

Seventh Sunday of Easter
Cycle B RCL

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

The author of Luke-Acts has an idealized understanding of the organization of the early church, believing that it was controlled from Jerusalem by the council of twelve Apostles. This understanding necessitated the choice of someone to succeed Judas the Betrayer. As in the Hebrew Bible, the casting of “lots” is a way whereby God can make the divine will known. See, for instance, Jonah 1:7.

Psalm 1

Wisdom psalms were composed by the scholars of the royal court’s school in Jerusalem to help young pupils understand and apply the fundamentals of honesty, modesty, and right dealing to every aspect of their lives. Although these songs were not for the Temple, as were the other psalms of the Psalter, they came to be part of Israel’s treasury of sacred songs during the exile in Babylon when the Temple stood in ruins.

1 John 5:9-13

The author returns to ideas drawn from the Gospel of John but with certain differences. In particular, faith for 1 John is believing in the testimony of God to the Son, *i. e.* the scripture witness. In the Fourth Gospel, on the other hand, faith is the reality of dwelling in the Son. All across Christendom at the end of the first century and well into the second, people combated Gnosticism by insisting on the integrity of the faith as a matter of intellectual belief. Another interesting adaptation is Jesus saying to his disciples in John 14:14: “If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.” Our author, aware of the potential magical misuse of this instruction, has added the proviso that the request must be in accordance with God’s will (1 John 5:14).

John 17:6-19

The complexity and richness of John’s Gospel is nowhere more apparent than in this petition of the so-called “High Priestly Prayer” (John 17). The prayer to sanctify his students in the truth makes it clear that Jesus, who is the truth (John 14:6) and, indeed, the very word of God (John 1:1,14), will be with them in power following his death and resurrection even though his physical presence will be removed.