

# The Living Word

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Bible readings for Sunday, April 19, 2020, with explanatory notes

6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

*"Rejoice... trials" – the two sides to Christian faith. Conflicting values and allegiances bring testing, which the joy of new life in Jesus overcomes.*

7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith – of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire – may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed.

*"Genuineness of your faith" – as gold is refined by an extreme heat process, so trials refine and prove how certain we are of the final outcome with God. Peter's readers who maintain faith without sin in trials shine like pure gold, bringing glory to God.*

**REFLECTION** The early church believers Peter was addressing faced out to a world hostile to their beliefs and values. Persecution, and the trials it brought, were real to them. It's happening now! Our increasingly secular and politically-correct culture tries to block the expression of Christian faith and penalises those who uphold Christian values. Employees have been dismissed or disciplined, and businesses taken to court, for being true to their beliefs. Peter acknowledges the reality of trials, but tells readers to hold on to the confidence given to them. As born-again believers, their destiny is certain and their faith guarded, by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. The resurrection of Jesus, he says, makes all the difference. Rejoice – because Jesus, who was dead, is now alive and going through this with us, so we have a confident expectation of the final outcome. Being born again into new life puts us on a joyful path, an inheritance of salvation now, as well as at the end time. We know we have a destiny with Jesus, who has risen, and we don't fear death, because He has conquered death. So we face difficulties with the Holy Spirit's inner joy, allowing them to grow our faith and bring out our best.

**QUESTION** *Have you been saved, or are you being saved – or both? What does "receiving... the salvation of your souls" mean?*

**PRAYER** Jesus, Lord, You lived on earth and shared our life but unlike us, sin never caused You to stumble. Unlike us, You were perfectly filled with the Holy Spirit. And on our behalf, You suffered a horrific Roman execution and then were seen alive and engaging with Your disciples on the third day and afterwards. Thank You for holding out the offer of spiritual regeneration and new life. Thank You for being with us and sharing our lives now. Thank You that our human need to worship is not left looking back to someone who WAS, but is met fully in the new life of relationship and fellowship with someone who IS. Amen.

• **For further study on refining**, see Job 23:10; Psalm 12:6, 66:10; Proverbs 17:3; Isaiah 48:10; perhaps Jeremiah 11:4.

8-9 Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

*"You have not seen Him" – only a few believers had seen Jesus resurrected but before He ascended.*

*"Inexpressible and glorious joy" – the evidence of the new life in Jesus, v.3. The born-again Christian gains a deep inner gratitude and security in God's love.*

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **April 19**

*Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching*

Easter 2: **Jesus' resurrection is the axis our whole faith turns on**

Psalm 16:7-11 – David the songwriter foresaw the resurrection

John 20:19-31 – The resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 – Peter tells the crowd he witnessed the resurrection

1 Peter 1:3-9 – Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of our new hope

## Psalm 16:7-11 – David the songwriter foresaw the resurrection

**The Messiah will not be abandoned but will find the path of life**

*Peter quoted this Psalm (vv. 8-11) in his address on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:25-28 (below).*

7 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I keep my eyes always on the LORD. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

*"My eyes... on the Lord" – like Psalm 23, faith and trust is emphasised. A warrior stationed to the right is placed to protect with the shield in the left hand.*

9-10 Therefore my heart is glad and my

tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because You will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will You let Your faithful one see decay.

*"You will not abandon me" – Paul, like Peter, applied this to Jesus' resurrection, when speaking at Pisidian Antioch, Acts 13:35.*

11 You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in Your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

*"Joy in Your presence" – in the context of David's song, the expectation of eternal glory for the faithful, but prophetic of Jesus and for His worshippers.*

**REFLECTION** The Jewish early church knew that significant events didn't just happen: they understood from Scripture that "the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets," Amos 3:7. Everything that had happened – and the resurrection – was in God's plan, as Peter later explained.

**QUESTION** *How much do we value the Old Testament to give foundation to what we learn from the gospels and post-resurrection teaching?*

## John 20:19-31 – The resurrected Jesus appears to the disciples

**He breathes the Holy Spirit on them in an initial impartation**

19-20 On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After He said this, He showed them His hands and side. The disciples

were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

*"The disciples were together" – the apostles and others, fearing arrest for being followers of Jesus. His appearance in a body through locked doors was miraculous.*

21-23 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you." And with that He breathed on them and said, "Receive

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the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

*"As the Father has sent" – Jesus is sending them to continue His work but this verse gives the full Trinitarian mandate of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

*"Receive the Holy Spirit" – the first of a number of occasions of receiving, preparing them for the outpouring to come, Acts 1:4-5, 2:1-47. People who have had an experience of the Spirit's infilling are more receptive to further impartations.*

24-25 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

*"Thomas" – missed Jesus earlier and thought the others had seen a ghost, Matt. 14:26. John is careful to affirm Jesus as the incarnate Word, resurrected with a real body.*

• **For further study**, John 1:14; 1 Jn 4:2-3; 2 Jn 7.

26-27 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked,

**REFLECTION** The apostles (now eleven) and other disciples saw Jesus alive, in a resurrection body and He had close fellowship with them. These two occasions mention Thomas the twin, not present the first time. A typical 'late adopter', he wants to be sure for himself. On the second appearance a week later, when Thomas was present, Jesus chides him, more in encouragement than rebuke. Thomas doesn't need to 'test the scars' but expresses the one of the strongest statements of Jesus' deity in the Bible, "My Lord and my God", and John honours Thomas in making this moment the high point of his gospel account.

**QUESTION** Do you talk about God a bit impersonally and generally – or do you readily praise "My Lord and my God"?

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32** – Peter tells the crowd he witnessed the resurrection

*It happened as David had foretold in song, long before*

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

*"My Lord and my God" – the climax of John's gospel which he wrote to show Jesus as the Christ, or Messiah, who fulfilled God's promises to Israel by being God in the flesh, v.31.*

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

*"Those who have not seen" – are at no disadvantage and later believers come to personal faith through the testimony of others. 1 Peter 1:8, 2 Cor. 5:7.*

30-31 Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.

*"Written that you may believe... and... have life" – the emphasis of John's gospel*

*"Addressed the crowd" – with a message typical of those repeated throughout the early church: (1) OT promises fulfilled in life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; (2) the apostles eyewitnesses of all Jesus' ministry and His chosen representatives; (3) a call to repent and to believe; and (4) those who respond experience salvation and impartation of the Holy Spirit.*

22 "Fellow Israelites, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know.

*"Miracles, wonders and signs" – proving Him to be Messiah, and as in Exodus 7:3, Deut. 4:34-35.*

23 This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the Cross.

*"God's... plan and foreknowledge" – God exercising permissive will which allows wicked men freewill while upholding His greater purpose.*

24 But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.

*"Death to keep its hold" – verse 36; Romans 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:12-20.*

25-28 David said about [relating to] Him: "I saw the Lord always before Me. Because He is at My right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore My heart is glad and

**REFLECTION** Studying the preaching that was the style of the early church – there are about 30 examples – it is noticeable how the messages concentrate on a few key facts in a way that is quite repetitive. And the fact of the resurrection of Jesus and the eyewitness evidence of the apostles is central to the Good News they were sharing. They met on the day of the resurrection, to celebrate Jesus who is resurrected and very much alive!

**QUESTION** How could we make the resurrection, and the present reality of Jesus, more of an emphasis in our gatherings? Why have other emphases become prominent?

**1 Peter 1:3-9** – Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of our new hope

**We can be reborn into new life because Jesus is alive**

*eternal life, a privilege which no circumstance can ever devalue.*

3-4 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

*"Praise be" – for the privileges God has given believers. Believing the resurrection of Jesus is the key to spiritual rebirth, John 3:3-8. This is our choice to enter into a new life and the promise of*

4-5 This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

*"Inheritance kept in heaven" – the promise for people of the new covenant in Jesus, safeguarded by faith and underwritten by the resources of heaven. Inheritance means both hope now, and eternal fellowship with God to come.*