



Seventh Sunday of Easter

8 May 2016

Sentence Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.

Acts 16.31

Collect

Father, righteous one, your beloved Son prayed that his disciples in every generation might be one as you and he are one. Look upon this assembly gathered in his name. Fulfil in us the prayer of Jesus and crown our celebration of this Easter season with your Spirit's gift of unity and love. Grant this through Jesus Christ, the first born from the dead, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. **Amen.**

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Paul and Silas' stay in Philippi continues in today's reading. Paul's healing (albeit done out of annoyance!) leads to a confrontation between Paul and Silas and the apparatus of the Roman State. Paul, a Roman citizen, is unjustly treated by the magistrates and with Silas, thrown into gaol. An earthquake follows and just as the gaol is about to take his life (Roman law held that a gaoler should suffer the fate of any prisoners who had escaped), Paul saves him. The story of the earthquake can also be read on a different level: wherever Paul went, there were earthquakes, the Roman world and communities and individuals within it were turned upside down by the power of the Gospel

One day, as we were going to the place of prayer, we met a slave-girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners a great deal of money by fortune-telling. While she followed Paul and us, she would cry out, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.' She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market-place before the authorities. When they had brought them before the magistrates, they said, 'These men are disturbing our city; they are Jews and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to adopt or observe.' The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with

rods. After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was an earthquake, so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened. When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted in a loud voice, 'Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.' The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They answered, 'Believe on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.' They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. He brought them up into the house and set food before them; and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God. *Acts 16.16-34*

Reader For the word of the Lord
All **Thanks be to God**

Psalm 97 at 8am APBA, page 324,

This psalm is an 'enthronement psalm' (like Ps 47; 93; 96-9). It is likely that the Psalm does indeed go back to David and that it was also used after the Exile to celebrate the restoration of the Jews to their land. It celebrates the greatness and the power of God over everything and everybody and establishes God as pre-eminent over any other nation's god.

A reading from the book of Revelation

This final reading from Revelation has a glittering and dazzling portrayal of Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, the bright morning star which is meant to draw our eyes away from all other distractions and allegiances and direct ourselves towards God and God's Kingdom. It is, in a sense, the final word of the final book of the scriptures which is a summation of all that has been presented in the visions of John the Divine. Though there is a warning, this final section is ultimately about the life, glory and majesty of the Kingdom of God.

I, John, heard a voice saying to me, 'See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone's work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.' Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they will have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city by the gates. Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises falsehood. 'It is I, Jesus, who sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.' The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let everyone who hears say, 'Come.' And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes take the water of life as a gift. I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. The one who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen.

Rev. 22.12-21

Reader May your word live in us,
ALL **And bear much fruit to your glory.**

Gospel Acclamation

ALL **Alleluia! Alleluia!**
 A little while you will no longer see me, says the
 Lord; and again a little while and you will see me.

ALL **Alleluia!**

Reader The Lord be with you

ALL **And also with you**

Reader A reading from the holy gospel according to St John

ALL **Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ**

Today's gospel reading is the last part of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane before he is betrayed and then brought before the authorities. It is about God's love for Jesus and through Jesus, for all God's people; the love of God's people for one another, creating a unity which will indeed reveal to the world the disturbing message that there is another way of being human. Disunity may perhaps be the ultimate worldliness, since it means accepting that we are defined, in the last analysis, by something other than the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Jesus looked up to heaven and prayed, 'Holy Father I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. 'Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.'

John 17.20-26

Reader For the Gospel of the Lord
ALL Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Bible Readings next week **Day of Pentecost**
Acts 2.1-21 Psalm 104.26-36 Romans 8.14-17 John 14.8-17

Prayer for the Week O God, you withdraw from our sight that you may be known by our love: help us to enter the cloud where you are hidden, and to surrender all our certainty to the darkness of faith in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Pray for the Faithful Departed

We remember before God:

Phyllis Ramsden, Myra Lesley Douglas, Peggy Shannon,
Edgar Chandler, Albert Wilson, *Priest, whose anniversaries occur this week.*

Commemorations of the week – none this week.

