

Easter 5A - Comments/questions on the lessons for May 3, 2026

Acts 7:55-60

- Stephen is one of seven “Hellenists,” Greek-speaking followers, appointed by the apostles to ensure that all widows received equal distribution of food on a daily basis. He gets into an argument at the synagogue with the “Freedmen,” who spread a rumor that he is speaking against Moses and God (Acts 6). When Stephen responds and claims that they are even worse than those who opposed Moses as they betrayed and handed over Jesus, they become enraged and begin to stone him. Stephen thus becomes the first martyr.
- Two things that Stephen says as he is dying parallel the death of Jesus: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them” (= “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34) and “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (= “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46)). The death of Jesus models for his followers how they are called to give up their life and emulate the forgiveness he shows. How are we doing?

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

- Here are the verses left out of the psalm. Do these verses add to or change the psalm we read?
*⁶ You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.
⁷ I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,
⁸ and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.
⁹ Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.
¹⁰ For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
¹¹ my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.
¹¹ I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
¹² I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
¹³ For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.
¹⁴ But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, ‘You are my God.’*
- Once again, we see the psalms use vivid imagery to picture the emotions and actions of God. The psalms invite us to use our imagination as we pray for help. The psalm invites us to picture God as a fortress to keep us safe. The psalm invites us to picture our struggles as a net that we seek to free ourselves from.
- What does it mean to pray, “My times are in your hands”? Where is God moving you, moving us, moving our world, in these times?

1 Peter 2:2-10

- These verses describe what we as Lutherans call “the priesthood of all believers.” We are **all** a royal priesthood. We are **all** called. How can viewing all that we do as a calling from God change how we live our lives?
- What do you imagine the “pure, spiritual milk” to be that helps you to grow into salvation?
- What does it mean to you to be a living stone, built into a spiritual house?

John 14:1-14: These are an interesting set of verses in that they are probably misused in at least three different ways. So, I would like to offer thoughts on each of those three places.

- “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go and prepare a place for you?” (14:2) – These verse are often used at funerals as a way to comfort people that we will all have a place prepared for us in heaven. But the word used here for “dwelling places” is used frequently in these chapters for “remain” or “abide,” as Jesus will say a little later, “Abide in me as I abide in you.” (15:4) The “dwelling places” that Jesus is talking about is each of us. We are the dwelling places that Jesus is preparing.
- “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (14:6) This is often used as an exclusive claim for Christianity. But you would have to take this verse by itself – and only by itself – to make it say this. In this context, Jesus is letting the disciples know that if they want to know who God is, then look at Jesus. The life of Jesus, the words of Jesus, show us the way to God, the truth of God, and the life found in God. This verse was never meant to be used as a judgment against others. Rather, it was meant to encourage us to look at Jesus and find out who God is and what God intends for us.
- “If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.” (14:14) This verse does not mean that we can ask God for anything we want. Rather, it is set in the context of doing what Jesus does, following in the way that Jesus walks. When we are in line with the name of Jesus, then we will be empowered to do even greater works than Jesus.