

FIRST READING Acts 7:55-60

Our first reading is from the book of Acts, the seventh chapter. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the apostles to serve tables so that the apostles could be free to serve the word. Stephen does more than distribute food, however. For his preaching of God's word, he becomes the first martyr of the faith. Here is the reading:

⁵⁵ Filled with the Holy Spirit, [Stephen] 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.

L: May the church hear what the Spirit is saying.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

L: This morning's psalm is from Psalm 31. It will be read responsively with the congregation reading the bolded text.

PSALM 31:1-5, 15-16

¹ In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be | put to shame;
deliver me | in your righteousness.

² **Incline your | ear to me;**
make haste to de- | liver me.

³ Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag | and my stronghold;
for the sake of your name, lead | me and guide me.

⁴ **Take me out of the net that they have secretly | set for me,**
for you are my tow- | er of strength.

⁵ Into your hands I com- | mend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O Lord, | God of truth.

¹⁵ **My times are | in your hand;**
rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who | persecute me.

¹⁶ Let your face shine up- | on your servant;
save me in your | steadfast love."

SECOND READING: 1 PETER 2:2-10

Christ is the cornerstone of God's saving work and the foundation of our lives. We are God's chosen, holy people who continuously celebrate and declare the mercy of God we experience through Jesus Christ.

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.

L: May the church hear what the Spirit is saying.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL: P: The holy gospel according to **JOHN 14:1-14**

C: **Glory to you, O God.**

[Jesus said to the disciples:] 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.”

P: The gospel of Christ. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

Prayers of the People

L: Please rise as you are able for the Prayers of the People. Trusting in the power of Christ’s resurrection to heal and redeem our broken world, let us pray for the needs of all creation, saying “God of grace” and responding “receive our prayer”.

A brief silence.

God of glory, you have built your church on Christ the cornerstone. Inspire lay leaders, deacons, pastors, and bishops to proclaim forgiveness and your steadfast love to all whom they encounter. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of majesty, you bring forth plants and animals, skies and seas, mountains and valleys. Protect all you have made from the ravages of pollution and climate disaster. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of mercy, you intend governments and social service agencies to be instruments of peace and justice. Guide political leaders and organizations to be agents of compassion, and raise up advocates for those who seek refuge and assistance. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of well-being, you soothe those in distress, console all who grieve, provide for any in need, and comfort those who are sick especially Alfred, Byron, Jose, Terri, Martha, Tim, Terry, Eleanor, Bea, Abdulaziz, Meryem, Aysa, & Hasan, Alma, Sylvia, George, Harold, Joan and Orville. We also bring to you those we carry in our hearts and minds this day, silently or named aloud at this time... (brief pause). Restore them to health of body, mind, and spirit. Instill caregivers with a sense of purpose to be your healing hands in this world. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of community, you call us together as your people for mutual support and to witness to your love in the world. Make your presence known among those unable to attend worship today. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of eternal life, you have prepared dwelling places for your people, so that we are never separated from you. We give you thanks for the faithful departed who witnessed to your mighty acts in word and deed. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of community, you call us together as your people for mutual support and to witness to your love in the world. We pray especially for all those who grieve missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit people. It is deeply painful. Teach us to advocate, reconcile, end violence, and seek justice until it never happens again. God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

God of resurrection power, use us and these prayers to proclaim the good news of new life to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Savior.

Amen.

Post-Communion Prayer

L: Let us pray.

C: Life-giving God, in the mystery of Christ's resurrection you send light to conquer darkness, water to give new life, and the bread of life to nourish your people. Send us forth as witnesses to your Son's resurrection, that we may show your glory to all the world, through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.