as portrayed in Acts, is taking a bold step in interpreting this psalm as referring to Jesus, instead of allowing the psalmist to speak for themselves. Instead, look at the overall message, that Peter is proclaiming Jesus as Lord and that what has happened to them on this day of Pentecost is another sign of God doing a new thing among them.

Psalm 16 is a song attributed to David, showing how the author has chosen God, chosen God’s ways, and trusts in God’s salvation. The writer trusts that God is present with him, and that following God’s ways brings joy and pleasure. God is the one who saves us from death and sin. Reading Psalm 16 and understanding it on its own is key to being able to read Acts 2 and understanding how Peter is interpreting only a portion of the Psalm out of its context.

1 Peter 1:3-9 proclaims God’s salvation in Jesus Christ, that we have hope through the resurrection. The readers are encouraged to remain faithful though they may be going through times of trial and suffering, for in the end they will have salvation through Jesus Christ. Those who remain faithful will see “the outcome of your faith” (vs. 9).

John 20:19-31 is a personal favorite passage of mine. I love Thomas because he is so real. He is called “Doubting Thomas” but it’s not really doubt he is dealing with, but rather unbelief. Doubt is a part of the faith journey, and earlier in John chapter 14 Thomas questions Jesus about the way to the Father, saying “how can we know the way?” There, Thomas may be doubting, but in chapter 20, he is simply refusing to believe. And no matter how often we might say “didn’t he listen to Jesus when he talked about rising from the dead?” or wonder how he could have missed the resurrection, what would you say if your close friend died and then everyone said they had come back to life, even if he had dropped hints this would happen—and you believe in God, even in Jesus now? Many of the faithful struggle with questions and doubts. It’s the unbelief that can really trip us up (remember the man who says, “I believe—help my unbelief” to Jesus?). Doubts question our faith. Unbelief simply says it cannot be. Unbelief puts you at arm’s length, because it says “I will not believe, no matter what you say.” But we all have areas of unbelief, whether it be about the bodily resurrection, or about whether a sin can be forgiven, or whether or not reconciliation is possible with someone who has hurt us. Doubts are areas we have questions or struggles in. “Unbeliefs” are areas where we simply do not, or cannot believe. This is why Jesus says to Thomas, once he sees him, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” Going from doubt to belief is hard; going from unbelief to belief is an incredible leap. So how do we get there? For Thomas, he had to see. For us, it may be about hearing and trusting. When we hear the witnesses, read the old, old stories, can we trust in them enough to come to believe, or move at least from unbelief to doubt? This passage is a great one, with many layers, but as always I go back to the man who prayed “I believe—help my unbelief.” Trust, hope, and prayer help us move from unbelief to faith.

Call to Worship
Like Peter, we may have denied Jesus

 **Christ is Risen, You are Forgiven, Jesus Loves You**

Like Thomas, we may have not believed

 **Christ is Risen, You are Forgiven, Jesus Loves You**

Like the others, we may have scattered on our own way

 **Christ is Risen, You are Forgiven, Jesus Loves You**

For all of our shortcomings, Jesus comes to us with the words, “Peace be with you.”

 **Christ is Risen! Know the peace of Christ.**

Know that you are forgiven and loved by Jesus.

 **Come and worship Christ, the risen Savior! Amen.**

Prayer of Brokenness/Confession

Almighty God, we confess that we do not always live as resurrected people. We live within the fears and cares of this world, that we don’t have enough, that we are not good enough. Forgive us for not seeing Your image in us. Forgive us for not seeking Your life in us. Help us to see we are made in Your love, Your image, Your peace. In the name of the risen Christ, who offers us peace, we pray. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance of Pardon

God loves you. You hear this again and again but you need to hear it again and again. God loves you. There is no border you can cross, no boundary that can be made, that will limit God’s love for you. Live with the fullness of God’s love, grace and peace. Amen.

Prayer

Living Christ, we give praise and thanks that You live so we all may live. We give thanks and praise for our faith journey, through times of doubts and struggles and questions. Give us hope in times of unbelief. Give us peace in times of struggle. Give us hope in times of doubt. Continue to guide us when we find ourselves bogged down, and lead us out of darkness into light. Loving Savior, we follow You, we love You, and we believe in You. Amen.