

Lectionary Texts for April 14, 2024 • *Third Sunday of Easter* - Year B
Acts 3:12-19 • Psalm 4 • 1 John 3:1-7 • Luke 24:36b-48



Acts 3:12-19

St. Peter's First Sermon in the City of Jerusalem II, c. 1785, by Benjamin West, American, active in England, 1738-1820

Oil on paper mounted to canvas, 23 1/4" x 17 15/16"

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Continued

The sermon in the lectionary text is actually Peter's second sermon in Acts, the first occurring at Pentecost and described in Acts 2. However, a study of this work by Benjamin West does not seem to have the emotion associated with Pentecost. With a few exceptions, the onlookers do not appear interested or involved in what Peter is saying. The bright beam of light coming from out of the cloud, focusing on Peter, provides compositional interest as do the horizontal line created by the head of Peter and other standing people and the diagonal space running from mid-height on the right, down to the lower left corner.

Benjamin West was born in a house that is now on the campus of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania. Self-taught, he excelled at the arts but with little formal education he could scarcely spell throughout his life. He painted portraits, beginning in his youth through his twenties. The provost of the College of Philadelphia, Dr. William Smith, saw a painting of his and became his patron, offering him education and connections with wealthy and politically connected Pennsylvanians. Sponsored by Smith, in 1760 West traveled to Italy, where he continued his self-education by copying works of master painters direct from the originals.

He arrived in England in 1763, intending to visit, but he never returned to America. West was introduced to several prominent people, including Samuel Johnson, Edmund Burke, and the Archbishop of York, and received a number of commissions from them. In 1772 King George III appointed him historical painter to the court, and he painted nine portraits of members of the royal family, including two of the king. When the American Revolution broke out in 1776 he neither spoke out for or against the war. In his later years he created a number of religious works, including *The Preservation of St. Paul after a Shipwreck at Malta* and *Christ Healing the Sick*. He was buried at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

— Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan
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Acts 3:12-19

When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?"

"The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,..."

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my right! You gave me room when I was in distress. Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.

How long, you people, shall my honor suffer shame? How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies? Selah

But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when I call to him.

When you are disturbed, do not sin; ponder it on your beds, and be silent. Selah

Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the Lord.

There are many who say, "O that we might see some good! Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"

You have put gladness in my heart more than when their grain and wine abound.

I will both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety.

1 John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

Luke 24:36b-48

While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost.

He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have."

And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.

While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you — that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”