

FAITH COMES BY HEARING THE WORD OF GOD 5.2.2021

Let's look at the Bible readings for the 5th Sunday of Easter, May 2, to prepare for on-line, drive-in, and in-person worship (10 am) with Abounding Joy.

1ST READING: Acts 8:26-40 The Holy Spirit guides the sharing of the Good News

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert place. ²⁷And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." ³⁰So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" ³¹And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: "Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. ³³In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can

describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth." ³⁴And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" ³⁵Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" ³⁸And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. ³⁹And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO ACTS, CHAPTER 8

1. Who or what is directing Philip's mission of sharing the good news of Jesus? (vss. 26, 29 + 39)
2. Was the Ethiopian eunuch already a believer? (vs. 27) What help does he need? (vs. 31)
3. Who does the sheep/lamb (vss. 32-33) refer to?
4. Do you think Philip included a teaching on baptism as a part of his presentation of the Gospel?
5. On a map of the holy land, look up the 4 locations mentioned in this text.

2ND READING: 1 John 4:1-21 We love because God first loved us

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already.

⁴Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater

than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. ⁹In this the love of God was made manifest among us,

that God sent his only Son into **the world**, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is **love**, not that we have **loved** God but that he **loved** us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

¹¹**Beloved**, if God so **loved** us, we also ought to **love** one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God **abides** in us and his **love** is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we **abide** in him and he in us, because he has given us of **his Spirit**. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God **abides** in him, and he in God. ¹⁶So we have come to know and to believe the **love** that

God has for us. God is **love**, and whoever **abides** in **love** **abides** in God, and God **abides** in him.

¹⁷By this is **love** perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in **this world**.

¹⁸There is no **fear** in **love**, but perfect **love** casts out **fear**. For **fear** has to do with punishment, and whoever **fears** has not been perfected in **love**.

¹⁹We **love** because he first **loved** us. ²⁰If anyone says, "I **love** God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not **love** his brother whom he has seen cannot **love** God whom he has not seen. ²¹And this commandment we have from him: whoever **loves** God must also **love** his brother.

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO I JOHN, CHAPTER 4:

1. (vss. 1-3) How can we tell if a spirit/teacher/teaching is from God or not?
2. Who are the two referred to as "he" in vs. 4?
3. "The world" refers to humanity opposed to God. What does this text say about "the world?"
4. What are the many definitions and promises connected to love in vss. 7-21?
5. What does the first sentence in vs. 18 mean to you?
6. In what way does verse 19 summarize the meaning of life for the believer?
7. In light of vss. 20 and 21 we are all guilty. How are we to deal with that guilt?

THE GOSPEL: John 15:1-8 Connected to Jesus, we bear the fruit of love

¹Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not **bear fruit** he takes away, and every branch that does **bear fruit** he prunes, that it may **bear more fruit**. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴**Abide** in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot **bear fruit** by itself, unless it **abides** in the vine, neither can you, unless you **abide** in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches.

Whoever **abides** in me and I in him, he it is that **bears much fruit**, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not **abide** in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you **abide** in me, and my words **abide** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you **bear much fruit** and so prove to be my disciples."

SOME QUESTIONS TO PONDER RELATED TO JOHN, CHAPTER 15:

1. How does the connection between a branch and a vine describe our relationship with Jesus?
2. Here Jesus talks a great deal about the importance of us "bearing fruit." What is that fruit? See John 15:9-17 and Galatians 5:22-23.
3. What does it mean to say that God prunes us (vs. 2)? How does He do that and why?
4. Here Jesus talks a great deal about the importance of abiding in Him and in His word. What does that mean to abide in Him, and how do we do that?
5. How does I John 4:17-18 (in the second reading) help us deal with the threat in John 15:6?