

EASTER 7

Year B

This Bible study was written by Janelle Hiroshige for Easter 7 (B) in 2021.

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the brothers and sisters (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶“Brothers and sisters,^[a] the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus, ¹⁷for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry.”

²¹“So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” ²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place^[a] in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

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.

Discussion Questions

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

- 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.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

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.

Discussion Questions

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

⁹If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

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.

Discussion Questions

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

⁶“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Commentary from Janelle Hiroshige

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.

Discussion Questions

What can be inferred about what Jesus valued by the way he spent his final days?

Who can you raise up in prayer today?