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| **The Lessons Appointed for Use on the** | http://www.lectionarypage.net/Art/Newshield.gif |
| Seventh Sunday of Easter |
| Year B RCL |

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

1 John 5:9-13

John 17:6-19

Psalm 1

**The Collect**

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.*Amen.*

**The First Lesson**

**Acts 1:15-17, 21-26**

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (together the crowd numbered about one hundred twenty persons) and said, "Friends, the scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit through David foretold concerning Judas, who became a guide for those who arrested Jesus-- for he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry. So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning 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." So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. Then they prayed and said, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place." And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

**The Response**

**Psalm 1**

***Beatus vir qui non abiit***

1 Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, \*  
nor lingered in the way of sinners,  
nor sat in the seats of the scornful!

2 Their delight is in the law of the Lord, \*  
and they meditate on his law day and night.

3 They are like trees planted by streams of water,  
bearing fruit in due season, with leaves that do not wither; \*  
everything they do shall prosper.

4 It is not so with the wicked; \*  
they are like chaff which the wind blows away.

5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand upright when judgment comes, \*  
nor the sinner in the council of the righteous.

6 For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, \*  
but the way of the wicked is doomed.

**The Epistle**

**1 John 5:9-13**

If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. Those 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. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I 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.

**The Gospel**

**John 17:6-19**

Jesus prayed for his disciples, “I 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. Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; for 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. I 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. All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. And 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. While 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. But 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. I 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. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.”

O God, the King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.*Amen.*

Today is the last Sunday of the Easter Season. It’s been a long time since Easter. Back on April 1st, the cherry trees were just starting to bloom, which were a little late this year. Weather-wise, it was an odd year; the week after Easter we had snow on those same cherry blossoms. The forsythias were just fading. The Bradford pears and the red buds have come and gone since. The dog woods have bloomed and are pushing forth leaves. And now the azaleas, and tree pollen, are out in full force.

The readings after Easter gave us many resurrection stories; this past Thursday was the day of Ascension, and now our fifty days of Easter are coming to an end. We are anticipating Pentecost next Sunday. “Send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us.,” we pray. We are ready to celebrate the Holy Spirit. But today’s readings have a sense of anticipation, almost a hovering. There is a sense of not-knowing what are the next steps, there is a feeling of “what do we do now?” “how do they, which is now we, cope after the ascension of our Lord?” “What does this mean for us?”—both then and now. What does God intend?

For Peter and the apostles, there is first the matter of replacing the disciple Judas—- one of the twelve, which is now only one of the eleven. In order to be in line with the twelve tribes of Israel, there must be twelve apostles. They felt incomplete and imperfect with 11. And although clearly in a position of leadership, Peter does not appoint someone, but they turn to an ancient practice, seen as an act of God, not as chance, of casting lots, which is the equivalent of tossing dice. However, once they are restored to their biblical number of twelve, we never hear about either Matthias or Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus. What matters is the completion.

The Gospel today comes from the Farewell Discourse of John and is a prayer that stresses the reality of the tremendous difference between how one leads a life defined by the cares of the world and how one leads a life defined by the love of God. This may seem entirely new, but in some sense this is the same thought process that we see in Psalm 1. There is a sense that those that follow goodness and righteousness do X, and those that follow evil and wickedness does Y. Hopefully it is understood that you should attempt to be on the good and righteous side.

But what really IS different, is that in the Gospel Jesus recognizes that most people are going to live IN the world even if they do not know or understand the ways of the world. There is not a sense of shunning of the world. There are times I wish, and I suspect you too wish that we did not KNOW the world, but we do. Still the trick is to have God’s concerns take precedence and not have the concerns of the world in our lives over take our focus off God.

The other aspect that is different is that Jesus knows that we need protection. I mean Jesus **knows**. Jesus prays on our behalf that God care for us. The best shepherd in the world prays for us. He knows so well that we need protection. His own life showed us God’s concern for the world and people, despite the fact that the incarnate expressing of God’s concern ends his life in death and rejection. His concern manifested God’s love in word and action. He preached, healed the sick, cast out demons, raised the dead and restored life. He stretched those in authority and they didn’t like it; he knows we need protection. And because that death was not enough to stop the movement of his love and concern, he protects us still.

We are Jesus people, we are the Jesus movement, as our presiding Bishop Michael Curry likes to say. Jesus’s death and resurrection shows us that God’s love rises above the worst that the world can do. And we are to head straight into that world doing likewise.

And as the disciples are sent and become apostles, we too are sent in the world. We too are to carry on the ministry of Jesus, proclaiming love into the world. Proclaiming that God still loves the world, the people and all creation, despite any hostility or indifference to God.

Therefore, let us know the world, but let us not belong to the world. We declare that we belong to Jesus and that when we make that declaration we want others to join us. Things will still feel incomplete, in transition, holding its breath for what comes next. The earth will turn, and summer will give way to Autumn and leaves will fall. We will still wonder where we go from here, we will still from time to time wonder, “what do we do now?” But in the midst of uncertainty, and change, and curiosity about our next steps, one thing can be complete: our joy. We want others to belong to Jesus to let our joy be complete. And it is only complete if we share that joy.

So come Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place of joy where our Savior Christ has gone before.