

Third Sunday of Easter  
Cycle B RCL

Acts 3:12-19

When Herod the Great rebuilt the Second Temple, his design included great covered porches (*stoa*) that enclosed the entire complex. Following the Greek practice, scholars would daily teach their students under the shade of these ample, columned structures. Solomon's portico is the eastern porch, and our author portrays Peter's speech as being one of the learned discourses that scholars might deliver in the temple precincts. The speech seeks to integrate the events of salvation within the context of Israel's history. Notable is the expression "author of life" for Jesus in verse 15. As always in Jewish contexts, repentance (3:19) entails the removal of the offense forgiven from the heavenly book God keeps to judge the world. (See also Psalm 51:1.)

Psalm 4

This is an *individual lament* that attempts to rouse God to action on behalf of the psalmist by appealing to God's public reputation ("name"). This appeal is based on the expressed confidence that God will not allow a faithful person, who refrains from public cursing and offers the appointed sacrifices (verses 4-5), to be shamed by idolaters (verse 2). Laments often end with a statement of confidence that God will fulfill the psalmist's prayers, and Psalm 4:7-8 provides that characteristic ending.

1 John 3:1-7

The opening verses are a commentary on certain ideas in the first chapter of the Gospel of John. Only those who receive Christ the Word are children of God (John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1). Just as the world did not recognize the Word (John 1:11), so it will not recognize the children either (1 John 3:2). Unlike the Gospel, however, the author of 1 John understands the relationship of the children to God to be principally one of moral purity. This sets up the argument in 3:6-8 that the children will not sin and that those who do sin are children of the devil. The idea that Christians would be sinless was not universal in early Christianity, but it does find expression in the New Testament not only here but also in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Luke 24:36b-48

There are several different readings of this passage in ancient Greek manuscripts of Luke. Western manuscripts omit verse 40 entirely. These manuscripts join company with arguably the most important Greek manuscript Codex Sinaiticus by leaving out the reference in verse 51 to Jesus being taken into heaven. (The author, after all, will tell the story of the Ascension in Acts 1:6-11.) Consequently, we should not read Jesus' speech here as his last address to his students for our writer. The reference to understanding the scriptures in 24:45 reflects the apocalyptic idea that the Jewish scriptures are filled with hidden prophecies of the end of time but that one must possess an interpretive key to decipher them. This key is the Risen Jesus' gift to his students.