

Bible Study notes Easter 6

Preparation

Short introduction on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Ww8vHbnfSV8>

We will be reading the following lectionary readings set for Sunday (17th May).

- **Acts 17:22-31**
- **Peter 3:13-22**
- **John 14:15-21**

If you are planning to talk about these readings later, or you want to look back over your reflections in the future, please **note anything that strikes you** as you go along. You may want a pen and paper nearby and you will need a Bible. It can be helpful to set a time limit for your study.

When you read the readings, do it with as much confidence as you can muster! Allow the readings to do the work. Allow the Bible to speak to you. Allow God to touch you through the words.

If you wish, you can also try using your (God-given) imagination to imagine you are there in the reading with one of the characters or perhaps there yourself as an onlooker. Feel free, if you are doing this to ask questions of people in the reading. The Acts reading might be an interesting one to try this with this week.

As previously, you can follow the pattern below.

Pray first: (just a simple prayer or the *Our Father* if you find that easiest)

Read a reading (one at a time. Don't feel you have to read them all!)

PAUSE and imagine/reflect on the readings

- Did anything touch you in the reading?
- Did you gain any insights? Were there any challenges?
- What did you understand best?

If anything particular has struck you, you may want to return to it and reflect more on that part of the reading. You might also want to write something down.

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, There is no where we can go from your presence. You go ahead of us and care for us through your Holy Spirit, our comforter. Comfort, protect and guide me, and all who are entrusted to my care this week. **Amen.**

Acts 17:22-31

Paul is challenged by seeing the city of Athens full of idols. This was something any Jew would struggle with, as the first and second commandments clearly oppose having any other gods, and the worship of idols and false gods. Paul responds by challenging the people in Athens, from all over the known world, about the God's identity. Paul doesn't criticise directly but leads them into an understanding of what Jesus revealed about God's true nature. God who loves us as children.

Paul shows that he is able to look at what is happening around him and though he is distressed (v 16) he doesn't just dismiss others' beliefs out of hand. This is a challenge to me. When I think I'm right, do I ignore what others are doing, even though they may understand much more of the truth than I might want to admit? Here Paul, the Jew who has been converted on the Damascus road, quotes a Greek poet who says, "In him we live and move and have our being." Paul uses this as an opportunity to tell the good news of Jesus, raised from the dead. He challenges me and his listeners. Look at the world and be more creative with what you find there. I am reminded as I write this, that Jesus did a similar thing, he took the ordinary things in life and turned them into parables about the Kingdom of Heaven.

Finally, this reading challenges me to ask, "What is God like?" If God is different to how the Greeks saw their gods, is God different to how I see God then? It has been said that if God looks the way I see God, that cannot be God, for God is always bigger than the god I can imagine. Where then do I go? Last week's reading from John, answers, go to Christ, he is the way.

1 Peter 3:13-22

This reading talks to me about passing through.. Like Noah, passing through the chaotic waters of the flood, like someone being baptised and passing through the water to be cleaned, not only made physically clean, but also made clean by the resurrection of Jesus, Jesus who passed through the waters of death.

Currently we are going through the choppy waters of this current crisis. Like a person passing through the pains and sorrows of this world – I sometimes feel I am groping about in the darkness (as in the first reading - Acts 17:27). When I feel like this Peter offers the comfort that powers and authorities are subject to Jesus, so Christ has the final word.

John 14:15-21

Jesus says to his disciples that they will not pass through life alone when he is gone. They will not be like orphans, but they will be accompanied by the Holy Spirit, who will come to be with them and accompany them speaking up on their behalf, through the pain and sufferings they may have to suffer.

The reading finishes by assuring the disciples that by love (and the commands of Jesus all command us to love), by love, we will see – we will know him, and through him we will see the Father.