

**BIBLE STUDY**  
**May 1, 2023**

**THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**Acts 6: 1-7**

**John 14: 1-12**

**1 Peter 2: 4-9**

**1. Acts 6: 1-7**

- The division between the Hellenists and the Hebrews was a matter of language. The Hellenists spoke Greek and the Hebrews spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. The Hellenists were not necessarily from the diaspora. This conflict is a result of growth. The problem leads to a solution that increases the ministries of the early church. In addition to the apostles there are now deacons. The deacons are called to “serve at table.” That may refer to the distribution of food to the needy or to the record keeping associated with the food distribution. However, the deacons assume a ministry of the word along with the apostles.
- The apostles consult with the church members who approve of the plan and select seven worthy men. The requirements are that they have a good reputation and that they are filled with the Spirit.
- The apostles lay their hands on them as a sign of commissioning them for this ministry. The laying on of hands continues to be the outward sign of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The apostles will devote themselves to prayer and the preaching of the word. They see prayer as part of their ministry.
- Among the seven deacons are two very prominent ones, Stephen and Philip. Stephen will be introduced in the next chapter as he gives a defense of his faith before his martyrdom. Philip will baptize the Ethiopian eunuch and bring the Christian faith to Africa.
- The final verse of this selection attests to the continued growth of the early church to even include Jewish priests.

**2. John 14: 1-12**

- In the previous chapter of the Last Supper, Jesus has told them that one of them will betray him, that Peter will deny him three times, and that Jesus will be going away, and they cannot follow now. So, the apostles need reassurance which Jesus gives at the beginning of this chapter.
- In 12: 27-28, Jesus experiences great trouble of spirit at the approach of his Passion and Death. He finds comfort and courage in his relationship with his Father. He encourages his disciples to take comfort in their relationship with God and with him. They should have faith in God and in him. This previews Jesus’ promise that the Father and he will come to dwell in the hearts of believers.
- There are many dwelling places (mansions) in the Father’s house. There is room for all who believe in Jesus. A dwelling place is being prepared for them. More than just a space or a room, Jesus promises a relationship, a

unity, which will last for eternity. They will be where Jesus is. In other words, they will share the same relationship that Jesus has with the Father—as a son or daughter.

- Jesus says, “You know the way...” Thomas objects, “How can we know the way.” Thomas speaks for all of us. How can we know of these things of heaven? How can we know the things of God? These things of which Jesus speaks is beyond us.
- Jesus says, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Primarily, he is the Way. The way to God is not things to be understood or grasped intellectually or assented to. Our relationship with Jesus is the Way. Knowing him as a person, knowing his values, his preferences, and his passion, and incorporating them into our lives is what shows us the way. Most importantly, the example of his sacrificial love on the Cross is the Way for all Christians. The way reveals the truth. The truth of Jesus is that he is God’s human face. He is the fullest and most perfect image of who God is. Making Jesus the Way, and being formed in his Truth, bring us Life--- abundant life.

### **3. 1 Peter 2: 4-9**

- The first letter of Peter is written to people who were newly baptized. It is written for their instruction. In verses 1 and 2, the response to God’s love that is poured out in Baptism is to put aside their former ways of life with its negativity, and to be nourished with the word of God as newborn babies are nourished with milk.
- Through Baptism, they have tasted that the Lord is good. Here Peter is quoting Psalm 34:9.
- Peter uses the imagery of Jesus as the stone. In Isaiah 28:16, God says that he is laying a stone in Zion—a cornerstone, chosen and precious. God is going to build on this stone.
- Then he refers to Psalm 118, where the stone is rejected by the builders, but God chooses it to be the cornerstone. The religious leaders rejected Jesus, but God chose him to be the cornerstone of his new community, the Church.
- For those who believe, this cornerstone is the foundation of their faith. For those who do not believe, it becomes an obstacle. The Death and Resurrection of Jesus requires our response. Do we accept it as God’s way of saving us by bringing victory out of defeat, or do we reject it and so we stumble and fall into disbelief.
- The Christian community now becomes the heir to the promises made to Israel. What was said of Israel in Exodus 19:6, Isaiah 61:6, and Revelation 1:6, 20:6 is now true of the Christian people. We are chosen by God, a priestly people called to offer worship, and a holy people, meaning we are set apart to serve God.