

Sermon for 14 April 2024 @ Bethesda UMC/Baltimore

Third Sunday in Easter

Scriptures: Acts 3:12-19; Psalter:741, Psalm 4; 1 John 3:1-7; Luke 24:36b-48

As we settle into the work of Eastertide, we find great variety.

On Easter itself, we shined the light around the first day: the early morning, the evening, in one place and then another, doubting and comparing.

Then Last Sunday we advanced, reflecting on weeks and months and maybe years, centered on trust and loving.

Now, in what we read today, this third Sunday of Easter, we watch as some of us are recognized by outsiders as having clear traits that result in acts.

Peter has gotten over his shame @ denying Jesus at his trial. He and the other disciples are still practicing their faith at temple, as they all were raised... and now we have one of the examples of the power we all have as Jesus' followers. Being leaders in our specific situations goes with following Jesus, right from our baptism.

Then we remind ourselves with a psalm how we experience God, from the start of every day to the end of every night.

We also hear wise old John commenting on the difference between those that follow, and those that don't. It never ceases to make a difference, not only in how we feel, but in how we are experienced by others. Be true, be honest, be gentle, always be open, not to ego, but to God.

All these insights get applied in every time and place, and in every experience of other spiritual traditions. That is why it is so good, in our own United Methodist worship, to have a Sunday when we practice the Native American faith as we began our service today. The longer we grow as human beings, the more we have to share about real faith. We live in a time when interaction between spiritual traditions is greater than ever before, and a fundamental principle of following Christ is being respectful of, and seeking to grow through, God's many ways of loving.

That makes us listen more deeply our own traditions, and often to see where our way of speaking and acting misinterpreted what Jesus meant.

Let us celebrate the expanding wisdom that comes to us, again and again, as we practice loving God through Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: Lord, even as we see how war breaks us apart in the Middle East, guide us here as we work on politics in Baltimore. Help us learn all we can and take our civic matters very

seriously. Let us be the ones who never give up respecting differences and standing firm on justice and truth-telling. Thank you for the great blessings we celebrate this day, with a birthday, and the love here in this fellowship, and in the plans we make to continue, allowing Jesus into every part of our being and doing.

Love us. Forgive us. Show us more how to be brave and gentle.

Amen.