July 1

After the Ascension

Choosing Another

 Jesus ascended into heaven, leaving the disciples alone. They returned to Jerusalem, to the upper room where they were staying.

 Even though the angel appeared to the disciples and told them where Jesus had gone and that he would return, they had to have sensed a loss of the Master and a bewilderment of all that had happened.

 The believers stuck closely together – Read: Acts1:13.

 Judas killed himself over the deal with the chief priests so there were only eleven, so during the meetings of believers it was determined that another needed to be chosen – Read:

Acts 1:20.

 There were certain requirements for the replacement: Read: Acts 1:21-22.

 In Acts 1:23-25 - Barsabbas and Matthias were nominated and they prayed for wisdom to choose the right person. Matthias was the winner!

 We are fortunate to live in a democracy where we have a vote to choose who will lead us, we should pray for guidance in our vote and then keep those chosen in prayer while they serve us that God will guide them in their decisions.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 1:14.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Guide our president, O Lord, and all those in power around the world that they may come to you for guidance in their important work.

July 2

Pentecost

Alone but not Forgotten

 Jesus was gone, he made no more appearances in the flesh but as he promised, he did not leave the believers unaided.

 The believers were assembled as they often were – Read: Acts 2:2-4.

 Those in the city also heard the sound – Read: Acts 2:5-13. They were amazed to hear these Galileans speaking in each of their native tongues. Peter came to the defense of the believers, pointing out that this was a fulfillment of Joel’s prophesy – Read: Acts 2:17-21.

 Peter spoke out boldly about Jesus – Read: Acts 2:22-24.

 Part of our being a Christian is to spread the Gospel of Jesus to others, this can be a difficult task, but with the help of the Holy Spirit, we too can and must speak boldly!

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 2:33

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me, O Lord to use the Holy Spirit to guide me every day, not just in times of trouble but also in praise.

July 3

Pentecost

The Saving Equation

 Peter outlines the case of Jesus resurrected – Read: Acts 2:31-34. Pointing out how David died but the people before them actually are witnesses to the fact that Jesus lives!

 Read: Acts 2:36 – Peter took quite a chance to blatantly saying that they had crucified Jesus! But the statement had the right effect and they had a question – Read Acts 2:37.

 In Acts 2:38 and 39 we see the equation of salvation:

* Repent + Baptism=Salvation
* Receiving forgiveness of sin and the gift of Holy Spirit
* This was for the people that day as well as us “those far off”

 Peter’s message was highly received – Read: Acts 2:41. Wow 3,000 souls added!

 We must tell others what Jesus has done for us. We will probably only bring a few souls to the Lord in our lifetime, but we must not be discouraged but keep the faith and tell the good news everywhere.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 2:40

PRAYER THOUGHT: Strengthen me, O Lord, to stay turned away from sin and to walk in the light of your saving grace. We are still in a corrupt generation!

July 4

Independence Day

Freedom

 If asked, “What does freedom mean to you?” – What would you say?

 Let’s take a look at socialism, we might be able to handle a socialistic state, there is ownership of property and all medical and dental expenses are taken care of by the government. The taxes in these countries are very much higher than in the United States.

 Communism would be a bit harder to swallow, ownership is practically nil, farmers usually do have a small plot of land they can keep the produce from but the large acreages are owned by the government. There are “elections” with one person on the ballot. Religion is very much frowned upon.

 These analogies do not even scratch the surface of the misery suffered under socialism and communism. We have found through the years and wars that “Freedom is not free” it comes at a very high price. Like our freedom from sin came at a very high price to Jesus!

VERSE FOR TODAY: Isaiah 58:6b.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Thank-you, O Lord, for this great nation with freedom to serve you!

July 5

Peter and John

Preachin’ and Healin’

 The lame beggar – Read: Acts 3:1-10. What in these verses was given that money could not buy?

 Peter goes on to speak to the people who witnessed the healing – Read Acts 3:13-16.

Peter points out:

* They killed Jesus
* God raised Jesus from the dead
* Faith in the Name of Jesus has healed the man

 Peter continues to speak boldly, they were arrested and told to pipe down – Read: Acts 4:18-20. They told the Sanhedrin that they could not keep quiet.

 The message of Jesus to them was like boiling, whistling tea kettle, bubbling with the message of salvation, they could not keep quiet.

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 4:31.

PRAYER THOUGHT: May I be filled to overflowing with your love and hope that I cannot possibly keep it to myself!

July 6

Ananias and Sapphira

God Knows

 The believers back then, being few in number and subject to persecution, stuck very close together, share and sharing alike – Read: Acts 4:32.

 Ananias and Sapphira sold property read Acts 5:1-11. Now we may think this is quite harsh to die because you lied to God. We must realize that we cannot lie to God, we perhaps will not die on the spot but God knows and we will get our just reward or punishment when the time of judgment comes.

 It can be quite awesome to think about, the Lord knows, hears and sees all but it is also a comfort to know the Lord loves us and sees all our needs and will help us, all we need to do is ask!

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 5:9a.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me, to put the fact that you know all, O Lord, to work positively in my life not promote fear but love.

July 7

Apostle Persecution

Worthy of Disgrace

 The apostles were brought before the council again, jailed and angel was sent and set them free, as the jailers were discovering they were gone yet the gates were locked – Read: Acts 5:25.

 When questioned about spreading the Word – Read: Acts 5:29-32.

 The council was ready to kill the apostles but Gamaliel had some good advice for the Sanhedrin – Read: Acts 5:34-39.

 Being persuaded the apostles were punished – Read: Acts 5:40.

 The reaction of the apostles was not what we would expect – Read: Acts 5:41. They were happy about the beating because they felt worthy of the disgrace for the sake of Jesus.

 May we too think of the disgrace and humiliation for the sake of Jesus as worthiness in God’s eyes and to keep right on spreading the Word!

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 5:42.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Help me to be Christian enough to suffer humiliation and disgrace for the sake of your Name.

July 8

Christian Martyr

Stephen

 Stephen was a special person – Read: Acts 6:8. Stephen was asked a question in Acts 7:1 that spurred the speech that outlined the highlights of the main characters of the Old Testament in Acts 7:2-53. (Read it all if you so desire.) Verses 51-53 put the “frosting on the cake” to make them very angry but Stephen didn’t stop there – Read: Acts 7:55-57 – it must have been quite a site to see these devote members of the Sanhedrin with their ears covered and yelling!

 The fate of Stephen – Read: Acts 7:58. Stephen’s reaction as he was being stoned –Read Acts 7:59.

 Stephen died for what he believed and many others have too, whether Christian or otherwise like the Jews in WWII. Do we have faith strong enough to keep it while being killed?

VERSE FOR TODAY: Acts 7:60.

PRAYER THOUGHT: If your will, O Lord, demands it may I have the strength of faith to die for what I believe.