

EASTER: A TIME TO REJOICE IN HOPE

Third Sunday of Easter
April 26, 2009

Acts 3:12-19
Psalm 4
1 John 3:1-7
Luke 24:36-49

A Way Back to God

*“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer
and on the third day rise from the dead,
and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name
to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
You are witnesses of these things.”*
Luke 24:46b-48 (RSV)

The hope of the resurrection is what motivates us to follow after the Christ. Sin is a real part of our life in this world. Evil is all around us, but we would rather not deal with it. To deal with sin would mean that we would have to look at ourselves in the mirror and we tend to shy away from that reality.

Acknowledging sin forces us to have to face the fact that we are lost and without hope in this world. We are forced to face the reality that, left to ourselves, we can not untangle the net that has us bound. The wages of sin is death and that is the reality of our life, and we can not extricate ourselves from our situation alone. The more we try, the more we realize that our efforts are fruitless. The deeper we look into ourselves, the greater the awareness of how sinful and apart from God we are. Our actions work against us as we are confronted by the goodness of God.

When we look at Jesus, we are forced to decide – do we submit to him or do we reject him outright? The resurrection story is a bloody one because the consequences of sin are dire. But the story doesn't end on the cross. Three days later Jesus arose from the grave so that repentance and the forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in his name to all nations.

This is the good news. Entrance into the presence of God that was blocked because of sin is now opened to any who would believe in the Son of God and what he has accomplished for us on the cross. The resurrection is cause for celebration in the heart of the Christian. For those who confess their sins and repent, Jesus has made a way for them back to God.

This week's Reflection was prepared by the Rev. David Haberer, Pastor of Church for All Nations which reaches out to the world from the heart of New York City. Visit: www.CFAN.net to learn more about this ministry. Pastor Haberer is an ordained minister with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

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This week remember to pray for the work of the Bible Societies in: South Korea –

With prayers for the development of designs and new materials to help sister Bible Societies spread the Word of God effectively in their contexts and with prayers for working closely with them so that Scriptures are published that meet their needs; **North Korea** – With prayers that North Korea will open its doors so that the Gospel may be spread freely in that country; **Thailand** – With thanks to God for new publications, including the long-awaited Mien Bible and the first Thai-Chinese New Testament, and with prayers for ongoing translation work and for the new Thai-Korean New Testament with Psalms and Proverbs, and with prayers for God's blessing as preparations are being made for hosting the Triennial Translation Workshop being held in Bangkok in June.

Activity Corner: "Breaking Open the Scriptures" Chart

Supplies needed: Bible; poster board; markers

In this week's Gospel text, Jesus tells the disciples that everything about him that has now been fulfilled was written in "the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms." Invite members of your household to look up the following Scripture passages in the Old Testament and talk about how they were fulfilled. Set up these Scripture passages in the form of a chart, using poster board. Make two columns, one for the listing of the Old Testament Scripture passages and another column entitled, "Fulfilled by Jesus." Encourage members of your household to write their responses in the second column.

Psalm 22:1	Isaiah 9:6-7	Isaiah 61:1
Psalm 22:16-18	Isaiah 11:1-5	Jeremiah 23:5
Psalm 41:9	Isaiah 35:5-6	Micah 5:2-5
Psalm 69:21	Isaiah 53:1-12	Zechariah 9:9

Conclude by reading together Psalm 4 as a closing prayer and singing one of your favorite hymns or songs of praise.