

Bible Study
Fifth Sunday of Easter, Year C
April 24, 2016

[RCL] Acts 11:1-18; Revelation 21:1-6; John 13:31-35; Psalm 148

Acts 11:1-18

In this passage we here an account of the apostle crossing what were social and religious boundaries of the day. There were many social conventions regarding what sort of people could interact with others sorts of people. Jesus came to break down these barriers, and his apostles followed in these teachings. Peter challenges us in our scripture this week. Who are we to decide what is clean or unclean; good or bad; right or wrong. God makes all things clean. Through God we can know truth and have a just life. By stepping aside from what hinders, we can build a relationship with God that will lead us into life.

- What has God made clean for you?
- What in your life hinders the way God can act through you?
- How can you learn to let go of these things that hinder you?
- How can you let go of your conceptions of what is “clean”?

Psalm 148

Praise! God made all things that they might praise God’s goodness. All things belong to God and God is a mighty caretaker. God raises up strength in us that we have the courage to take on any challenge that we are faced with. Knowing that we are God’s beloved we can rest easy and find comfort through all times. And people are not the only beings who honor God through praise. In this psalm we hear of the multitude of creation, from sun to moon to tree to wind. If even the fire and fog offer praise unto God, then we are in great company.

- What does praising God look like in your daily life?
- How do you join the chorus of praise?
- How has God raised up strength in you?

Revelation 21:1-6

In Revelation we are reminded that God makes all things new. In each completion we can find newness of life. It is through God that transformation happens. When we experience harm or hurt, if we take these things to God they can yield life. In this passage we hear that God is the Alpha and the Omega. God is with us in our beginning and in our ending. Each time we start down a new and unfamiliar path God is alongside us. Each time we come to an ending God is also there.

- What needs to be made new for you? How might you bring this to God?
- When have you experienced an ending in which you found a wonderful new beginning?
- What is a story of resurrection in your life?

John 13:31-35

This passage defines Christian life for us in a largely straightforward way. “Love one another.” And even though this commandment is simple at first, we know through human experience that this can be challenging. Jesus calls us to love without exception. When we see so much difference and diversity in the world this sort of love can be difficult to grasp in its complexity. It

takes a great deal of effort to truly love those who cause harm, spread hate, or simply follow different belief systems from our own. Jesus teaches us that others will know that we are disciples of Christ by the way we speak, act, and move through the world. If we spread a narrative of love and if our actions align, God will be glorified.

- Where have you experienced the complexity of truly loving all people?
- When have you been loved by another regardless of your differences?
- How do you engage in a posture of loving kindness in your life?

Written by Samantha Haycock

Samantha Haycock is the Director of Children and Youth Ministry at Christ Episcopal Church in Alameda. Her passion in ministry is spreading Jesus' call for social justice and in helping people to make connections between their daily and spiritual lives so that they can bring their whole and authentic selves to the world. Samantha is a banana slug, holding a BA in Psychology from UC Santa Cruz and has a Certificate in Youth and Family Ministry from Bexley Seabury and Forma Faith Formation Academy. She is a participant in the Collaborative for Church Vitality, serves on the Forma Advocacy Working Group, and assists The Episcopal Church DFMS with the youth, young adult, and Sermons that Work online presences. When she is not working Samantha enjoys concocting strange things in her kitchen and hiking all over the place.

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