

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 4.11.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for the 2nd Sunday of Easter, April 11, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Acts 4:32-35 Life in the 1st century church

³²Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord

Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold ³⁵and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO ACTS, CHAPTER 4

1. In vs. 33 it says that, "with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." What does this mean? Is that our calling too?
2. This account of life in the early church says the believers adopted a type of economy where no one owned private property. We have no record that this lasted very long. Why do you think the practice died out? Was it doomed to fail given human nature?
3. How does this story relate to our current situation in America where the government (not the faith community) now does the lion's share of helping the poor?

2ND READING: 1 John 1:1-2:2 Life, forgiveness and joy through Jesus alone

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life — ²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us — ³that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and

do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

¹My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO I JOHN, CHAPTERS 1 & 2:

1. Compare I John 1:1 with Gen. 1:1 and the Gospel of John 1:1. What's similar? Why?
2. (Vss. 1-2) What or who is this word of life that John has seen, and heard, and touched?
3. What are we doing when we say we are not sinners and have not sinned (vss. 6-10)?
4. The use of the word "if" in vss. 7 and 9 makes it sound as though God's grace and forgiveness are conditional. Are they based on what we have to do first? How do those two verses read differently when we translate the word to be "as" instead of "if"?
5. What's the good news for us regarding cleansing as stated in verses 7 and 9?
6. Look up the dictionary meaning of the word "propitiation" (found in the last verse).

THE GOSPEL: John 20:19-31 The risen Jesus gives peace, faith, and purpose

¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

²⁴Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark

of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

²⁶Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." ³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JOHN, CHAPTER 20:

1. What does his appearance behind *locked doors* tell us about Jesus' resurrected body?
2. Given the disciples' recent doubts and denials, what's significant about the words that are highlight in yellow?
3. In vss. 22 and 23, what does Jesus reveal as the central mission of the church?
4. The profession of faith made by Thomas in vs. 28 is the strongest one made in all of John. What's significant about this given what Thomas had been saying previously?
5. Based on vss. 25-31, what is faith, where does it come from, and why is it important?