

Bible Challenge April 16 (Easter Day) – April 22, 2017

Advent's weekly Bible Challenge is based upon the readings assigned for each Sunday. The Basic challenge is to re-read the texts that were read on Sunday morning and included in the Sunday bulletin. The Adventure and Explorer challenges are suggestions of different ways to deepen your knowledge of the Bible. The challenge is organized as one reading for each of five days, but find a pace or style that fits your schedule.

INTRODUCTION

On Easter Day the Lord acted! On the first day of the week God began creation, transforming darkness into light. On this, the "eighth day" of the week, Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. We celebrate this new creation in the waters of baptism and in the feast of victory. With great joy we celebrate this day of days, even as we begin the great fifty days of Easter. Filled with hope, we go forth to share the news that Christ is risen!

DAY ONE: Acts 10:34-43

Peter's sermon, delivered at the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer, is a summary of 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."

³⁴Peter began to speak to [the people]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

Adventure Challenge: Acts 10.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Peter's speech summarizes the essential message of Christianity. Compare that summary with the Apostles Creed or with your own summary of the essential message.

Option B: Research Cornelius.

DAY TWO: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

The right hand of the Lord acts valiantly; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good;

God's mercy endures forever.

²Let Israel now declare,

"God's mercy endures forever."

¹⁴The LORD is my strength and my song,

and has become my salvation.

¹⁵Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents of the righteous:

"The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!

¹⁶The right hand of the LORD is exalted!

The right hand of the LORD acts valiantly!"

¹⁷I shall not die, but live,

and declare the works of the LORD.

¹⁸The LORD indeed punished me sorely,

but did not hand me over to death.

¹⁹Open for me the gates of righteousness;

I will enter them and give thanks to the LORD.

²⁰"This is the gate of the LORD;
here the righteous may enter."
²¹I give thanks to you, for you have answered me
and you have become my salvation.
²²The stone that the builders rejected
has become the chief cornerstone.
²³By the LORD has this been done;
it is marvelous in our eyes.
²⁴This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Adventure Challenge: Psalm 118.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* This is one of the *Hallel psalms*; research what that means and the connection of the Hallel psalms to the Last Supper.

Option B: Note how the speaker in this psalm is sometimes an individual, sometimes a group, and sometimes an individual talking to a group. (This is best seen by reading the whole psalm.) Imagine you are preparing a formal worship service; decide which verses you would have one person read and which would be read by a group. Would you have the same person read all the individual lines or would you use different voices?

DAY THREE: Colossians 3:1-4

Easter means new life for us as it first meant new life for Christ. His resurrection reshapes the entire focus and motivation for our lives, since we are now hidden with the risen Christ in God.

¹If you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Adventure Challenge: Colossians 3.

Explorer Challenge: The language of *things that are above* and *things that are on earth* reflect a world view that may seem archaic, given our 21st century understanding of the universe. Use the rest of Colossians 3 to identify specifically what the writer of Colossians had in mind with these metaphorical phrases.

DAY FOUR: John 20:1-18

John's gospel describes the confusion and excitement of the first Easter: the stone is moved, disciples race back and forth, and angels speak to a weeping woman. Then, Jesus himself appears.

¹Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. ²So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." ³Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. ⁴The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. ⁶Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; ⁹for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. ¹⁰Then the disciples returned to their homes. ¹¹But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb; ¹²and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. ¹³They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." ¹⁴When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you looking for?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him

away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." ¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to him in Hebrew, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" ¹⁸Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Adventure Challenge: John 20.

Explorer Challenge: *Option A:* Research Mary Magdalene.

Option B: Read about the Resurrection in one of the other gospels.

DAY FIVE:

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. Amen.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

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

Adventure Challenge: Meditate on the phrase *we no longer look for Jesus among the dead, for he is alive.* How, when, or where is Jesus alive for you?

Explorer Challenge: Research the phrase *paschal lamb*.