

Easter 2

A Reading from the Book of Acts.

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.



“They Shared Everything They Had,” Wisnu Sasongko (Indonesia)

Questions for reflection:

What images first make themselves clear in the painting above? What do they mean to you?

How does “sharing everything we have” translate into the life of a congregation? A diocese? A wider church?

What do we share that isn't material?

At whose feet do we lay our resources for wise distribution?

How does God model this extravagant sharing of resources with Creation?

Easter 3

A Reading from the Gospel According to Luke.

Jesus himself stood among the disciples and said to them, “Peace be with you.” They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Jesus has risen from the dead—but the disciples fear him as a ghost. How do we proclaim resurrection over re-animation?

This is one of a few resurrection accounts in which Jesus eats with his disciples. What’s so important about sharing food with the resurrected Christ?

“You are witnesses of these things.” How can we serve as faithful witnesses of Christ’s suffering? Of his death? Of his resurrection? And of the need for repentance and forgiveness?



--Ivanka Demchuk, "Appearance to Ten"

Easter 4

A Reading from the Gospel According to John.

Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Many years ago, I brought my German Shepherd to a herding-instinct trial. In these trials, the dog is taken into a paddock with a flock of sheep and a shepherd, to see how naturally they assist the shepherd in the work of guiding the sheep from one place to another without scattering the flock.

I assumed that there would be a “professional shepherd” to handle this—but I was wrong! The dog’s owner—in this case, I alone—was called to function as the shepherd.

But how hard could it be? It’s just a bunch of domesticated, meek sheep!

I was wrong about that too. My dog Lucy was a champ, but I was NOT. Those sheep knew that I had no idea what I was doing, and they literally ran me over. I didn’t know that a skilled shepherd guides from behind, not by going far ahead or even from the middle of the group. I was not the “good shepherd” or even a particularly effective hired hand.

In the context of Jesus’s ministry, in God’s ongoing work of guiding us, protecting and defending us, and even dying for us, how might our own shepherding experiences teach us about the work we’re called to do?

How might we do better?

How might we pray to our own Good Shepherd for guidance on that work?

(The Reverend Susanna Cates)

Easter 5

A Reading from the Gospel According to John.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples."

"I Am the Vine"

How might it feel to be part of the vine?

Not just to see the vineyard from afar

Or even pluck the clusters, press the wine,

But to be grafted in, to feel the stir

Of inward sap that rises from our root,

Himself deep planted in the ground of Love,

To feel a leaf unfold a tender shoot,

As tendrils curled unfurl, as branches give

A little to the swelling of the grape,

In gradual perfection, round and full,
To bear within oneself the joy and hope
Of God's good vintage, till it's ripe and whole.
What might it mean to bide and to abide
In such rich love as makes the poor heart glad?

--Malcolm Guite, Parable and Paradox

Easter 6

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, "Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?" So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.



--Jerzy Nowosielski, "Jordan"

Easter 7

Psalm 1

1 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, *
nor lingered in the way of sinners,
nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord, *
and they meditate on his law day and night.

3 They are like trees planted by streams of water,
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; *
everything they do shall prosper.

4 It is not so with the wicked; *
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, *
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, *
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

“Rivers are dynamic. They meander and sometimes cut new pathways altogether. Cut banks are the outer banks of an s-curve in the river where the water flows faster. On the more protected inner part of the river’s s-curve the water slows down, and sediments drop from the water creating a point bar. In open plains, this process is what allows rivers to move their banks. That is where tree roots come in to hold the bank together...

The root systems of trees not only stabilize river banks structurally, they also take in large quantities of water, lessening the saturation of the clay soils... Banks stabilized by tree roots are protecting water quality since eroded soil itself can become a river pollutant. Forested river banks filter much of the water that runs off our urban and agricultural landscapes, slowing polluted overland flows by allowing the water to soak into the soil. Tree-provided shade keeps river water temperatures

cooler (Fun fact: Oxygen dissolves better in cooler water, and that is important for fish species). The trees, along with other plant varieties, also form habitat for wildlife. Even the fallen trees, called snags, serve to create habitat and slow water flows.”

--Amy Barouth, “More Trees Please,” from the River Keepers Organization

After reading the above excerpt from an article urging riverbank tree planting, how do we re-read Psalm 1? How are the faithful “trees planted by streams of water” important?

Where are we called to find our firmly planted roots? How can we help others to discover or re-plant theirs?

Who is wicked? Who is a sinner? Where is our hope, knowing that we are both?