

Bible Challenge March 21-27, 2016

INTRODUCTION: *This week's Bible Challenge is the readings for Easter Sunday. If you wish to keep a Lenten focus during this week, try reading the five Gospel passages identified for Holy Week:*

Passion Sunday: Luke 22:4 – 23:56. *Through the teachings and events of the passion story we see and hear the great contradictions that characterize the coming of God's reign. The leader serves, the empty disciples are able to fill others, proud Peter is revealed in his cowardice, and Jesus—the innocent bringer of life—is arrested, beaten, executed, and buried.*

Maundy Thursday: John 13:1-17; 31b – 35. *The story of the last supper in John's gospel recalls a remarkable event not mentioned elsewhere: Jesus performs the duty of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples and urging them to do the same for one another.*

Good Friday: John 18:1 – 19:42. *This is John's story of Jesus' passion—from his arrest to his burial.*

Holy Saturday: Matthew 27 *Matthew describes Jesus' trial and final hours.*

Easter Vigil: Matthew 28:1 – 10. *Matthew tells of the resurrection.*

FIRST READING: Acts 10:34-43

Peter's sermon, delivered at the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer, sums up the essential message of Christianity. Everyone who believes in Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the words of the prophets, receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

Adventure Challenge: Acts 10.

Explorer Challenge: Compare Peter's proclamation with Moses' declaration in Deuteronomy 10:12-22. (Note particularly Deut. 10: 19.)

PSALM: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. 118:24)

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 118.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A.* Psalm 118 is a "Hallel" psalm; research what this means.

Option B. Using a commentary or other research tools, learn how this psalm is organized as a liturgy or processional psalm that seems to include performance instructions.

Option C: Look at Hebrews 13:6, Matthew 21:42, Mark 12:11, Acts 4:11, and Peter 2.7 to see how phrases from this Psalm 118 are used in the New Testament.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

Paul describes the consequences of the resurrection, including the promise of new life in Christ to a world that has been in bondage to death. He celebrates the destruction of evil and the establishment of God's victorious rule over all.

Adventure Challenge: 1 Corinthians 15: 12–58.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A.* 1 Corinthians 15.

Option B. Compare Paul's gospel summary (1 Corinthians 15:3-11) with Peter's gospel summary in Acts 10:34-43 (our first reading).

GOSPEL: Luke 24:1-12

Evidently expecting to find Jesus' corpse, some of his women followers go to the tomb with embalming spices. After a perplexing encounter with the empty tomb and angelic visitors, the women become the first to proclaim the amazing news of resurrection.

Adventure Challenge: Luke 24.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A.* Research Jewish burial practices.

Option B. Compare this reading from Luke with parallel passages in Matthew 28: 1-8; Mark 16:1-5; John 20:1-10; and 1 Corinthians 15:3-9.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive and has become the Lord of life. Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ, and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: *Alleluia.* Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the feast. *Alleluia.* (1 Cor. 5:7, 8)