

Sixth Sunday of Easter
Cycle B RCL

Acts 10:44-48

Herod the Great completed his capital city of Caesarea Maritima in 10 BCE; and from that time until the Islamic conquest of 640 CE, Caesarea continued in this role. The sumptuous city with its theater, promontory palace, amphitheater, and other attractions was the quintessential Roman city. Herod's greatest building in Caesarea was the temple to Roma and Augustus that eclipsed all of his building projects except the temple in Jerusalem. This city, however, was so famous for its paganism that the rabbis declared that neither it nor Caesarea Philippi (modern Banyas) could be counted as part of the land of Israel. This background helps us understand how surprising the appearance of the Holy Spirit and the subsequent mass baptism is in this heart of Roman paganism.

Psalm 98

This *hymn* shares so much of the imagery of the Second Isaiah (Isaiah 40-55) that some researchers consider the poem to be post-exilic. The focus of the psalm is upon the reestablishment of a righteous judgment not only for Jerusalem but also for the entire earth over which Yahweh reigns

1 John 5:1-6

The First Epistle of John was probably written in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) around the turn of the second century by a follower of the unknown author of the Fourth Gospel. The present passage amplifies that part of Jesus' farewell to his disciples in John 15:9-17 in which Jesus gives them the command that they should love one another. The author of 1 John identifies this love with the abiding presence of God (4:7-16).

John 15:9-17

One of the principal features of the elect community in Jewish apocalypticism was its unity. Indeed, the Qumran (Dead Sea) sectarians called themselves *ha-yaxad*, "the unity." Jesus likewise instructed his students that their community too was to be a divine unity, but he went beyond Jewish sectarianism by commanding that love be the golden bond that would maintain that unity until the end of the age.

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