



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Easter 6 (B)**  
**May 9, 2021**

**RCL: Acts 10:44-48; Psalm 98; 1 John 5:1-6; John 15:9-17**

### **Acts 10:44-48**

This lesson from Acts concludes the story of Peter and Cornelius. Cornelius, a devout centurion living in Caesarea, was bidden by God to find Peter in Joppa. He sends people to find Peter and return. Peter was residing with Simon the tanner. It was in this house that Peter had the dream challenging his views of what foods were clean. Directed by God to go with Cornelius' people to Caesarea, Peter discovers that God has been acting in and through this surprising person, a Gentile centurion. Peter begins to preach about how he is learning that all people fearing and following God are acceptable to God, and testifies to the good news of Jesus, his life, death, and resurrection.

It is while he is speaking that the Holy Spirit shows up, as we hear today, poured out even on the Gentiles in the crowd. Peter realizes that baptism cannot be withheld from them, for the Holy Spirit had already been received. This is a story of two lives that cross unexpectedly by the guidance and call of God. It results in quite a surprising conclusion for all those involved.

- How is God challenging us to grow right now? What are we withholding that God invites us to extend?
- How has the Holy Spirit brought you a surprising lesson? What was the lesson?

### **Psalm 98**

This is a psalm of praise. God is victorious! God reigns! Those of us who recognize and live in God's reign are invited into praise. All of us creatures, not just humans, are invited to sing a new song. The lands sing, the waves crash, the rivers clap their hands. It truly is a new song. It's a song of excitement and joy. God rules with righteousness, there is equity, there is mercy and faithfulness. These are things to celebrate.

- What might it mean to sing a new song to God? How is a new song different from an old song?
- How does the voice of creation singing in joy speak to us about God's reign?

## 1 John 5:1-6

There are a number of similar themes in the Gospel of John and 1 John. This section of 1 John echoes the image of being born again found in John 3. It also takes up themes that we hear in today's gospel: obeying God's commandments and loving God's children. Care needs to be taken in hearing the language of 1 John; the epistle is addressing a number of issues that have arisen in the Johannine community and they are feeling separated from others. It is not surprising that the focus is on loving those who are believers. The general message, though, is that our lives are different because of our faith.

Following Jesus makes a difference in who we are and how we live. It is a life born out of our faith in Christ Jesus. It brings us the assurance of the love of our God who has walked with us, who understands what it is like to suffer, who has shared with us in the very depths of the pain that living can bring. It transforms how we understand and engage all of life, joys, pains, and sorrows. The author of 1 John describes this as conquering the world. Because of our faith, we are to live differently, we are to love our siblings. We show our love for God by keeping God's commandment to love others.

- How do you experience your faith affecting and changing how you live?
- What does keeping God's commandment of love look like concretely?

## John 15:9-17

The meal is finished. Feet have been washed. Jesus' arrest is just over the horizon; Judas has left to find the authorities. These are precious, final moments. During them, Jesus speaks with these close followers of relationships and obligations. The one who has just washed their feet as a servant now calls them friends. It is a friendship with cost, the cost of love that may even call them to give up their lives for others. It is a deep, abiding relationship, not one casually entered and easily discarded. This is a relationship rooted in loving one another, love that extends itself for others. Love that bears lasting fruit.

And this relationship is for us! As Jesus speaks, we stand in the room with all the disciples. I call you friends, he says. This is my commandment that you love one another. Jesus gave some of his last moments with the disciples to share how it is that we who are believers are to be in relationship with him as abiding friends, and how we are to relate to each other, extending love to one another.

- What might change if we understand ourselves to be friends of God?
- How is our joy complete when we live abiding in Christ's love? What does it mean to have Christ's joy within us?

*Sr. Kathy Lawler, OEF, is a Franciscan, a member of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. She is a candidate from the Diocese of Northern California in her final year of low-residency M.Div. studies at the Church Divinity School of the Pacific (Class of 2021). Her initial training in chemistry informs much of her ministerial focus. She is particularly enthusiastic about helping folks find connections between spirituality and science. She also teaches about the congruence between Christian faith and modern science. Kathy enjoys gardening, listening to audiobooks, and being in the beauty of God's good creation.*