

## *Contents*

### **Easter 2**

*But God raised him up,  
having freed him from  
death, because it was  
impossible for him to be  
held in its power.*

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#### **• Lectionary Readings (Year A)**

##### ***Revised Common Lectionary***

First Reading	<b>Acts 2:14a, 22-32</b>
Second Reading	1 Peter 1:3-9
Gospel	John 20:19-31
Psalm	16

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32**

But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:

["Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel: 5

"In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, 10  
and your young men shall see visions,  
and your old men shall dream dreams.  
Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
and they shall prophesy.  
And I will show portents in the heaven above 15  
and signs on the earth below,  
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.  
The sun shall be turned to darkness  
and the moon to blood,  
before the coming of the Lord's great and glorious day. 20  
Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."]

"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge 25 of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me, 30  
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;  
therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
moreover, my flesh will live in hope.  
For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
or let your Holy One experience corruption. 35  
You have made known to me the ways of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had 40 sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. Foreseeing

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**Lectionary Selection**  
**Acts 2:14a, 22-32 • May 1, 2011**

this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,  
nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

45

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

## *Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs*

1. What has just happened to Peter and the eleven? Recall the early part of chapter 2 of Acts:

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.*

*Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine." (Acts 2:1-8, 11b-13)*

*But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them*

*Who are the eleven? Who else has been in the house where they were sitting?*

*What might the eleven be feeling and wondering as they come out of that room into the street with Peter?*

*What might Peter be feeling or wondering as he stands here with the eleven? What difference might it make to stand with the eleven?*

*Whom in the crowd does Peter address? What do we know about them? What might they be feeling or wondering at this point? Are they amazed and perplexed? Are they those who say that Peter and the eleven are drunk and filled with new wine?*

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## Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 • May 1, 2011

As Peter addresses *them*, he quotes from the prophet Joel (2:28-32) and the Psalms (16:8-11).

What might these words mean to those Peter is addressing? How might these words connect with what they may be thinking or feeling? How might they be baffling or puzzling?

What connection might Peter make in using these particular scriptures? How might Peter be hearing these words for himself?

What unexpected twist does Peter give to the texts? How might those in *the crowd* be startled or stunned by this new use of a familiar scripture?

2. In the crowds you're familiar with and are part of, how do you see this happening around you today? In your school or civic club, church group or political action committee, where do you see crowds sneering that someone is filled with new wine? What are they saying?

How does saying this benefit them?

What might it cost them?

Where around you do you see others who are amazed and astonished, asking "how can this be"?

More often than not, which group are you in?

## At the Workbench: Easter 2

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Who are the Peters around you, raising their voices and addressing the crowd?

How do you know them when you see them? Who are the “eleven” who stand with them? What distinguishes them from *the eleven*?

What are they saying?

3. What do you know of an inner crowd who claims that you or others are *filled with new wine*, unworthy of being heard, even before speaking? What do you know of voices, attracted by the noise, who assemble to sneer at you or others?

What do they look like?

What do they say?

What might you gain from heeding such sneering?

What might you lose out on?

What do you know of another crowd inside of you who is amazed, perplexed, and wonders what this means?

What might you gain from heeding such amazement?

What might you lose out on?

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## Exploring the Pattern: Themes and Motifs

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 • May 1, 2011

Which crowd do you usually stand in?

What do you know of an inner Peter who raises his voice and says listen to what I say?

What does this inner Peter have to say to your inner crowd?

Which crowd does he address?

What does he risk in speaking?

## *Reading Between the Lines*

Peter stands with the eleven and says *Listen to what I say*. . . . Then he quotes the prophets Joel and then David. What is it that he says in his own voice? Why does he surround his own words with those of ancient authority?

Have you found yourself in a situation where you felt impelled to speak, to voice a truth or perspective not shared by those around you? Reflect, remember. Did you speak? Why? Why not? What is the cost of not speaking when your voice matters? What is the cost of speaking at such a time? What is gained by not speaking? By speaking? What do you know of such a voice inside you, struggling against a noisy crowd?

What does your inner crowd say? What is your inner Peter struggling to say? Who might stand with you in that struggle?

*Beth Harrison*

*bharrison@bibleworkbench.org*

It seems that whenever times are hard or dark, in the midst of war with others as well as warfare among ourselves, people wonder if these might not be “the last days.” The dissonance in the text, of course, is that in the midst of awful and horrendous events like “blood, fire and smoky mists,” the prophet Joel speaks of the Spirit doing new and unexpected things. In these 2011 last days, how do you see the Spirit being poured out on “all flesh”—rather than on the rich, white, Harvard-bred, European, male, or straight flesh? What are your sons and daughters—too young to drive, drink, vote, or die in battle—telling you? What are they seeing that you do not see? What are the visions of “young men,” as opposed to those of the patriarchs, elders, or wise old ones? What are old men in your house, church, office, or on your street corner dreaming? And who are the Spirit-filled slaves—in sweat shops or sex markets, among the welfare mothers, busboys, or addicts? If people like you paid attention, took them seriously, and listened, what might you learn about how to finding meaning and purpose—to more than survive your “last days”?

*Ben Dol*

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## *Parallel Readings*

### **From *Kitchen Table Wisdom***

#### *Traps*

Those who don't love themselves as they are rarely love life as it is either. Most people have come to prefer certain of life's experiences and deny and reject others, unaware of the value of the hidden things that may come wrapped in plain or even ugly paper. In avoiding all pain and seeking comfort at all cost, we may be left without intimacy or compassion; in rejecting change and risk we often cheat ourselves of the quest; in denying our suffering we may never know our strength or our greatness. Or even that the love we have been given can be trusted.

It is natural, even instinctive to prefer comfort to pain, the familiar to the unknown. But sometimes our instincts are not wise. Life usually offers us far more than our biases and preferences will allow us to have. Beyond comfort lie grace, mystery, and adventure. We may need to let go of our beliefs and ideas about life in order to have life.

The loss of an emotional or spiritual integrity may be at the source of our suffering. In a very paradoxical way, pain may point the way toward a greater wholeness and become a potent force in the healing of this suffering.

A woman with heart disease and chronic angina once told me of the downside of the surgery which had relieved her symptoms. Before this surgery, she had suffered frequent chest pain from her disease. Over the years she had modified her diet, learned to meditate, and had been successful in controlling most of her pain. Yet some of her pain had been resistant to her efforts. Paying very careful attention to this, she had been shocked to notice that she experienced pain when she was about to do or say something that lacked integrity, that really wasn't true to her values. These were usually small things like not telling her husband something that he did not seem to want to hear, or stretching her values a bit in order to go along with others. Times when she allowed who she really was to become invisible. Even more surprising, sometimes she would know this was happening but sometimes the chest pain would come first, and then, examining the circumstances which provoked it, she would realize for the first time that she had been betraying her integrity and know what it was that she really believed. She had learned a great deal about who she was in this way, and though she was physically more comfortable now, she missed her "inner adviser."

Rachel Naomi Remen,  
*Kitchen Table Wisdom: Stories  
That Heal*, (New York: Riverhead Books, The Berkley  
Publishing Group, 1996),  
pp. 75-77.

This is not actually so surprising. It is known that stress can affect us at the weakest link in our physical makeup. It raises the blood sugar in people who have diabetes, precipitates headaches in those with migraine, and stomach pain in people with ulcers. It causes people with asthma to wheeze and people with arthritis to ache. What is new in this story and so many others that I have heard is that stress may be as much a question of a compromise of values as it is a matter of external time pressure and fear of failure.

Unexplained pain may sometimes direct our attention to something unacknowledged, something we are afraid to know or feel. Then it holds us to our integrity, claiming the attention we withhold. The thing which calls our attention may be a repressed experience or some unexpressed and important part of who we are. Whatever we have denied may stop us and dam the creative flow of our lives. Avoiding pain, we may linger in the vicinity of our wounds, sometimes for many years, gathering the courage to experience them.

Without reclaiming that which we have denied, we cannot know our wholeness or have our healing. As St. Luke wrote in Acts of the Apostles 4:11, the stone rejected by the builders may prove in time to be the cornerstone of the building.

What we believe about ourselves can hold us hostage. Over the years I have come to respect the power of people's beliefs. The thing that has amazed me is that a belief is more than just an idea—it seems to shift the way we actually experience ourselves and our lives. According to Talmudic teaching, "We do not see things as they are. We see them as we are." A belief is like a pair of sunglasses. When we wear a belief and look at life through it, it is difficult to convince ourselves that what we see is not what is real. With our sunglasses on, life looks green to us. Knowing what is real requires that we remember that we are wearing glasses, and take them off. One of the great moments in life is the moment we recognize we have them on in the first place. Freedom is very close to us then. It is a moment of great power. Sometimes because of our beliefs we may never have seen ourselves or life whole before. No matter. We can recognize life anyway. Our life force may not require us to strengthen it. We often just need to free it where it has gotten trapped in beliefs, attitudes, judgment, and shame.

Rachel Naomi Remen

From *The Gift*

*Tired of Speaking Sweetly*

Love wants to reach out and manhandle us,  
Break all our teacup talk of God.

If you had the courage and  
Could give the Beloved His choice, some nights,  
He would just drag you around the room  
By your hair,  
Ripping from your grip all those toys in the world  
That bring you no joy.

Love sometimes gets tired of speaking sweetly  
And wants to rip to shreds  
All your erroneous notions of truth

That make you fight within yourself, dear one,  
And with others,

Causing the world to weep  
On too many fine days.

God wants to manhandle us,  
Lock us inside of a tiny room with Himself  
And practice His dropkick.

The Beloved sometimes wants  
To do us a great favor:

Hold us upside down  
And shake all the nonsense out.

But when we hear  
He is in such a "playful drunken mood"  
Most everyone I know  
Quickly packs their bags and hightails it  
Out of town.

Hafiz

Hafiz, "Tired of Speaking Sweetly," in *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz the Great Sufi Master*, translated by Daniel Ladinsky, (New York: Penguin Compass, 1999), pp. 187-188.

**From *Abounding Grace***

The truth is that our finest moments are most likely to occur when we are feeling deeply uncomfortable, unhappy, or unfulfilled. For it is only in such moments, propelled by our discomfort, that we are likely to step out of our ruts and start searching for different ways or truer answers.

M. Scott Peck

*From Joy of Quotes.com*

When we are enthusiastic we are intoxicated with passion rooted in our true selves and it flows into all we do.

Linda Saccoccio

M. Scott Peck, *Abounding Grace: An Anthology of Wisdom*, (Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2000), p. 3.

## Critical Background

### From *The Human Being*

#### *The Human Being: Catalyst of Human Transformation*

Considering the weight the early church attached to the resurrection, it is curious that, subsequent to the empty-tomb stories, no two resurrection accounts in the four Gospels are alike. All of these narratives seem to be late additions to the tradition. They answer a host of questions raised by the gospel of the resurrection. At the core of all of these accounts is the simple testimony: we experienced Jesus as alive.

A later generation that had not had these visions of a living Jesus needed more; for them the resurrection narratives answered that need. But what had those early disciples experienced? What does it mean to say that they experienced Jesus alive? The resurrection appearances did not, after all, take place in the temple, before thousands, but in the privacy of homes or cemeteries. They did not occur before the religious authorities, but only to the disciples hiding from those authorities. The resurrection was not a world-wide historic event that could have been filmed, but a privileged revelation reserved for the few.

Nevertheless, something “objective” did happen to God, to Jesus, and to the disciples. What happened was every bit as real as any other event, only it was not historically observable. It was an event in the history of the psyche. The ascension was the entry of Jesus into the archetypal realm. Skeptics might interpret what the disciples experienced as a mass hallucination, but the experience itself cannot be denied.

This is what may have happened: the very image of God was altered by the sheer force of Jesus’ being. God would never be the same. Jesus had indelibly imprinted the divine; God had everlastingly entered the human. In Jesus, God took on humanity, furthering the evolution revealed in Ezekiel’s vision of Yahweh on the throne in “the likeness, as it were, of a human form” (Ezek. 1:26). Jesus, it seemed to his followers, had infiltrated Godhead.

The ascension marks, on the divine side, the entry of Jesus into the son-of-the-man archetype; from now on, Jesus’ followers would experience God through the filter of Jesus. Incarnation means not only that Jesus is like God, but that God is now like Jesus. It is a prejudice of modern thought that events happen only in the outer world. What Christians regard as the most significant event in human history happened, according to the Gospels, in the psychic realm, and it altered external

Walter Wink, *The Human Being: Jesus and the Enigma of the Son of the Man*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), pp. 152-154. Reprinted with permission.

history irrevocably. Ascension was an *objective* event, if you will, but it took place in the imaginal realm, at the substratum of human existence, where the most fundamental changes in consciousness take place.

Something also happened to the disciples. They experienced the most essential aspect of Jesus' presence as having remained with them after his death. They had seen him heal, preach, and cast out demons, but had localized these powers in him. That power had always been in them as well, but while he was live, they tended to project these latent, God-given powers onto him. They had only known that power in him. So it was natural for them to interpret the unleashing of these powers in them after his resurrection as if he had himself taken residence in their hearts. And it was true: the God at the center of their beings was now indistinguishable from the Jesus who had entered the Godhead. But had they experienced Jesus alive in them, or the Human Being? Jesus, in many of the post-Easter son-of-the-man sayings, seems to speak of the Human Being as other than himself. Was Jesus stepping aside, as he seems to do in the Gospels, to let the Human Being become the inner entelechy (the regulating and directing force) of their souls? In Elizabeth Howes' words,

*Something also happened to the disciples. They experienced the most essential aspect of Jesus' presence as having remained with them after his death.*

So the disciples speak of the sense of the presence of Jesus, not God. The new reality of God or the image of God in them was felt as Jesus. Perhaps the steps in the evolution were like this. First, there was the experience of God or God-in-the-Self; the very reality they had experienced in Jesus they now experienced within themselves. But because they had always identified this divine presence as being in Jesus, they called what they experienced in themselves "Jesus" *as if* he were alive. But if he was alive, then he must have been resurrected. At this point the "as if" got dropped and they identified God in the Self as the risen Jesus in a literal sense.

The disciples also saw that the spirit that had worked within Jesus continued to work in and through them. In their preaching they extended his critique of domination. They continued his life by advancing his mission. They persisted in proclaiming the domination-free order of God inaugurated by Jesus.

The ascension was a *fact* on the imaginal plane, not just an assertion of faith. It irreversibly altered the nature of the disciples' consciousness. They would never again be able to think of God apart from Jesus. They sensed themselves accompanied by Jesus (Luke 24:13-35). They found in themselves the New Being that they had hitherto only experienced in Jesus. They knew themselves to be endowed with a spirit-power they had known only occasionally, such as when he sent them out

to perform healings (Mark 6:7-13). In their struggles with the Powers that Be, they knew that whatever their doubts, losses, or sufferings, the final victory was God's, because Jesus had conquered death and the fear of death and led these former captives out of captivity.

Jesus the man, Jesus the sage, the itinerant teacher, the prophet, even the lowly Human Being, while unique and profound, was not able to turn the world upside down. His attempt to do so was a decided failure. It was his ascension, his metamorphosis into the archetype of humanness that turned the world upside down. The Human Being constituted a remaking of the values that had undergirded the Domination System for some three thousand years before Jesus. The critique of domination continued to build on the Exodus and the prophets of Israel, to be sure. But Jesus' ascension to the right hand of the Power of God was a supernova in the archetypal sky. As the image of the truly Human One, Jesus became an exemplar of the utmost possibilities for living.

*Could the son-of-the-man material have been the lore that grew up to induce visions of the Human Being? Could it have been a way to activate altered states of consciousness based on the meditation on the ascended Human Being enthroned upon the heart?* As we shall see, both the Jewish mystical tradition and the Gnostics used their own traditions similarly. It was not enough simply to know about the mystical path. One needed to take it. And the paths were remarkably alike.

The ascension was real. Something happened to God, to Jesus, and to the disciples. I am not suggesting that the ascension is nonhistorical, but that the historical is the wrong category for understanding ascension. The ascension is not an historical fact to be believed, but an imaginal experience to be undergone. It is not a datum of public record, but divine transformative power overcoming the powers of death. The religious task for us today is not to cling to dogma but to seek a personal experience of the living God in whatever mode is meaningful.

Walter Wink

*It was his ascension, his metamorphosis into the archetype of humanness that turned the world upside down.*

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