

Lessons for the Second Sunday of Easter**April 16, 2023**

Psalm 148 ~ *The Psalmist calls on all things to praise God their Creator.*

Acts 5:29-42 ~ *The apostles were beaten, but they continued proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ.*

1 Peter 1:3-9 ~ *Our faith that Jesus is the Christ is strengthened through suffering.*

John 20:19-31 ~ *Through the marks of Jesus' suffering, we may believe He is the Christ.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Jesus Gives a Wounded Peace.

The apostles rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for the name of Jesus! They continued proclaiming that Jesus is the Messiah. An old Jewish legend explains that the Messiah is a wounded healer. He is the One who, through his death, "has given us a new birth into a living hope." He has promised us salvation, "although now for a little while we may have to suffer grief in all kinds of trials." He is the One who sends us out into the world, just as the Father sent him, to forgive the sins of those who need to be restored to the fellowship. Jesus puts the community back together again by the power of his wounded hands and side.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, from this side of your empty tomb, even the cross doesn't look so bad, but help me remember that your suffering was great and your victory majestic, so that in my own trials I may be certain of your strength and triumph for me with its promise of a living hope and an eternal inheritance. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT - The peace of sins forgiven that God in Christ has given us to share, builds the body of Christ and strengthens the fellowship of all believers. That peace is often expressed in the sharing of earthly goods to meet material needs of neighbors who suffer deprivation.

OFFERING PRAYER: Lord, bless these gifts that they may be
the signs of peace and unity
to bear the news of sins forgiven -
your blood once shed and body riven. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Suffering is the breaking point or the proving point for faith. It is no wonder that He who suffered for the sins of the world is understood best in suffering. But too often faith is tripped up by our aversion to pain, physical as well as emotional. Philosophical roadblocks to faith ask "how can a loving God allow such suffering?" Jesus points to the marks of His suffering as the proof of His love and calls on His followers to restore those who doubt by extending forgiveness even through suffering, just as God in Christ has done for us.

Questions to Consider: Why is suffering the crux of faith?

- Rather than thinking of suffering as retribution, how did the apostles regard suffering?
- How does suffering test your faith? . . . strengthen your faith?
- What did Thomas require that the other disciples had not received?
- What did Jesus give the disciples that he still gives us to share with others?

Bonus on next page: Jesus, in his death and resurrection, is the source of sorrow and joy.

Early Morning Son Rise

He said that he would rise again; but who
would have believed it? Who, indeed, would think
that death, so cruelly strong and proud just two
short days before, could be brought low and sink
beneath the dark horizon left when Christ,
the Son of God, was laid inside the tomb?
His friends who watched him die would not have priced
the cost of sin that high. Now in their gloom
and grief they all forgot that he had said:
"I am the Resurrection and the Life."
They only knew their dearest friend was dead;
their hearts were hopeless, ransacked by the strife.
But this would be God's gracious, great surprise:
before the break of dawn the Son would rise!

© *Gilbert A. Franke*
March 1992