

## **Who Is In Need?**

Questions from Acts: Part 1 “Who Is In Need?”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – April 7 2024

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

**Readings:** Acts 4:32-35; 1 John 1:1-2:2; John 20:19-31

**Reflection:** Psalm 133

**Greeting:** God is indeed my salvation; I will trust and won't be afraid. The Lord is my strength and my shield; He has become my salvation. Praise the Lord!

**Prayer:** Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of life that you have delivered to us, shown in the death of your Son. Help us to celebrate our Lord's resurrection as a sign of everlasting life. As we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ the Son, help us to share the gift of love we find in you our Heavenly Father, and guide us in the truth of your Holy Spirit. May we be one with each other as we are one in Christ Jesus. May we love you with our whole being, and may we share that love with one another. And may we be reminded of your redeeming grace and steadfast faithfulness all the days of our lives. Amen.

**Reflection:** Psalm 133

*How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore. (Psalm 133 NRSV\*)*

We read the words of Psalm 133, and we hear of God's blessings. That we share together in God's love when we join together as one. That we will always find good things as a community in Christ. How will you celebrate God's love this week? How can you share the joy that you find in the resurrection of our Lord? Who will you lift up in your prayers this week? How can you support that person with your time and your talents? How will you reach out to those in need in the name of Christ this week? What are you discovering as you live out your life in Christ?

**Prayer:** O God, our bread, our milk, and our honey: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us to your table. Feed us with your plenty, and enlarge our table for all the hungry. We thank you for all you have already done and the great love that has been shown to us. We lift up our joys and our concerns, bringing all things before you. We share with you the worries that we have spoken aloud. We share the celebrations that we have voiced together. Help us to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter and our tears. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. And may you guide us in love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Alleluia.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

**Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the New Revised Standard Version Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 4, verse 32 through 35.

*Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (Acts 4:32-35 NRSV\*)*

Our next reading is from 1 John chapter 1, verse 1 through chapter 2, verse 2.

*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— what we have seen and heard we also declare to you so that you also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 1:1-2:2 NRSV\*)*

Our final reading is from John chapter 20, verses 19 through 31.

*When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe." A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although*

*the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:19-31 NRSV\*)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

Today marks a new series for the Easter season. In it, we will be looking at questions that will come from our readings from the Acts of the Apostles. The questions may be directly from the text and other times may arise from our reflection on the text. But each week we will be addressing a different question and exploring the answer that we find with the early church. Our first question in this series is "who is in need?" This stems from a description that we are given of the early church. When we look at the way that the early church operated, we see a group of people sharing everything together. That they joined together with all that they had and shared it together so that anyone in need would be taken care of. They brought anything they had together for the greater good, letting go of selfish and greedy desires. This presents us with our first question of this series. "Who is in need?" To answer this, we also need to think about how we can be like the early church today. It is sometimes hard for us to imagine what it would be like coming together and giving away everything to live together like that. But I think the question that it raises for us today is one that about how we can come together to help those in need. But to do that, we also have to consider who is in need of help.

Our other readings today help to give us an idea of how we can begin to frame an answer to our question. We start with our reading from the first letter of John. We are given a picture of Christ in which Christ is there to cover the sins of everyone. Which means that if Christ's gift is for everyone, then we must consider everyone when we begin to think about who is in need. It also helps us to think about how we act together to respond in Christ. That we find fellowship together in Christ's care. That we find the help we need to do the right thing and to walk in the light. That we join together in that fellowship so that we are strengthened by each other and may do more when we join together. In that, we are much like the church that we see in Acts. They come together so that they may do more together than they ever could apart. We do the same thing today when we join together as the church in Christ, knowing that we are stronger together than we ever could be on our own. We hear of a different kind of strength in our gospel account from John. We hear a familiar story of Jesus appearing to the disciples. We hear that most of the disciples are together when Jesus appears to them. He shows them his hands and his side. But Thomas was not with them when that happened. Thomas wants to experience the same thing the others experienced. That he wants to have the same assurance they had when Jesus appeared to them. We often label Thomas as doubting

because of his stance, but I can understand. I can relate to him because he wants to have the experience everyone else had. He isn't asking for more, he just wants the same thing. Interestingly, when Jesus appears to Thomas, he offers him the chance to have that same experience, to see the wounds and feel his side. But Thomas already believes. He thought he would need those extra things and it turns out he didn't. But Jesus says something that relates to all of the disciples at this point. They all seem to have come to believe because they have seen. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." That there is something more when you can believe without having to experience the same thing.

And this got me to thinking about how we share Christ with others. How we can share our experience of Jesus to help bear witness to the difference he has made in our lives. And it brings us back to our reading from Acts. That everyone has gathered together and is sharing in everything together. But when they bring new people in, how are they sharing Christ with them? Because they won't be sharing something that can be seen, not the way that Christ appeared to the disciples. While they may not be sharing something that can be seen, they are sharing something that can be felt. Because the love of Christ can be felt when they help those with them with whatever they need. And I extend that to any kind of need that people may have. We can get too hung up with financial and physical needs, forgetting all the other needs people may have. Especially because that isn't always the need people are searching for. How do people come to believe if they cannot see? They would experience the love of Christ, and they would experience it with the way that the church shared. Not just in what they shared together in physical things, though that is important, but also in what they do. Because there are many things that will bring us together in Christ. Because we come together to have a shared experience. They come together to share in love. We can experience that through shared activities. We come together in worship. We sing together and we pray together. We support each other with our presence. Because sometimes just being in a room with people that will support you is a strong thing to have. Knowing there are people that will pray for you without you having to say it is a powerful thing. We share together in things that unite us in Christ, such as celebrating communion. When we come together to share in one bread and to drink from one cup, representing that we share in one body redeemed by one blood. It reminds us that we share in one love together. Sometimes we just need to know that others are there because it is a reminder that Christ is there. Sometimes it is the emotional support that we need, knowing someone is there to be strong when you are weak. And sometimes it is in knowing that you can be strong for someone else in their time of weakness. Because we have many different needs. Because it isn't just about needing someone to lean on, but part of that emotional need is knowing you can be there for someone else. Because we all want to find a way that we can help. We all want to find ways to be useful as part of a community. And we all seek out the bond of friendship. Friendship is something that we find in Christ, and that friendship in Christ helps us to be better friends with each other. When we extend friendship in Christ, we share a bond with the early church. They came together so that all could feel

welcome, and all could belong. They shared a friendship that helped to give them all purpose. They shared together that all would be better together.

I was thinking about that question that we started with. "Who is in need?" The answer that I ended up with is all of us. Every single one of us is in need in some way. We may not all need the same thing, and we may need them at the same time. Because life will come with ups and downs. We will have different needs at different stages of life. We may need different things because of who we are with our own strengths and weaknesses. But when we come together and we share in what we have, we are better. When we come together and we share in the material goods that we have, when we help to fill that need when someone else is lacking, we share together in Christ. When we share together with our emotions, we also share together in Christ. When we share a joy with others, it can bring others joy. Because there is something fulfilling about celebrating a joy together that can lessen our own sorrow. There is also something fulfilling in when we share a sorrow together because it helps to lighten the load because we know we do not carry it alone. We know that Christ lifts us up when we share in those emotional needs together. We also grow when we share our thoughts together. When we study Scripture together, we exchange the thoughts that we have, and we grow in our understanding because share in the way that we experience Christ. We share in the lived experience that we have and each of us grows in knowledge and wisdom because of the way we come together in Christ. I think all of those are important for how we live. Because we will all have physical, intellectual, and emotional needs. We all have spiritual needs. And we will have needs that we cannot fulfill on our own. We need community for them. And the community that we find in Christ is a community built on love. A community built on trust. A community built on faith. A community built in truth. And it helps each and every one of us. Because when we ask the question "who is in need?" We quickly find the answer is all of us. But we also find that Christ is there to help us in our need. And Christ is there to help us to be there for each other. So let us never forget the gift of our risen Savior. Let us never forget the love that we have been shown. And let us help one another, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession and Pardon:** God, you are with us even when we turn away from you. Guide us back into your loving arms. Judge us not by the perfection of our actions but show us mercy and love. We have strayed like lost sheep from your ways, failing both in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Bring us back into your fold that you may guide us and lead us in all things. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us and forgive us. May we walk in your love and trust your ways. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you. May the Lord forgive all your sins and lift you up in love through Jesus Christ our Lord, and by the Holy Spirit keep you in life eternal. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

### **Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Our Current Series – Questions from Acts**

Our Easter series explores questions that we will take from our readings from the Acts of the Apostles. Each week we will reflect on the early church and the lessons we learn from the questions that they press us to answer.

April 7th – Who Is In Need?

April 21st – By What Name?

May 5th – Can Anyone Withhold?

May 19th – What Does This Mean?

April 14th – Whose Power Is This?

April 28th – What Is to Prevent Me?

May 12th – Who Will Witness?

### **Prayer List**

Rev Angie Lee	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Eric Veach
Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey	Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Ronnie Winstead	Lauren Stewart
Tom Finley	Laura Carlen	Rosie Chancellor	Chuck Hogan
Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Emily Blade	Tim Schnauz
Donna Carlen	Ernie Peters	Jess Shoot	Stanley Kiser
Corine Howard	Don Gilmore	Shirley Jester	Marsha Overton
Linda Carlen	Michael Nichols	Paul Cox	Taylor Waldorf
Harriet Tucker	Marlene Kincaid	Cara Dillier	Peggy Farley
Mandy Schumacher	Ann McMorris	Marci Cutts Smith	Jaydelyn Brassard
Pat Hayden Titus	Devona Dittamore	Nancy McElravy	Marie R.
Connie Brown	Thelma Ball	Stephanie Strewsbury	John Graves
Cathleen Carl	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Larry Thompson
Greg Williams	Jim & Kay Wells	Earl Sparks	

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