

Bible Study notes Easter 4

Preparation

We will be reading the lectionary readings set for Sunday (3rd May).

Psalm 23 • 1 Peter 2:19-25 • Acts 2:42-47 • John 10:1-10

If you are planning to talk about these readings later with others, or you want to look back over your reflections in the future, please **note anything that strikes you** as you go along – so you may need a pen and paper – you will need a Bible. I suggest you set a time limit for your study.

Read the readings with as much confidence as you can muster! Allow the readings to do most of the work. Allow the Bible to speak to you. Allow God to touch you through the words.

Today's Bible Study

I suggest you begin with a short prayer. Pray that you may encounter the living God in the living words of the Bible. Ask for God's light to shine on your reflections and you may also wish to say the Lord's Prayer. A 5 minute YouTube introduction is also available:

Read *one* of the readings

- Psalm 23,
- 1 Peter 2:19-25,
- Acts 2:42-47,
- John 10:1-10

PAUSE

As you pause, note if anything touched you in the reading – any insights you gained. If anything has struck you, you may want to return to it and reflect more on that part of the reading. You might want to write something down.

Reflect on these questions:

- What struck you in this passage?
- What did you understand best?
- How did what you understood best, or what struck you in the reading, challenge you?

After your reflection, you may want to move on to another reading but you don't have to do them all! Some of my reflections are below if you are interested. When finished, pray the final prayer:

Final Prayer:

Risen Christ, help me to follow you this Eastertime. Call me by my name and give me your assurance that I am indeed following you. Bless, protect and guide me, and all who are entrusted to my care this week. Amen.

Some of my reflections

Psalm 23:

I can never look at this psalm without remembering my dad, because the first thing he did when he landed on German soil after he was shot down in the war, was to recite the words of Psalm 23. He was a young flight engineer and had been flying in a Lancaster bomber before they were hit by flack which set the plane on fire (with a whole payload of bombs on board). Only occasionally, he told the story how four of the crew escaped – the others presumably killed as the plane exploded. To say those words of Psalm 23, which we also spoke at dad's funeral service, always puts me in mind of the contrast between our temporal life and God's eternal home. I am struck by the phrase "goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life". This seems to be untrue in so many ways for anyone who is suffering, and for my dad to have said this at that point must mean, even in deepest of shadows, surrounded by death and the fear of being killed, God's goodness and mercy were present to him. I love the way the psalms do this, again and again – they turn us from places of peril and fear towards places of delight and hope. With God as our shepherd there is nothing to fear.

1 Peter 2:19-25

This reading contains the words, "by his wounds you have been healed". The first time I became aware of these words was when I was receiving communion at the Taizé Community in France. I had been to the communion several times, but at Taizé the words spoken are in many languages and at the point in the communion when, each time the congregation said, "Lord I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the words and I shall be healed," I could not understand it. Then, one day I was sitting by Ricardo from the Philippines. He spoke the words in English and I understood them. This phrase stayed in my mind." By your wounds we are healed. The risen Lord appears to the disciples not "perfect" but wounded – he shows the disciples his wounds and he breathes peace and healing upon them.

Acts 2:42-47

The phrase "breaking of bread" comes out twice in this reading and it was in last week's reading as well. During the lockdown we have been advised that we should not be sharing communion on line. I will hold a short at 9am service on Zoom on Sunday – when I'm due to preach at Central. I will invite those present on the Zoom call to break bread together – I will not call it communion but I will invite God to do whatever God wants to do with the food and drink we place in God's hands. Then together we will break bread as the early church did, often themselves in the midst of trouble and persecution. I will leave the rest in God's hands!

John 10:1-10

I am struck in this reading by Jesus saying he is the Gate. I say more about this in the notes I have prepared for Sunday's worship. (You should receive these before Sunday but they will appear on the website) <http://centralhall.info/resources/>