

Year A Easter 4 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Acts 2:42-47. 1 Peter 2:19-25. John 10:1-10

What now?

During this Easter season we substitute the Old Testament readings for readings from the Book of Acts. This makes perfect sense – not often one can say that! We are now in the post-Ascension world, with the apostles. And note that Acts doesn't call them disciples any more. Disciples comes from the root word discipline; whose primary meaning to learn. The word apostle, means to be sent out, giving a very different feel for the stage of development of the followers of Jesus. Yes, they still had much to learn, but their main purpose in life was to go out and proclaim the good news. They would learn a lot as they went; it would be wrong to think learning finished with Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

In our reading from Acts this morning we get a picture of how they chose to live; to live in a way that they considered to be consistent with the teachings of Christ. Our reading from Acts starts with the word 'they', which isn't very helpful. It refers to the approximately 3,000 who were baptised after Peter had addressed them on the day of Pentecost.

It seems they settled fairly quickly into a radically novel way of living and worshipping after the spectacular events of Pentecost. After Pentecost they must have been asking themselves, either out loud or in their heads, 'Ok, so what do we do now?'

We are told they came together to learn from the apostles. They came together to share fellowship. They came together to share the breaking of the bread in worship. They came together to pray.

We are also told that as they came together they shared whatever resources they had with each other, and anything that was surplus to their basic requirements they sold to enable them to give to anyone who was in need.

Every day they continued to meet, both to worship and to share food, providing hospitality for all who needed it. This sounds really quite mundane –

a daily routine of ordinary acts of kindness, of studying and learning from the teachings of the apostles, of prayer and worship, of breaking bread together. But, of course, it wasn't mundane. This was a radically different way of living, of understanding the nature of God, of seeking the good of others. Doing this day by day was a sign of a deepening faith, of ushering in an example of God's kingdom, that other people saw, and wanted to be part of. This was their daily life – not spectacular, but a steady witness of what is possible, day by day.

And in today's world, could that be a useful lesson and example for us? With the world in seeming chaos, are we called to be present in the 'now' of daily living; of living a life that accords with the teachings of Jesus? Admittedly it is a very challenging prospect. I have more wealth than many people in this country. So many are in need, so how much of my wealth do I consider to be 'surplus' and I am willing to give to those in need, without asking if they are worthy of receiving it? That is a judgement call we each need to make, and know we are accountable to God in the decisions we reach.

At this time of year, I have to complete my annual commitment to the Iona Community, by stating that I want to remain 'With Us'. I have to account for my use of my money. I am expected to give a minimum of 10% of my disposable income to charity, and there is some useful guidance as to what can be deemed to be essential expenditure, to arrive at what my disposable income is. It is a useful and sobering activity to undertake – to account for my use of my money. What have I spent it on in the last year? What privilege I have in having disposable income at all, compared to the vast majority of people who live on barely enough or no where near enough to live on. And at this time of year I review my giving and decide if I want to change the charities I make regular donations to.

I also account for my use of my time, again an interesting exercise, to see where I use my time and what for; including time for personal recharge of my batteries. This is a key component of the Iona Community's Rule of Life – to take care of self by not over-committing; knowing that we can't give of our best if we are 'empty' of energy.

None of us really knows what tomorrow brings – that is why we are led to live a daily life, in the present. In the Lord's Prayer we pray that today we will be

given our daily bread – all that we need for today. We can choose what to do today, how to live, how to share what gifts and riches we have with those who do not have these, what level of comfort we wish to live in.

We can also choose to follow the example of the early forming community in faith, the followers of the Way as they became known. We can come together to learn, to deepen and broaden our faith, to come together to share fellowship, to come together to share the breaking of the bread in worship, to come together to pray. And maybe in coming together as a community to help us reflect and discern what of our individual resources is to be given to those in need. We can be in awe of their commitment to that radically new way of living and their sacrifice of their own wealth in order to help others. The day to day challenge for us is to see how we match up to that today, each day, in the decisions we make.

One of those decisions, which isn't a daily one, but has daily consequences for us, is how we choose to use our democratic vote on 7<sup>th</sup> May. Please discern wisely, pray profoundly, and go out to vote for a candidate you consider would likely support policies that align most with the teachings of Jesus.

After Pentecost the disciples must have asked themselves, 'What now?' They chose a daily rhythm of prayer, worship and sharing with each other. How do we choose to replicate that today, when we ask 'What now'?

May we contemplate that question, as we continue today, just like every Sunday morning, where we choose to come together, where Jesus meets us as we break and eat the consecrated bread. A simple act, with a profound impact. A communion, a spiritual coming together, that we celebrate and partake in. How are we to live our lives, with the example of those first apostles exploring how to live in those first days after the resurrection. Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!