

Notes on the readings for Easter 4

Old Testament: Acts 4: 5-12

St Peter had healed the crippled man, who had followed Peter into the Temple leaping and dancing and bring the crowds to see what was happening. Peter was speaking to the crowd about the resurrection and calling the people to repentance and to follow Jesus. The Temple authorities came up and arrested Peter and his companions and spent the night in prison. The next day they were taken before the Sanhedrin, the same court that had condemned Jesus. Far from being cowed, Peter spoke out boldly, telling the court that the lame man was healed by the risen Jesus, this same Jesus whom they had condemned and had had crucified. Jesus was the cornerstone they had rejected – the true and only source of God's saving power.

Epistle: 1 John 3: 16-24

For John, love is the key and the antidote to all hatred. This love was personified in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and we are urged to follow his example of practical care and concern for others as the expression of love. As John Proctor has said about the Church, that it is "a fellowship of open eyes, open hearts and open hands". We are notoriously bad at judging ourselves and we must rely upon God who knows us through and through. The important two points are how we love Jesus and how we show this in love for others. As we continue in love, so we will grow in faith, prayer and fellowship with God.

Gospel: John 10: 11-18

Jesus was explaining the Christian life through the parable of the sheep and the shepherd. He was reminding them that the shepherd provides care and oversight of his flock protecting the sheep from thieves and the mercenaries, who will flee at the first sign of trouble. The shepherd, Jesus, cares for his flock and will lay down his life for it – he is totally committed, even to death to defend the flock. Yet there is more – it isn't just the Jews that Jesus seeks to bring back to God, but the nations as he tells his hearers that there are sheep outside the fold who must be brought in.