

Pericope Study for Sunday, May 17, 2015 – Easter 7B

Presented Tue 5/12/15 by Richard Burgess

Collect / Prayer of the Day (ELW)

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Possible Sermon Titles for Easter 7B

As usual, use at your own risk.

	Acts	1Jn	Jn
Apostolic Succession by Lottery	X		
How to Make God a Liar		X	
Jesus = Eternal Life		X	
Jesus Wants Us One			X
Numbered among the Disciples and Allotted a Share in Their Ministry	X		
Protected by the Father			X
So We May Be One			X
Was Paul the Real Successor to Judas?	X		
Who Do You Belong To?			X
Whose Testimony Do You Believe?		X	
Witnesses to the Resurrection	X		

Old Testament: Acts 1:15–17, 21–26 (NRSV)

¹⁵In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, ¹⁶Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus — ¹⁷for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."

~~¹⁸(Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out.¹⁹This became known to all the residents of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their language Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)~~

~~²⁰For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it';~~

~~and~~

~~'Let another take his position of overseer~~

²¹So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, ²²beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection." ²³So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen ²⁵to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." ²⁶And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

1.18-20 Why are verses 18-20 omitted? What would be gained by including them? Or to put it another way, why was it important that these verses be included in the canon?

1.21-22 Why was it important that to be "a witness with us to his resurrection" the disciple must have also been with Jesus, et al, throughout his ministry, passion, and ascension? Does this have implications for us as witnesses to Christ today?

1.24-25 Note that the disciples prayed before casting lots. Is this why sometimes we pray before voting at synod assembly?

1.26 *cast lots* What kind of faith is required for this method of discernment? How might it be an abdication of responsibility for the resulting decision? How might it be used today? How is casting lots like or unlike gambling? Like or unlike "God of the gaps" theology in which science does as much as it can and leaves God to fill in the "gaps" that are left?

1.26 *apostles* Cf Lk 6.13b "he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles". Apostles are a subset of the disciples.

What about Paul as an apostle? And why was it important to replace Judas in the first place? What do you think of the following as a possible answer to both questions:

Acts 1.15-17, 21-26 "Even though Matthias is ultimately chosen by the apostles through the casting of lots, the Spirit elects Paul to carry the apostolic mantle left vacant by Judas. Clearly the criteria established by Peter and seconded by apostolic consent -- namely, that the one to replace Judas ought to have been witness to the entire ministry of Jesus from the beginning -- was not seconded by the Holy Spirit. Luke only ever mentions Matthias here in the Book of Acts. The Spirit chooses Paul as the twelfth apostle.

"Maybe Jesus did know what he was doing when he selected Judas as one of the twelve. Through the apostolic hole left by Judas, the homogeneous community was empowered to receive a Jew of the diaspora to show Israel the true, universal, meaning of election. As Slavoj Žižek notes, "[O]nly through Judas' 'betrayal' and Christ's death could the universal Church establish itself -- that is to say, the path of universality goes through the murder of particularity. Or, to put it in a slightly different way: in order for Paul to ground Christianity from the outside, as the one who was not a member of Christ's inner circle, this circle had to be broken from within by means of an act of terrifying betrayal. (Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity*, 17-18)" (Myers, "Working Preacher" 2012, Crisis in Theology ¶5-6)

Epistle: 1 John 5:9–13 (NRSV)

⁹If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. ¹⁰Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. ¹¹And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

¹³I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

1.9 What does *(God) has testified to his Son* mean?

1.10 What does it mean to *make (God) a liar*? Is this possible? Honor / shame-based culture talk?

1.12 *whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life* What does it mean to *not have the Son of God*? What does it mean to *not have life*? What might this verse mean to someone having a crisis of faith, ie, who is not sure they “have the Son of God”? How do you handle this verse in our pluralistic, interfaith world?

1.13 Presumably this letter’s audience believed and could be assured of their eternal life. What is the value of this to today’s hearers of this lesson, ie, our congregations?

Gospel: John 17:6-19 (NRSV)

⁶I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; ⁸for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. ⁹I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. ¹⁰All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. ¹¹And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. ¹⁴I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁷Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

Notes, Observations, and Thought Questions:

17.6 Unpack these phrases and/or clauses:

- *made your name known*
- *those whom you gave me from the world*
- *They were yours, and you gave them to me*
- *they have kept your word*

17.11 Unpack these phrases and/or clauses:

- *I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world*
- *I am coming to you*
- *protect them in your name*
- *so that they may be one, as we are one*

17.14 What about having the Father's "word" and about not belonging to the world make the world hate Jesus' disciples? How does this play out in the lives of our parishioners as they try to live faithfully in the world without belonging to it?

17.18-19 What does it mean to be sent into the world as Jesus has been sent into the world? Having been sent into the world, what is the value of having been "sanctified in truth"?

This passage, as is the larger context from which it is taken, is complex, abstract, and not quite as catchy as Jesus' parables or the Sermon on the Mount. What can be done to make it interesting? Is there an underlying story to be fleshed out? Can the somewhat abstract images be made concrete? How is the content relevant to the daily lives of our parishioners? To us preachy clergy types?