



BIBLICAL RESOURCES

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16 (15); 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

The Lord has risen indeed!

Luke 24:13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, 14 and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, 16 but their eyes were kept from recognising him. 17 And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. 18 Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" 19 He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, 20 and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. 21 But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. 22 Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, 23 and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." 25 Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! 26 Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. 28 As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. 29 But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. 30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. 31

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognised him; and he vanished from their sight. 32 They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" 33 That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. 34 They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" 35 Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In all four gospels, there are two kinds of stories recounted regarding the resurrection. (i) Resurrection Proclamation stories and (ii) Resurrection Appearance narratives (none in the original Mark, which ended at 16:8). Each writer uses the tradition both to proclaim the resurrection and to show how we may arrive at Resurrection faith. This is very much the case in Luke 24:13-35.

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

(i) There is reference to Moses (= the Pentateuch), the Prophets (meaning both historical books and prophets) and all the Scriptures (possibly meaning the last part of the OT, "the writings"). To find out which texts resonated with the early Christians, read Luke-Acts and see which texts are consistently referred to. E.g. Isaiah 53, Psalm 110, Psalm 118 etc.

(ii) In the programmatic scene in Nazareth, Luke 4:16-30 refers to Isaiah 61:1-2; 48:6 as well as to 1 Kings 17:1, 8-16; 18:1; 2 Kings 5:1-14.

(iii) Perhaps the story nearest is that of Abraham's hospitality to his three guests, unaware that they are "angels" (= God in reality). The Graeco-Roman reader would be familiar with such stories about the gods disguised.

KIND OF WRITING

A story unique to Luke — the story of

Thought for the day

We come to Easter faith by acknowledging the hungers of the heart ("our own hope had been"), by searching the scriptures ("our hearts burning within us"), by holding on to the story of the first disciples and witness of the women, by the Eucharist ("the breaking of the bread") and by sharing our faith ("they told their story"). Is there more? As the story starts, *he stops them*. Towards the end of the story, *they stop him* from walking out of their lives, perhaps for ever. The moment of desire leads to the moment of recognition and a life-changing encounter.

Prayer

Open our ears, O Lord, to the words of Scripture, that our hearts may burn within us. Open our hearts to share with others the faith we have received, that "we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith" (Rom 1:12).

Philip and the Eunuch in Acts mirrors it. Both belong to a type of folktale in which the welcome to the unrecognised stranger turns out to be the decisive event of your life. In the Jewish tradition, there are stories of Elijah, interestingly, exactly in this role. The Lucan version exhibits the typical features of resurrection appearance stories: doubt, lack of recognition, revelation and mission. Notice that the reader knows more than the protagonists (with the exception of Jesus).

The narrative sequence: 1. Journey; 2. Jesus joins them; 3. recounting of events; 4. recounting of hope; 5. recounting of Easter; 6. Jesus' reproof; 7. Jesus' exegesis; 8. Meal; 9. realisation; 10. return to Jerusalem; 11. report of unreported previous appearance to Simon; 12. report of what happened at the breaking of the bread. In real time, the chronological sequence: 7-3-4-5-1-2-6-9-8-12-10-11. Although very smoothly told, this is a story of multiple stories, marvellously intercalated.

Notice the remarkable narrative skill in the manner in which the disparate sto-

- A** 13 In the same/Jerusalem/going
B 14 They were talking to each other
C 15ab Jesus appears to them
D 16 Something prevented them from recognising him
E 17-19a Jesus makes a request which stops them
F 19b-24 Ministry, death and tomb, no sight
G 25 *slowness of heart/ slow to believe*
F* 26-27 Ministry, death and tomb, biblical light
E* 28-30 They make a request which stops him
D* 31a Their eyes were opened, they recognised him
C* 31b Jesus disappears from them
B* 32 They talk to each other
A* 33a In the same/ Jerusalem/returning + Coda: 33b-34

ries are woven into a single narrative. Thus Luke tells a story of men on the road, who tell what had happened in the city, who related what was related to them by women, who have a further experience of Jesus' words and actions and who then report this to the assembled community which tells them in turn of further such events. Beneath the calm and almost matter-of-fact simplicity of this story, a complex process of narration is in process. You don't feel jolted around. Notice the quantity of reported speech, when realisation comes later.

There is also a powerful concentric structure: slowness of heart is the centre.

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

Luke observes the "ingredients" of resurrection faith: my own hopes and longings; the Word of God (in this case the OT); the story of Jesus; the tradition of the women at the tomb; the recognition of hidden presence; the Eucharist; elusive "epiphanies"; checking my faith with the faith of the community. In a sense it means that we have to think of our story in the light of the Jesus story, and that in the light of the salvation history of the Hebrew Bible.

But such intellectual and personal synthesis does not suffice: the risen Lord himself discloses himself unexpectedly and elusively. The idea here is of an "objective" self-presentation, in the sense that it is not a metaphor for the synthesis of faith. Rather, Jesus takes the initiative. Only after the encounter, however oblique, has happened can we recognise him in the breaking of the bread.

Then we retrace our steps to the community. Lastly, this discovery of faith needs to be tested against the community witness and remain always in communion with that in order to be "valid." The story, then, provides a path of catechesis - while leaving the element of mystery intact.

Sometimes people feel it would be wonderful to know which texts of Scripture the Lord had in mind. But in Luke's Gospel we do! Have a look at Luke 4:16-30.

ST PAUL

Now I would remind you, brothers and sisters, of the

good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe. (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verses 13f. This sets up the story, the characters and the situation. The reader knows it is Jesus and becomes an observer of the birth of faith.

Verse 17 *He makes them stop.*

Verses 18f Highly ironic that they should tell him, of all people, the story of his own death and resurrection!

Verses 25f. Luke makes Jesus do what the early Christians did: look to the scriptures to understand their astounding experiences.

Verses 28f. They make him stop. The scene does echo the Eucharist, but that is not the chief point: the Risen Lord comes into our lives when we desire him (cf. they urged him strongly).

Verse 33f. Mutual confirmation of faith stories.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus joined them and listened to them. "We had hoped...." They poured out to Jesus their disappointments. When you have been upset or disappointed who has joined you along the road? To whom have you been able to pour out your heart? Who was a 'Jesus person' to you, listening to you in respectful silence? To whom have you been a Jesus person?

2. Jesus then helps them to see things in another light by opening the scriptures to them. Have you had the experience of new hopes being formed after disappointment? When has your heart been burning within you? What helped you to form new hopes in the light of the new reality? Who was with you in this?

3. The disciples invite Jesus to join them at table - there follows a recognition of who he is. We meet many people on the road of life. Usually we meet and pass on. Occasionally we meet someone whom we invite into our homes, into our hearts, in a deeper way, and in a way that leads us to know people and to be known by them in a way we had not done before. With whom has this happened for you? Where in these relationships have you experienced the presence of God or of Jesus?

4. Jesus vanished but first he had given them life and they took up life in a new way. Can you name those moments of disclosure that enabled you to return to daily life renewed?

PRAYER

O God of mystery, out of death you delivered Christ Jesus, and he walked in hidden glory with his disciples. Stir up our faith, that our hearts may burn within us at the sound of his word, and our eyes be opened to recognise him in the breaking of the bread.

Grant this through Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead, who lives with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

God raised him from the dead so that your faith and hope are set on God

1 Pet 1:17 If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. 18 You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. 20 He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. 21 Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

On the second Sunday of Easter we began reading from 1 Peter. This is the letter which contains the often quoted phrase: *Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you* (1 Pet 3:15). The letter as a whole is an invitation to embrace again salvation in Christ and not to lose it through half-heartedness.

CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

Commentary on the context, communities and authorship may be found in the notes for Easter 2A17.

KIND OF WRITING

1:1-2: Letter opening
1:3-12: Thanksgiving:

Three main sections
1:13-2:10: Opening
2:11-4:11: Middle
4:12-5:11: Closing

5:12-14: Letter conclusion

Our reading comes from the main opening section. Vv. 17-21 do not stand alone but follow clearly from vv. 13-16.

1:13-16: the call to holiness (given below)
1:17-21: motivation for holiness

The writer gives no fewer than five exhortations to holiness in vv. 13-16: prepare your minds, discipline yourselves, set all your hope on God, do not be conformed to this world; be holy. (The full citation is given below.) This five-fold imperative is indeed intense and it naturally gives rise to questions: why should

we be holy at all and secondly how can we reach such high goals. The very next section — our reading for today — takes up the necessary topic of motivation.

RELATED PASSAGES

Therefore *prepare* your minds for action; *discipline* yourselves; *set* all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, *do not be conformed* to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, *be holy* yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.” (1 Pet 1:13–16)

For he will repay according to each one’s deeds: to those who by patiently doing good seek for glory and honour and immortality, he will give eternal life; while for those who are self-seeking and who obey not the truth but wickedness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be anguish and distress for everyone who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honour and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality. (Rom 2:6–11)

To the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance. (1 Pet 1:1–2)

For thus says the LORD: You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money. (Isa 52:3)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 17 The metaphor of the family has already been invoked in 1:2-3, 14. The strict impartiality of God was an important teaching of both Judaism and Christianity. See above from Romans 2:6-11; cf. also Galatians 3:18. Fear here is not psychological fright but rather proper awe before God, our loving father. The image of exile is resumed from the start of the letter. It is used to underline the exile of Christians from their true homeland.

In the letter of Diognetus, this Christian condition is expressed strikingly:

They live in their own countries, but only as nonresidents; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. (Diognetus 5:5)

Verses 18-19 This is a reminder of the cost of salvation. The language of ransom or rescue was already ancient in the Hebrew Bible: Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Deut. 7:8; 9:26; 15:15; 24:18; Isa. 44:22–23; 51:11; 52:3. It turns up too, perhaps form the historical Jesus, in Mark 10:45 and Matt. 20:28. In these contexts, ransom is an echo of the Suffering Servant Songs. The lamb imagery for Jesus’ death started early, with Paul: *For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.* (1 Cor 5:7) and is found widely in the New Testament. It may help to remember that the passover lamb was traditionally a communion and not an atonement sacrifice. We have indeed been delivered — precisely that we might be free to live new lives in Christ.

Verse 20 The conviction there was a plan of salvation, unveiled in Christ, is known in the New Testament: Rom 16:25–26; 1 Cor 2:7–13; Eph 3:3–11; Col 1:26; 2 Tim 1:9–10; Titus 1:2–3. Following by then accepted tradition, Christ’s resurrection triggers the end of the ages. This linking of end and beginning is typical of apocalyptic thinking, as can be seen in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15, based on the idea of resurrection as end-time event. The end time, in this vision, is actually now or, rather the “already and not yet” of Christian existence.

Verse 21 The teaching is highly God-centred, which is fitting given the emerging doctrine of the resurrection. From the time of the book of Daniel onwards, many Jews came to see life after death as a measure and disclosure of the faithfulness of God. What God achieved for us in Christ is the foundation of our faith and hope. Faith here is not doctrine but a movement of heart as we place all our hope in God.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. The sense of being set free is strong: from what do I need to be liberated?
2. Where does my own faith actually come from — on what is it based?

PRAYER

God of new birth and new life, help me to embrace all you have done for us in Jesus’ death and resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Acts 2:14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

Acts 2:22 “You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— 23 this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24 But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. 25 For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; 26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. 27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

Acts 2:29 “Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, ‘He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

32 This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33 Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The Acts offers us a great series of speeches and homilies and Peter’s proclamation at Pentecost is one of the most important of them. Fully 50% of Acts is made up of sermons, discourses and letters. Within that 50%, the sermons given make up 33% of the whole document, a significant portion.

Here is a brief list, to give a flavour

Peter: 8 speeches overall
 Stephen: 1 (7:2-53)
 Cornelius (10:30-33)
 James: 2 (15:13-21, 21:20-25)
 Paul: 9 speeches overall
 Gamaliel the Pharisee: 1 (5:35-39)
 Demetrius the silver-smith: 1 (19:25-27)
 Tertullus the lawyer: 1 (24:2-8)
 Festus the governor: 1 (23:27-30)

In the Christian homilies, we may indeed detect early tradition but always as received and embedded in the theology of Luke. In such skilful retrieval and reuse, we see again the literary gifts of the third evangelist.

CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

The speech (abbreviated in the lectionary) cannot be grasped apart from its context, which is the Pentecost event. Thus 2:1-13 forms even to 3:37-47, the story of the first converts.

KIND OF WRITING

The enumeration of the speeches in Acts can vary but there are some twenty-four extended sermons by Peter, Paul and others. This speech illustrates a combination of classical rhetoric and rabbinic argumentation. Ps 16:8-11 and Ps 110:1 (in v. 34) recur as reference points in the biblical argument for Jesus as God’s messiah, raised from the dead.

RELATED PASSAGES

The speeches fulfil a promise at the start of Acts: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* (Acts 1:8)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

Verse 14 The link with Pentecost is made more fully in the omitted verses, including Joel 2:28-32 (adjusted)

Verses 22-24 We may notice the combination of historical narrative and theological interpretation. Luke begins with a Christology “from below,” starting with Jesus of Nazareth. Although humans were responsible for Jesus’ death, what happened was all part of God’s plan, according to Luke. The core proclamation is in v. 24: God raised him



Rogier van der Weyden (*El Escorial*)

to life.

Verses 25-28 David is treated as the author of all the Psalms. (See also Acts 13:35.) The early Christians looked back to the Psalms in particular in order to come to terms with the unexpected death of the messiah. Already the rabbis had understood the Ps 16 to speak of the resurrection. Hades = Sheol, which is not the hell of later Christian doctrine.

Verse 29-33 The argument is that David was clearly not speaking of himself—he is dead and buried—but was writing as prophet of the Messiah. Notice how the verses of the Psalm are embedded in the exposition. “This Jesus” i.e. Jesus of Nazareth. Finally, the link with the Holy Spirit and the context of Pentecost is made in v. 33.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Can I trace my own journey of faith in the risen Lord? How is my faith sustained today?
2. The proclamation evokes a reaction: conversion and baptism. The first is once and for all but conversion is never truly “over.”

PRAYER

God you raised Jesus from the dead and gave us life in his name. As we bear the name of Christian, help to follow Jesus not only in name but also in fact. Give us the courage to bear witness and to speak out. Amen.

THE LITURGY

Acts 2:14, 22-33; Ps 16 (15); 1 Peter 1:17-21; Luke 24:13-35

THEMES ACROSS THE READINGS

Naturally, the readings all still proclaim the resurrection but from a particular angle: that of coming to faith and bearing witness. We see this in the speech from Acts. Peter links the proclamation with the word of God in the Hebrew Bible and challenges his hearers to conversion, as we note in a subsequent verse: Peter said to them, *Repent, and be baptised.* (Acts 2:38)

Coming to faith underlines the proclamation from 1 Peter. The apparently redundant final phrase puts it up to us: *Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.*

The Emmaus story recognises a threat to faith at all times: slowness of heart. It illustrates that coming to Easter faith can be a complex journey but in its core it is very simple: I must desire to have this Jesus in my life. No one can “do” this for me. It is a movement of the heart, a desire to which I say my own amen.

THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Ps 16 (15) was cited in Peter’s speech so it matches well. A modern critical reading would deny that the psalm, in its historical context, speaks of resurrection.

SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS

First reading

Acts 2:14, 22-33

In our reading today — one of many speeches in the Acts — we overhear a dialogue with Judaism, as the apostle argues from Scripture that Jesus is the Messiah of God.

Second reading

1 Peter 1:17-21

Our reading starts off in practical vein but is soon very deep. What do you think of the last sentence?

Gospel

Luke 24:13-35

Today we hear a great story of discovery and change. Can I resonate with any of

the characters?

WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS

Monday 1 May

Acts 6:8-15

Stephen, whose feast we celebrate on 26 December, was one of the seven chosen to relieve the pressure on the apostles (Acts 6:5). Today we begin his story, a story of extraordinary witness leading to martyrdom. The Greek for a “witness” is *martyros*, from which our word martyrdom.

John 6:22-29

The focus throughout John 6 is really on the *person* of Jesus. This is very evident in today’s Gospel: ‘This is working for God: you must believe in the one he has sent.’

Tuesday 2 May

St Athanasius, bishop and doctor

Acts 7:51-8:1

As we listen to the story of Stephen’s death, we might notice echoes of the story of Jesus’ crucifixion peculiar to Luke’s Gospel. This is intentional, because Luke sees Jesus’ death as that of a prophet-martyr.

John 6:30-35

Appetites, such as hunger and thirst, are often used metaphorically to speak of hungers of the heart. Today, Jesus satisfies our hunger because he is our bread of life.

Wednesday 3 May

Sts Philip and James, apostles

1 Cor 15:1-8

The apostolic proclamation takes us back to the original experiences of those who encountered the risen Lord. It is not enough, of course, to depend on the past: we have to recognise our own moments of encounter.

John 14:6-14

In our Gospel today, Philip seems to blurt out something inappropriate. However, it leads to deep teaching.

Thursday 4 May

Acts 8:26-40

Today we hear a memorable anecdote involving an exotic figure, the finance

minister of the “Candace” or queen of Ethiopia. There are considerable links with the Emmaus story: the unrecognised “guest”, the explanation of the Scriptures, the sudden disappearance and displacement. Luke wants us to “hear” these stories together.

John 6:44-51

The sermon on the bread of life continues. You may notice references to the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection. In this Gospel — which has no Lord’s Supper — Jesus “gives” his body and blood on the cross.

Friday 5 May

Blessed Edmund Ignatius Rice, religious

Acts 9:1-20

The story of Saul / Paul begins today, a story which will occupy the rest of the Acts. The conversion of Paul was a key event for early Christianity, placing at the service of The Way a remarkable person of faith, intelligence and energy.

John 6:52-59

The “giving of my flesh” takes place in this Gospel at the crucifixion. Eating and drinking are metaphors for faith in Jesus’ death and resurrection, celebrated sacramentally in the Eucharist.

Saturday 6 May

Acts 9:31-42

The story we are about to hear has a double resonance. It resembles the story of Jairus’ daughter in Luke 8, which in turn resembles the story of Elijah and the widow’s son in 1 Kings 17. Luke’s message is clear: great prophetic and life-giving actions continue among the followers of The Way.

John 6:60-69

There are several things “going on” in this reading. The departure of some mostly likely refers to a split in the community when some walked away (no unknown today, alas). The close of John 6 is a version of the scene in Capernaum—*who do you say I am?* The wording is very different, but Peter is the spokesman and this affirmation of faith is one of the strongest in this Gospel.