

# Our Sunday Readings

## Founded on Christ

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES 4:32-35  
PSALM 118:2-4,13-15,22-24  
I JOHN 5:1-6  
JOHN 20:19-31

### ACTS 4:32-35

#### **Reading closely**

1. In what ways can a *community of believers* be of one heart and mind?
2. What all do you imagine the apostles doing?
3. What might have inspired people to sell property and bring it to the apostles?
4. How readily do you think people shared their possessions?
5. How would you have decided how to distribute things?
6. What impact do you think this behavior had on outsiders?

#### **Living the word**

7. Would you like to have been part of this community?
8. To what authorities do you submit? In what ways do you submit to them?

### THE FIRST READING

#### **Better than both worlds**

In the Greco-Roman world the ideal of friendship was “to be of one mind.” A Jewish hope was of a world in which no one was in material need (Deuteronomy 15:4). Here Luke shows that the early church is so strongly united

in its faith in Christ that its virtuous behavior exceeds the ideals of both the pagan and Jewish worlds.

#### **The apostles’ authority**

Acts of the Apostles is the second part of Luke’s two volume work. Book One, his Gospel, features Jesus. Book Two features the apostles, especially Paul.

Luke shows how the authority of Christ is now shared by the apostles. These leaders are preaching, teaching, and healing in the name of Jesus (v.33). They also administer the material goods of the community. Placing one’s possessions “at the feet” of the apostles is a gesture that acknowledges their authority (v.35).

#### **Radical detachment**

This passage captures an aspect of Jesus’ ministry that Luke emphasizes in his Gospel. Jesus commands his followers to renounce greed (12:15) and give up all their possessions (5:11, 14:33). Possessions represent a person’s spiritual or interior disposition. Those who are truly committed to Jesus readily give their material goods away.

**JOHN 20:19-31**

**Entering the word**

Imagine that you are one of the disciples.

1. Why are you hiding?
2. What all are you feeling?
3. What have you been doing since Jesus was crucified?
4. What are the other disciples saying and/or doing?
5. What are you doing when Jesus appears?
6. How do you react when Jesus appears?
7. Do Jesus' words of peace surprise you?
8. How do you feel when Jesus shares the Spirit with you?
9. Where is Thomas during all of this?
10. How do you try to convince Thomas of what has happened?
11. Why doesn't Thomas believe you?
12. How does Thomas react when Jesus appears again?
13. Do you think you will ever fear or doubt again?
14. What do you think Jesus and the Father expect of you now?
15. What does this time of reflection leave you thinking about?

**THE GOSPEL READING**

**Peace & reconciliation**

The disciples are afraid and withdrawn. Jesus walks through the locked door and gives them peace. The great hope of God's people was for *shalom*, a lasting peace that encompassed all creation.

Jesus tells his disciples to walk through the doors of other locked hearts in order to dispel fear and bring peace and reconciliation into the world. One way the Church fulfills this mission is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

**The Holy Spirit**

Before he was killed, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help the disciples carry out their mission (14:15f). John reminds us that although the earthly Jesus is gone, he remains within and among us in the person of the Spirit (19:30).

**Doubt & faith**

Thomas is mostly remembered for not believing that Jesus rose from the dead. What people forget is what he said when Jesus appeared to him: *My Lord and my God!* This is the boldest statement of faith in John's Gospel.

Thomas' words of faith sum up the main theme of this Gospel: Jesus is one with the Father, just as Jesus had been telling people all along. To see Jesus is to see the Father. Those who believe that Jesus is from God receive his Spirit of eternal and empowering life.

**Seeing & believing**

The first half of this Gospel is often called *The Book of Signs*. Here Jesus does and says things so that people will see that he is the one whom God has sent to give eternal life to all who believe. Verses 30-31 thus sum up the reason John wrote. (John's Gospel seems to have ended with verse 31. Later someone added an epilogue.)

Because we ourselves haven't seen the earthly Jesus nor the signs he worked, John wrote his Gospel in order to help us believe. Both the words of this Gospel and the guidance of the Holy Spirit enable us to believe and profess that Jesus is *our Lord and our God*.

**PRAYER**

*adapted from an Anglican Prayer*

Almighty and ever-living God,  
you strengthened your apostle Thomas  
with sure and certain faith  
in your Son's resurrection.

Grant us so perfectly and without doubt  
to believe in Jesus Christ,  
our Lord and our God,  
that our faith may never be found wanting  
in your sight.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.  
Amen.