

**Lessons for Fifth Sunday of Easter**

**April 24, 2016**

Psalm 148 (*antiphon: v 13*) ~ *All creation praises God who has provided a strong champion for his people.*

*Acts 11:1-18 ~ With a word, God cleanses the unclean.*

*Revelation 21:1-7 ~ In Christ, God has made us His people in a brand new world.*

*John 16:12-22 ~ Jesus acknowledged that His people are works in progress, but the end is assured!*

*OR John 13:31-35 ~ In Jesus' sacrificial love, God is glorified, and we have a new pattern for loving.*

**GATHERING THE TEXTS:** God Changes Everything for Good.

Often we take note of change with regret and dismay, but in Christ, God has changed things for good! By His sacrificial love, Christ has given glory to God through His redemptive plan for all humanity. In His superlative love, Christ has given us a pattern and a command to love one another. By His Word in the flesh, the Father has spoken and cleansed us sinners of our guilt. The One who is the Beginning and the End has made all things new, for good!

**PRAYER BEFORE THE SERVICE:** Lord Jesus, the Alpha and Omega, in the beginning You called me into being and at the end You will welcome me into Your new Jerusalem. As I recognize the magnitude of Your sacrificial love that has cleansed my life from sin, fill me with a purpose to love Your people the way You see them. Amen.

**STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT:** God does not regard us as unclean, but with His Word incarnate, has called us His own, now and for eternity. How we treat others in the moments and with the matter of our lives must be patterned by Jesus' sacrificial love for us.

**OFFERING PRAYER:** With Your Word in human flesh,  
Lord, You banished cruel death!  
Grant that we may live our days  
To show Your love in many ways. Amen.

**CONVICTION AND COMFORT:** Jesus' command, "Love one another as I have loved you," is still far out of our reach! But He promised the Holy Spirit who would lead His followers into all truth. Like the disciples, we are sometimes reluctant to go where the Spirit leads, especially when it involves extending the Gospel to people with whom we aren't accustomed to dealing. God's unconditional love in the sacrifice of His Son is power and pattern for a change in our lives that we will catch up to in the new Jerusalem.