



## SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Sunday, April 3, 2016

Acts 5:27-32; Psalm 118:14-29;

Revelation 1:4-8; John 20:19-31

### A READING FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS

When they had brought the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with

your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Saviour that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

ACTS 5:27-32

### Psalm 118:14-29

*p. 867*

- 14 The Lord is my strength and my song, \* and he has become my salvation.
- 15 There is a sound of exultation and victory \* in the tents of the righteous:
- 16 "The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! \* the right hand of the Lord is exalted! the right hand \* of the Lord has triumphed!"
- 17 I shall not die, but live, \* and declare the works of the Lord.
- 18 The Lord has punished me sorely, \* but he did not hand me over to death.
- 19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; \* I will enter them; I will offer thanks to the Lord.
- 20 "This is the gate of the Lord; \* he who is righteous may enter."
- 21 I will give thanks to you, for you answered me \* and have become my salvation.
- 22 The same stone which the builders rejected \* has become the chief cornerstone.
- 23 This is the Lord's doing, \* and it is marvellous in our eyes.
- 24 On this day the Lord has acted; \* we will rejoice and be glad in it.
- 25 Hosannah, Lord, hosannah! \* Lord, send us now success.
- 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord; \* we bless you from the house of the Lord.
- 27 God is the Lord; he has shined upon us; \* form a procession with branches up to the horns of the altar.
- 28 "You are my God, and I will thank you; \* you are my God, and I will exalt you."
- 29 Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; \* his mercy endures for ever.

*Holy and mighty God, your Son's triumph over sin and death has opened to us the gate of eternal life. Purify our hearts that we may follow where he has gone and share in the radiance of his glory. We ask this for the sake of our risen Lord.*

## A READING FROM THE REVELATION OF JOHN

John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen. "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

REVELATION 1:4-8

## THE HOLY GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST ACCORDING TO JOHN

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."

Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

JOHN 20:19-31

---

*...these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.*

A few days ago I saw a TV ad encouraging the purchase of some product. What caught my attention was not the product. I can't even think of what it was. It was the commercial's message that I noticed. It suggested that by purchasing their product one would be turning the tables and... *the Jones's would be trying to keep up with you!* I also saw an automobile ad which played on a similar theme, suggested that all who would buy this prestigious brand would be constantly admired in every way. The important thing in these ads is that they help to nurture a desire for us to become more than what people see in us now. They play on human feelings of insecurity and our desire to be recognized and celebrated as being important. The more this message is promoted, and the more people who buy into it, the happier are those who are on the sell.

And who are those who are on the sell? The variety of such interests is great indeed. They include everything from major manufacturers to individuals. Yes, that includes multi-nationals, institutions, governments, aspirants to higher positions and politicians, only to mention a few.

Some believe that a positive image has become essential to get ahead in some areas. I know of one man who sees himself as upwardly mobile and has tied into every social medium he can find. In each of these, he makes sure his name is in bold lettering. In pictures of him with other people, the only time the names of others are included is when those other people are big recognizable names in the media. He describes his ordinary activities in ways that make them seem like they are extraordinary and ready to form the basis for commanding better jobs in the future. In every way he tries to make sure that he looks good as a person who is in control of one's life. I suspect that none of this brings us any closer to knowing who he is as a real person.

A few years ago, there were articles about people with high incomes having trouble meeting their expenses. Now average folk who struggle meeting the expenses of life these days had and have little sympathy for these troubled high earners. What was the source of their difficulty? They said it wasn't in meeting day to day living expenses. It was in the earlier mentioned task of *keeping up with the Jones's* — the people who were their peers.

These people lived in neighbourhoods filled with upward mobile folk. New cars every year; big ticket electronics; latest fashion items; frequent fabulous vacations around the world; major house upgrades were everywhere to be seen. Their fear revolved around how one could socialize without also having similar upgrades, clothing, vacations and cars. These were the things they could scarcely afford — but in their minds, they had to have.

By contrast, we hear the author of the Gospel of John talking about what he has written to all who would be willing to read: *...these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.* Like Jesus, John is concerned about people and the lives we tend to live. There was no money or other earthly reward for him to write this Gospel. He is concerned about how we over and over again make things more difficult for ourselves so often because of what we regard to be important in life. He also was aware of the importance of our belief in Jesus and therefore our belief in his message for humanity. For in Christ's message for us all seems indeed disconnected between what we are taught is important in life and what is really important in the eyes of God.

Jesus came to earth for a reason. And that reason is us! If only people began to consider what truly does go into making life fulfilling. If only we people could turn our heads from the constant barrage of others telling us how to live or how we must live. If only people could readily promote that which is life-giving to friends, family members and neighbours. If only people would take the time to reflect on what is truly important in life and not be afraid to speak of these things. If only people could speak genuinely and openly about things like love, caring, forgiveness, justice with compassion and humility. If only people could embrace the good God created in the world while holding onto the good that God puts in our hearts through his word and his Holy Spirit. If only people could step back from the coercive demands the powers of the world to gain needed perspective before reacting.

Jesus Christ saw these as important and the authors of John knew that the life of Jesus had to be written down so that we could benefit. How are we to come to know the truth of God unless that truth is brought to us? How are we to have life and have it more abundantly unless we are informed of the way.

Let there be no doubt. True life is not to be found in enhancing and promoting our image at every opportunity. True life is not found in new cars every year; big ticket electronics; latest fashion items; frequent fabulous vacations around the world; major house upgrades — as nice as these may be at times.

At the core of it all is our ability and willingness to love. Seldom will we hear that from those in leadership positions. But in the final analysis, love is key. And God is all about love. Jesus brings us that message. As we believe in Jesus, we also believe in his message. Praise be to our living God.