After the Ascension July 1

The Choosing of 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 must have sensed a loss of their Master and a bewilderment of all that had happened.

The believers stuck close together – They gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers. Acts 1:14.

Judas had killed himself over the deal with the Chief Priests so there were only eleven, so during the meetings of the believers Peter proposed that another apostle be chosen. The requirements being that the person had to have been with John the Baptist witnessed the resurrection of Jesus and remained with the group to the ascension. Barsabbas and Matthias were nominated – Then they prayed, “Lord, you know the thoughts of everyone, so show us which of these two you have chosen to serve as the apostle in the place of Judas, who left to go to the place where he belongs.” Acts 1:24-25. Matthias was chosen.

We are fortunate to live in a democracy where we have a vote to chose 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: It is also written, ‘May someone else take his place of service.’ Acts 1:20b.

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.

Pentecost July 2

Alone but not Forgotten

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

The believers were assembled as they often were – Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. They were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. Acts 2:2-4.

When the people in Jerusalem heard the commotion they gathered around the house, people from all parts of the known world were in Jerusalem, and here were Galileans able to speak in each of their native tongues.

Peter stood up and spoke to the crowd, telling them that these people were not drunk as they suspected but the Holy Spirit had been given as he Prophet Joel prophesied – “Afterwards I will pour out my spirit on everyone: you sons and daughters will proclaim my message;…” Joel 2:28a.

Peter spoke out boldly about Jesus, part of being a Christian is to spread the Gospel – the Good News – 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: He has been raised to the right hand side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit, as he had promised. What you now see and hear is his gift that he has poured out on us. 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 times on happiness and in praise!

Pentecost July 3

The Saving Equation

Peter’s message to the Jews that day was – “All people of Israel, then, are to know for sure this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!” Acts 2:36.

When the people heard Peter’s message, they wanted to know – “What shall we do, brothers?” Acts 2:37b.

The answer that Peter gave the people, still holds true today, and is a very important statement for anyone who is seeking the Lord – Peter said to them, “Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God’s gift, the Holy Spirit.” Acts 2:38.

First then we must believe in Jesus and his resurrection, that he is the Son of God, repent of our sins and be baptized thus receiving the Holy Spirit! The saving equation!

Peters’ message was received by many of the people; they believed in Jesus as the Messiah and were baptized, a total of three thousand!

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

VERSE FOR TODAY: Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them, saying, “Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!” 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.

Independence Day July 4

Freedom

If asked, “What does freedom mean to you?” We Americans would probably have a hard time answering. Especially those born since the mid forties, we have fought in wars but not directly to preserve our own freedom but the freedom of others. We had not been attacked as in WWII at Pearl Harbor until September 11, 2001, putting our security and freedom in jeopardy.

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 paid 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 non- existent 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.

This is only a scratching of the surface of the misery suffered under socialism and communism. Is freedom just a word or is it a way of life? Freedom to us should be a way of life, a way of life we don’t want to lose!

VERSE FOR TODAY: Remove the chain of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Isaiah 58:6b.

PRAYER THOUGHT: Praise to you, O Lord, for allowing me to be born in a land of freedoms, especially the freedom to serve you according to your Word. Help me always to do my part to preserve the freedoms my forefathers fought so hard to win for me.

Peter and John July 5

Preaching and Healing

As Peter and John were at the gate Beautiful they saw a lame beggar, instead of giving him money – But Peter said to him, “I have no money at all, but I give what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I order you to get up and walk!” Acts 3:6. An everlasting gift!

While on Solomon’s Porch of the Temple Peter preached about belief in Christ’s death and resurrection, faith, forgiveness and being blessed. Some of the officers of the guard and Sadducees were in the crowd, Peter and John ended up in jail. The next day they were brought before the High Priest and council. Peter spoke boldly, being filled with the Holy Spirit, that it was the Jesus Christ of Nazareth who they crucified and God raised from the death and that – “Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.” Acts 4:12.

The council was quite taken back by the boldness of Peter and John but they could hardly prosecute them with the crowd there who had seen the miracle of the lame man and they were all praising God so the council warned Peter and John strongly not to preach anymore and set them free!

As we know Peter and John did not keep quiet, nor should we, after receiving the Spirit we must be like a boiling, whistling kettle, bubbling with the Good News and unable to contain it!

VERSE FOR TODAY: So they called them back in and told them that on no condition were they to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:18.

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

Ananias and Sapphira July 6

God Knows

The believers back then, being few in number and subject to persecution, so they stuck very close together, share and sharing alike – The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. Acts 4:32

Now Ananias and Sapphira were believers, they sold some of their belongings and decided not to give all the money to the Apostles but to keep some for themselves. Peter knew that there was more money and confronted Ananias with the fact that he had lied not only to him but to God, Ananias fell dead!

Later Sapphira came in, not knowing what happened to Ananias – Peter asked her, “Tell me, was this the full amount you and your husband received for your property?”

“Yes,” she answered, “the full amount.” Acts 5:8. She fell dead!

We must realize that we cannot lie to God! We perhaps will not die on the spot but God knows all 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 also can be a comfort to know the Lord loves us and sees all our needs and will help us, all we need do is ask!

VERSE FOR TODAY: So Peter said to her, “Why did you and your husband decide to put the Lord’s will to the test?...” Acts 5:9a.

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