

Easter Spirit: Spirit & Glory

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – May 3 2026

5th Sunday of Easter

Readings: Acts 7:55-60; 1 Peter 2:2-10; John 14:1-14 NRSVUE

Reflection: Psalm 118:20-25

Call to Worship: Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name; worship the Lord in holy splendor. The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare, and in his temple all say, "Glory!" May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace! (Psalm 29)

Prayer: Everlasting God, through Jesus Christ you overcame death and opened to us the door of eternal life. You have felt our pain and our sorrow and seen fit to give us hope. Renew and refresh us in your Holy Spirit as we seek to see the glory that you have shown us in Christ. Let us celebrate the joy that we find in your steadfast love and faithfulness. Let the light of our Lord's resurrection lift our hearts on this day. Guide us and lead us in worship together so that we may praise your name. Lift up our hearts that we may sing of your miraculous salvation. May your love bless us this day so that we may love one another more deeply. Help us to celebrate the empty tomb as a sign of your great love for us. May we be freed from slavery to sin and death and arise into a life of righteousness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 118

²⁰ This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. ²¹ I thank you that you have answered me and have become my salvation. ²² The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. ²³ This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. ²⁴ This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. ²⁵ Save us, we beseech you, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech you, give us success! (Psalm 118:20-25 NRSVUE)*

We read the words of Psalm 118 and hear of the support that we have with the Lord. That God is our strength and our salvation. That Christ is the corner stone of our lives and that we are lifted up by his grace and mercy. We have received strength and goodness in the glory of God. How can you build others up in the love of Christ? How can you share the blessings of the Lord with those around you? Who can you be lifting up in your joyful prayers in the week ahead? What can you do to help out a neighbor in need? How can we prepare our hearts and our lives to be ready for all things with Christ?

Prayer: O God, our grove, our lover, our well: In the resurrection of your Son you have brought us into your garden. Marry us for now and for ever, and give us to eat from the tree of life. 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 lifted up together. Help us to also share the silent pleadings from within. May we experience your grace in our laughter

and our tears as you guide us through the unknown. May you strengthen us in sorrow and in rejoicing, knowing you are with us. Help us to remember the promise we share as we seek your wonder and glory on this day. 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 Updated Edition Bible. Our first reading is from Acts chapter 7, verses 55 through 60.

⁵⁵ But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ "Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸ Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died. (Acts 7:55-60 NRSVue)*

Our second reading is from 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 2 through 10.

² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation— ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." ⁷ This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," ⁸ and "A stone that makes them stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (1 Peter 2:2-10 NRSVue)*

Our final reading is from John chapter 14 verses 1 through 14.

¹ "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going." ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the

life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸ Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it. (John 14:1-14 NRSVue)*

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

For the month of May we have a new series, “Easter Spirit”. We're going to be focused on the way that the Spirit moves us and the way that we keep the Spirit of Easter in our hearts as we go through our lives. That we keep the resurrection with us so that it may strengthen us in all that we do. Today we look at strength, and it's the strength that we find in the glory of God. We see the way that God strengthens us to be able to do the things that we need to do and gives us the hope that we need to strive to do better and to be better. That we get the backing that we need to be the people God calls us to be together. That God's presence can inspire us to greater heights than we could reach without him. That we are called together to celebrate that God is with us as his people. That we are moved by the Spirit to be one with each other and to be together in the Lord.

One of the ways that we see this is through our reading in Acts. It is the well-known account of the stoning of Stephen. Stephen is filled with the glory of God. He's filled with the Holy Spirit showing him the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. But the people around him don't want to hear it, because he is giving them something new. He is giving them something that they don't want to hear because they want things to remain the same. They cover their ears, and they shout, and they drag him out of the city. Now here's where his strength really shines. Because it's not that Stephen was so strong that he was just able to keep preaching. It was that Stephen is faced with a very difficult situation, and in that Stephen is strong. Because even as these people drag him out of the city, even as they drag him out to stone him for sharing the vision he has of Christ standing at the right hand of God, with the glory of God revealed to him, he is able to do something incredibly strong. He is able to forgive and ask for mercy for the people who are hurting him. These people that are so eager to take his life for what he is telling them. He asks God to show them mercy. Now, I see that as something amazing, because that kind of strength comes from knowing Christ in your heart. Because he is able to do something that I think takes an incredible amount of courage. It would be easy for him to hate in that moment, and yet he is so filled with the love of Christ that he asks for mercy for the people that kill him.

For me this is the kind of faith that comes from knowing that Christ is our cornerstone, just as we hear in 1 Peter. That we long to be nurtured in the glory of God so that we may be raised up in Christ. We let him build us up, as if we were a house and he were the chief cornerstone supporting us in all that we are. That we are lifted up and that we are built up, and that we are called to be of one people. We remember that we are of one people, that we are the body of Christ. Just as we are built up like a house in Christ, we share of one body and we are redeemed by one blood. Because of that we share in one resurrection. We share in that one hope. That we overcome death through Christ to be brought into everlasting life. That we are called to be God's people. By the glory of God we are called to be united as one.

This is also what we hear in our gospel reading. Jesus talks about how if we know him, we know the Father. That Christ prepares a place for all of us, a place that we can eternally call home. That when they ask Jesus to show them the Father, he is rightly confused. He tells them "you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." He wonders if they realize that if they have seen Jesus that they have seen the Father. On top of that, he tells them that the Father will be glorified in the Son. They will witness the glory of God revealed in the Son. How? Whatever we ask in Jesus' name he will do for the glory of the Father. Now, that is not to say that we should just ask for anything. Because we have to ask by faith in Christ. And if our faith is true, what we ask will reflect the glory of God. I think of Stephen again here when I think about what Jesus is telling the disciples. If God is to be glorified, what we ask for must be for the glory of God. That we must trust the Spirit to guide us so that we know what is right and what is good. We see Stephen doing just this when he asks for mercy on the people attacking him. We are called to reflect what we see in Christ. We ask for love. We ask for hope. We ask for justice. Because when we can ask for those things in Christ, we know that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

As I was thinking about all of these things, I was thinking about how they all come together. Because they give us this picture of a God who wants us to be able to ask him for what we need. A God who wants to share a future with us. A God who makes a place for us, who makes room for us, who prepares a space just for us. A God who tells us that we just have to ask and we will receive. I think sometimes we hesitate to do that. We hesitate to do it because we get scared. Why would we be scared of doing the right thing? Because sometimes it's hard, like we saw with Stephen. And it doesn't only apply when we stand up against the people who murder us. It is there for every situation that calls us to be brave. To face those who have power and still hold them accountable. It means telling people a difficult truth with kindness and love. It means supporting the least and the last against those that would hold them down. It means standing up against oppression and being a voice for those who have had their voice stolen. It means standing up for mercy and love, even for those who call for violence.

It means that when people want to wield Scripture like a hammer, that we trust that God will be with us so that we may stand in the way of that blow to protect those who are already hurting. This is the strength that I see that God gives us, and it's the Easter Spirit that dwells in us all. A Spirit yearning for truth and for love, a spirit yearning for us to accept the glory of God

in our lives to let it transform us. A spirit of goodness that we let come into our lives and change us. Because for me that is what I see Easter as. It is that transformation, having Christ transform our lives through his life, his death, and his resurrection. That we accept the place that he is making for us because we accept what it means to be one with Christ and one with each other. That we come to his table to eat together. That we come to his table to drink from one shared cup. We do so to be seated together at the table Christ prepares as one people. And we remember that God will always give us the strength to support each other in what is right. And that that Easter Spirit will help us in all that we are and in all that we do. 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 Next Series – Easter Spirit

Our series is all about how we let the resurrection transform our lives. We will have a focus this year on the Spirit. Each week will look at another aspect of the Spirit and how it transforms how we live. This series will take us through Pentecost and Trinity Sunday. How can we let the resurrection of Jesus continue to transform our lives all the year round? We celebrate the resurrection of Christ as we rejoice in the Spirit.

5/3: Spirit and Glory 5/10: Spirit of Truth 5/17: Spirit Approaches

5/24: Spirit is Here 5/31: Spirit of Goodness

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