

These comments present one interpretation of today's readings; other interpretations may be possible. Comments are best read with the readings.

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Acts 3:12-19

NRSV

Peter and John, observant Jews, have gone to the Temple at the time of day when sacrifice is offered for prayer. At the gate to the temple courtyard they have seen a man lame from birth, forced to beg in order to survive. Peter has commanded him: “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk” (v. 6). After helping him to his feet, the man has entered the temple precincts with them, “walking and leaping and praising God” (v. 8). “While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them” (v. 11).

Now Peter preaches to the crowd. It is not by their own power or devotion (“piety”, v. 12) that the man walks, but rather by God’s power, through Christ. Peter speaks as a Jew, to his own people: the titles of God in v. 13 are those by which God identifies himself to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:6). God has “glorified” (v. 13, exalted, lifted up) Jesus. Glorification stands in contrast to the actions of the unthinking mob, who “handed [him] over and rejected [him]”. “Holy and Righteous One” (v. 14) are messianic titles; the “murderer” is Barabbas. Jesus is “the Author of life” (v. 15), the pioneer or founder of a new order, an order open to all. The healing occurred due to faith in God’s *authority*, “his name” (v. 16), through Christ, God’s agent. Vv. 17-26 are an appeal to Israel to repent and be converted. The mob and the Jewish authorities, Peter says, “acted in ignorance” (v. 17): this is how part of God’s plan was accomplished. “The prophets” (v. 18), as a body – Isaiah in particular – predicted that “his Messiah would suffer” (v. 18). But there is a *second chance* for Israel: “repent” (v. 19) and be converted, “turn to God” and God will *wipe out* their sins.

In the NRSV, v. 19 begins a sentence; it continues: so that you may enjoy “times of refreshing” (v. 20) when Christ comes again at the end of the era, at “the time of universal restoration” (v. 21). Christ is the prophet Moses said God would “raise up” (v. 22); those who do not listen to him will be condemned (Deuteronomy 18:19, Leviticus 23:29). Peter reminds his audience of God’s promise to Abraham: “in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (v. 25). His words are like Genesis 22:18.

Psalm 4

NRSV

The psalmist calls on God, knowing that God is on his side (“of my right”). God has helped him in the past; may he hear his plea now. The psalmist addresses his foes in v. 2: how long will you slander me? You need to realize that God considers me (“the faithful”, v. 3) to be his, so he will respond to my prayer – so beware! Angry (“disturbed”, v. 4) as you are, seek inner quiet through silent meditation. Further, offer the “sacrifices” (v. 5) demanded by the Law (“right”) and trust

in God. Others seek what is “good” (v. 6); I pray that God may favour them. I know that inner joy, given by God, which I have received, is much more valuable (v. 7). So as I go to sleep, I rest assured of God’s peace and protection (v. 8).

1 John 3:1-7

NRSV

The author emphasizes that through our kinship with Christ, son of God, we can “be called children of God”, a status we enjoy because of God’s gift of love: his gift of his only Son as Saviour of the world. We have this status now (“that is what we are.”) Then v. 1b: most people did not listen to and understand Jesus (“did not know him”), so it is to be expected that few will listen to us, his emissaries. Then v. 2: being his children is happening now, and will be at the end of time, but we have not been shown in what way this will be; however, we do know that we will be like Christ: we will see the Father fully, in all his glory. “All who have this hope” (v. 3) in Christ, this expectation of the future – i.e. Christians – consider it required of them to live a virtuous, ethical, life (“purify themselves”), emulating the essential goodness, purity, of God.

In 2:1-2, the author says that he is writing “so that you may not sin”, but should anyone sin, Christ will defend us. Then in 2:3, he says that we know Christ “if we obey his commandments”, i.e. if we walk in God’s ways, his *laws*. There are dissenters from the true faith, who are spoken of, in v. 4, as *lawless*: they habitually deviate from God’s ways, persist in doing evil (v. 5). In 1:8, the author says “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves ...”: so sin is possible for Christians. When we do sin, we weaken our bond with God, the very bond which gives meaning and reality to being Christian (v. 6). The dissidents may claim that all that matters is a godly attitude, but being “righteous” (v. 7, godly) requires actions as well. Jesus is our example.

Luke 24:36b-48

NRSV

Jesus has appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and has shared bread with them (vv. 13-32). Upon returning to Jerusalem, they have heard from “the eleven and their companions” (v. 33) that Jesus has also appeared to Peter. “Peace” (v. 36), proclaimed by the angel at Jesus’ birth, (2:14) is now his gift to the disciples. When the group think they are seeing a ghost (v. 37), Jesus asks them: why do you have trouble in believing that it is me, risen from death? (v. 38) He invites them to “touch me and see” (v. 39), to understand. Realizing that he is risen, their joy is so great as to leap beyond belief (v. 41). They give him “broiled fish” (v. 42), a Galilean dish. Eating shows that he is not a ghost: he is bodily resurrected. Times have changed, as “while I was still with you” (v. 44) shows. He tells them that he fulfils the whole of the Old Testament (to Jews divided into “the law ... the prophets, and the psalms” or *Writings*), and explains the scriptures to them (v. 45). The quotation in vv. 46-47 combines verses from the Old Testament and apocryphal books. He commissions the Church: with faith in his divinity (“in his name”, v. 47) “repentance and forgiveness ... is to be proclaimed ... to all nations”; the Church is his agent.