

## NEXT STEP: STUDY &amp; SHARE

## READINGS

Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

*Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. (v5)*

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, & the life. Give us grace to love one another, to follow in the way of his commandments, & to share his risen life with all the world, for he lives & reigns with you & the Holy Spirit, one God, now & forever. Amen.

## SERMON TEXT- Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60

<sup>1</sup>Now 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. <sup>2</sup>And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples & said, "It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit & of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, <sup>4</sup>while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer & to serving the word."... <sup>7</sup>The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, & a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. <sup>8</sup>Stephen, full of grace & power, did great wonders & signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen... stood up & argued with Stephen. <sup>2</sup>And Stephen replied: <sup>51</sup>You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart & ears, you are forever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. <sup>52</sup>Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, & now you have become his betrayers & murderers..." <sup>54</sup>When they heard these things, they became enraged & ground their teeth at Stephen. <sup>55</sup>But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven & saw the glory of God... <sup>56</sup>"Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened & the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" <sup>57</sup>But they covered their ears... <sup>58</sup>Then they dragged him out of the city & began to stone him... <sup>59</sup>While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." <sup>60</sup>Then he knelt down & cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

## LISTENING TO . . .

**GOD-** *Christian life is rooted in the Father, Son, & Holy Spirit*

1. Consider 2:42-47, 4:32-35; what is on the cusp of happening? (See also 1 Tim 5:3-16.) What does St. John add (1 John 4:20)? How about St. Paul (1 Corinthians 11:17-22; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11)? How does focusing on the Word bring harmony & heal division? See John 8:31
2. Read all of Acts 6 & 7. How does it compare to Peter's Pentecost sermon (Acts 2)? How does Stephen connect the Old Testament to Jesus? See 1 Kings 19:10; Nehemiah 9:26; Jeremiah 26:16-24; Matthew 5:12; Luke 11:47-51, 12:11-12, 13:34, 24:44-47; John 14:15-26. These are just a few cross references; figure out the rest, use your Bible's study notes.

**EACH OTHER-** *Sharing & growing with our brothers & sisters in Christ*

3. Consider v60 & Luke 23:34. St. Stephen's request of forgiveness is preemptive. How would this forgiveness help you in dealing with others who have wronged you? Pray for this ability to forgive before it is even requested.
4. Jesus cites Psalm 31 on the cross (Luke 23:46). How does that fit with the Acts reading? V5 is traditionally included with *Compline* (nighttime prayer service). How does that fit as well? What would including v5 to your bedtime routine add to your discipleship?

**NEIGHBORS-** *Bearing fruit for those not yet our brothers & sisters*

5. Martin Luther notes that heaven is opened to us just like St. Stephen (v56), "When you are baptized, partake of Holy Communion, receive the absolution, or listen to a sermon (AE22:202)." How can you show & tell this to someone else who doesn't "see" it? See *Small Catechism* available [bookofconcord.org](http://bookofconcord.org)
6. John 14:1-6 is commonly read at funerals. What comfort do you find in those verses alongside the Acts reading, esp. vv56, 59? What is the way that Jesus shows? See Romans 6:1-5; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 51-57

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Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Series: Forged by the Spirit

05.07.23  
Rev. Jared Stillions, STS

Witness unto Death

*God who sent us His Son to show us the way through death to new life*

-Notes-

KEY VERSE: While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed,  
"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (v59)

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-NEXT STEPS MEMORY VERSE-

I am the way, the truth, & the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. (*John 14:6*)

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