



Third Sunday of Easter – Stephen’s Witnesses

April 18, 2021

8:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Trumpet Tune in E-flat

David N. Johnson

OPENING SENTENCES

Though your love is burning within us
We do not see you on the road, Jesus.

Open our eyes and our ears
Open our hearts and increase our faith.

How can we understand
Unless someone guides us?

Send us out rejoicing,
As we have been saved through your grace

And not through our own works.
It is no longer I who live

But it is Christ who lives in me.
We are all your children through faith.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Holy Giver and Receiver of life, you call us into holy and blessed community. Inspire us to follow the example of Jesus and the early apostles who embraced Jesus as the way and the truth and the life. Let us look to Stephen who shined with the light of your Holy Spirit; make him an example of faith and courage for all your followers, for the sake of the one who brought light and life to this world, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

“The Call” from *Five Mystical Songs*

Ralph Vaughan Williams

NARRATIVE READING

Acts 6:1-7:2a, 44-60

Today’s narrative reading is from the book of Acts:

¹Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. ²And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples

and said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, ⁴while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word." ⁵What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ⁶They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

⁸Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. ⁹Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others of those from Cilicia and Asia, stood up and argued with Stephen. ¹⁰But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he spoke. ¹¹Then they secretly instigated some men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." ¹²They stirred up the people as well as the elders and the scribes; then they suddenly confronted him, seized him, and brought him before the council. ¹³They set up false witnesses who said, "This man never stops saying things against this holy place and the law; ¹⁴for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses handed on to us." ¹⁵And all who sat in the council looked intently at him, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

^{7:1}Then the high priest asked him, "Are these things so?" ²And Stephen replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me.

⁴⁴Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as God directed when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. ⁴⁵Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David, ⁴⁶who found favor with God and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the house of Jacob. ⁴⁷But it was Solomon who built a house for him. ⁴⁸Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made with human hands as the prophet says,

⁴⁹Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?
⁵⁰Did not my hand make all these things?'

⁵¹You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. ⁵³You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it."

⁵⁴When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. ⁵⁵But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶Look, he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

Word of God. Word of life.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

MUSICAL RESPONSE

"Easter" from *Five Mystical Songs*

Ralph Vaughan Williams

APOSTLES' CREED

Let us proclaim the faith that we share:

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH

We gather our prayers using a sung response

Guided by the spirit and gathered into one, let us pray for the church, the world and all God's creation.



Melody: Traditional Korean folksong

Each petition concludes:
[Sung Response]

Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting that you always hear our prayers.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Rejoicing in the presence of God here among us, let us pray as our Savior taught:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

BENEDICTION

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom
to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus.

The God of life,

Father, † Son, and Holy Spirit,

bless you now and forever.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you all.

And also with you.

POSTLUDE

“Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands”

Georg Böhm

The hymn “Christ Jesus Lay in Death’s Strong Bands” (ELW 370) was written by Martin Luther. The melody is likely based on the 11th-century Easter sequence “Victimae Paschali Laudes.” Note that, in the text, the word “lay” is in past tense:

*Christ Jesus lay in death’s strong bands for our offenses given;
But now at God’s right hand he stands and brings us life from heaven.*

Georg Böhm (1661-1733) was the Principal Organist at St. John’s Church in Lüneburg, Northern Germany. He was notable for developing the chorale partita, a hymn-based form of organ composition.

PREACHING Pastor Stephanie Friesen
PRESIDING Pastor Melissa Pohlman
ASSISTING Pastor Peter Nycklemoe
ORGANISTS Deacon Cantor Mark Sedio, Isaac Drewes
SOLOIST David Gindra
VIDEO/SOUND Mark Kieffer

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Prayer of the Day – <http://www.narrativelectionary.org>

**Chancel flowers this weekend are given by the Floral Guild.
If you wish to donate flowers, contact Judy Korogi at 612-788-1288.**