



## BIBLE STUDIES THAT WORK

**Easter 7 (B)**  
**May 16, 2021**

**RCL: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; Psalm 1; 1 John 5:9-13; John 17:6-19**

### **Acts 1:15-17, 21-26**

Where violence seeks to end life, God seeks to bring new life. The invitation in this Easter season is to pay attention to the little buds of new life all around us. They are there, if only we take the time to notice. In this passage, new communities are forming. Communities of love who seek to follow the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this community formation, it is important for there to be people present who were actual witnesses to Jesus' resurrection. This reminds us that we are part of a great cloud of witnesses who have lived into this story over many years and over many generations. Mothers telling their sons. Grandparents telling their grandchildren. We get to join in *that story* and *that legacy*. Thanks be to God.

- What does it mean to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ today?
- What does it mean to cultivate resurrection hope while also acknowledging the reality of grief? Can both be true?

### **Psalm 1**

The image the psalmist gifts to us in this passage is that of a tree planted by a stream of water. This is a tree that always has access to sustenance. This is a tree that grows deep roots, it is not easily pushed around by the cares and occupations of this life. Our society tends to celebrate outer measures of success, but what if true peace and true joy are rooted in our ability to cultivate our own interiority? To sit in silence, to listen to our breath, to pay attention to God's spirit moving among us? That just might be what it means to plant oneself near living streams of water. If we are to stay present for ourselves and others, we need to be drawing on that strength.

- Is the well you draw on deep or shallow? How can it be deepened?
- What spiritual practices help you pay attention to God?

### **1 John 5:9-13**

God's testimony brings life. We know that if something does not lead to life and flourishing, then it is not the testimony of God. This passage was written in the midst of conflict. False teachers were leading the flock astray. How do you choose who to listen to? There are always loud voices competing for attention. The voice of God is often described as a whisper. The litmus test is this: does this make me more loving? Does this bring me closer to Jesus? Continual discernment helps us to regulate who we are listening to. The goal is to become more loving and more compassionate as we center our lives on Jesus and the things he cared about.

- Does the testimony I tell with my own life attest to the loving, liberating, life-giving work of God?
- How do the voices I surround myself with shape my Christian identity?

### **John 17:6-19**

I imagine this scripture like the ending of a movie. The nostalgic instrumental music sets in. There is a drone that starts with landscape shots and then moves into this intimate moment of Jesus with his disciples. My body moves closer to the screen because I want to hear what Jesus is saying as his final words to his disciples. It starts with mumbles, then I realize what Jesus is doing. *He is praying for his disciples.* Jesus prays that they will have wisdom, that they will be protected, and that they would always stay near to truth. In *A Ring of Endless Light*, Madeleine L'Engle writes:

“Prayer was never meant to be magic,” Mother said.

“Then why bother with it?” Suzy scowled.

“Because it’s an act of love,” Mother said.

Jesus embodies love when he spends his last moments on earth praying for his disciples. This passage is a gentle reminder of why we follow Jesus and why, even after all this time, we are still on this Christian journey: love.

- What can be inferred about what Jesus valued by the way he spent his final days?
- Who can you raise up in prayer today?

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