

LESSONS FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 8, 2018

Psalm 148 ~ *An exhortation to all creatures and elements of creation to praise God.*

Acts 4:32–35 ~ *The believers' were so united in Christ that they shared everything with those in need.*

1 John 1:1—2:2 ~ *Jesus is the Word of life; in Him alone we have fellowship with God through His blood.*

John 20:19-31 ~ *Jesus brought peace in forgiveness, even as He restored Thomas to the group.*

GATHERING THE TEXTS: Blessed in Believing

God gives His blessings through faith. Twice in our lessons today, the Apostle John connected the blessing of eternal life to faith in Jesus, the Son of God. He also tied that faith in Jesus to a new life of victory evidenced in obedience to God's commands. That life of faith is doubly blessed through fellowship with those who are united with us in Christ. The forgiveness that Christ extends is the power to restore us to each other even when sin or doubt separates us from the fellowship.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE: Lord Jesus, Your Spirit has turned my heart from doubt to faith. Help me, as God's child, love Him, obey His commands, and live in the victory of Your resurrection that has overcome the world and sin and death. Amen.

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT: The unity we have with one another through faith in Jesus, our risen Lord, moves us to use our worldly goods to meet the physical – and spiritual – needs of those with whom we are one in heart and mind.

OFFERING PRAYER: God of Grace, you have embraced us with your love and brought us into fellowship through Jesus' blood. May these gifts, products of our working days, promote peace and unity in many ways as we testify to the resurrection of our Lord. Amen.

CONVICTION AND COMFORT: Jesus has given us the gift of peace with the Father through His blood which purifies us from all sin. He has also given us the gift of forgiveness to extend to one another as we draw them into the fellowship of God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son. Too often we use the doors of tradition or practice to exclude those, like Thomas, who need to be encouraged in their faith. Thanks be to God, we have One who has stepped through the door of our limitations and has shown us the marks of God's love in the body of Christ.