

Pentecost 3A - Comments/questions on the lessons for June 14, 2026

Exodus 19:2-8a

- The Lutheran emphasis on “the priesthood of all believers” finds its biblical basis in part from this passage when God says, “you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.” In the New Testament we hear this same sentiment in the following two places:
 - “like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)
 - “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 1:5-6)

When we speak of “the priesthood of all believers,” we are saying that we are all empowered and called by God to live in faith. There is no distinction between clergy and lay people. We are all called to serve God and neighbor together.

- Though the people of Israel commit themselves to God, this did not mean that they always followed through. In Exodus 32 we hear the story of the golden calf, in which the Hebrew people create for themselves an idol while Moses is up the mountain receiving the law. Our call as a people of God is not a “once-and-done” matter. We continue to renew ourselves to be a priestly kingdom.

Psalm 100

- What does it mean to you to “make a joyful noise to the Lord”? We can begin by developing an “attitude of gratitude.” Each day, can you think of three things you are grateful for? When you do, you can raise them up to God with a joyful noise.
- The call of the psalm is intended for “all you lands.” The psalm envisions a global community that serves God. How can we extend our vision globally?

Romans 5:1-8

- Have you had an experience of how suffering produces endurance, which produces character, which produces hope? When have you known the presence and grace of God in the midst of suffering?
- Paul says here that “we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand.” We stand in and by the grace and forgiveness of God. We do not earn this forgiveness. We do not work for it.

Matthew 9:35 – 10:23

- What does it mean when Jesus says, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”? How can we raise up more “laborers”?
- When you read the names of the twelve disciples, what names do you know? What names do you not know? On the following page is a list of the traditions behind what happened to each of the disciples.
- Why does Jesus say here, “Go nowhere among the Gentiles”? Isn’t the message of the gospel supposed to reach out to the nations?
- What does it mean to “be wise as serpents and innocent as doves”? How can we form ourselves in that way?

Traditions about the Twelve Apostles

James: The son of Zebedee, brother of John, is listed as the first of the apostles to be martyred in Acts 12:1-3 – “About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.”

Peter (and Paul): Both martyred in Rome about 66 AD, during the persecution under Emperor Nero. Paul was beheaded. Peter was crucified, upside down at his request, since he did not feel he was worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

Andrew: went to the "land of the man-eaters," in what is now the Soviet Union. Christians there claim him as the first to bring the gospel to their land. He also preached in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, and in Greece, where he is said to have been crucified.

Thomas: was probably most active in the area east of Syria. Tradition has him preaching as far east as India, where the ancient Marthoma Christians revere him as their founder. They claim that he died there when pierced through with the spears of four soldiers.

Philip: possibly had a powerful ministry in Carthage in North Africa and then in Asia Minor, where he converted the wife of a Roman proconsul. In retaliation the proconsul had Philip arrested and cruelly put to death.

Matthew: the tax collector and presumed writer of a Gospel ministered in Persia and Ethiopia. Some of the oldest reports say he was not martyred, while others say he was stabbed to death in Ethiopia.

Bartholomew: had widespread missionary travels attributed to him by tradition: to India with Thomas, back to Armenia, and also to Ethiopia and Southern Arabia. There are various accounts of how he met his death as a martyr for the gospel.

James: the son of Alphaeus is one of at least three James referred to in the New Testament. There is some confusion as to which is which, but this James is reckoned to have ministered in Syria. The Jewish historian Josephus reported that he was stoned and then clubbed to death.

Simon the Zealot: so the story goes, ministered in Persia and was killed after refusing to sacrifice to the sun god.

Thaddeus: Also known as Jude (or the other Judas). He possibly could be the author of Jude. Some speculate that he may be a brother of Jesus. Tradition holds that Thaddeus/Jude preached the Gospel throughout Mesopotamia. He is considered the founder of the Armenian Catholic Church. He is often connected with Simon (the Zealot) and is believed to be killed around 65 AD in Lebanon. He presumably was clubbed to death and then his head was shattered with an ax.

Matthais: The apostle chosen to replace Judas. Tradition sends him to Syria with Andrew and to death by burning.

John: The only one of the apostles generally thought to have died a natural death from old age. He was the leader of the church in the Ephesus area and is said to have taken care of Mary the mother of Jesus in his home. During Domitian's persecution in the middle '90s, he was exiled to the island of Patmos. There he is credited with writing the last book of the New Testament--the Revelation. An early Latin tradition has him escaping unhurt after being cast into boiling oil at Rome.