

Lectionary Readings  
for  
Fifth Sunday of Easter  
Year A

Scriptures Set by  
R. G. Huff

Acts 7:54-60  
[Stephen As Martyr]

Dramatic Dialogue – Acts 7: (54) 55-60 [for three readers]

Reader One: After Stephen had preached to the people, recounting to them how their ancestors had failed to respond to the work and message of God, they became enraged.

Reader Two: But filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

Stephen: "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"

Reader One: But the crowd covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him

Reader Two: Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.

Reader One: The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Reader Two: While the people were stoning Stephen, he prayed:

Stephen: Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Reader One: Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice,

Stephen: Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

Reader Two: When he had said this, he died.

*Same reading with adjustments to the statements of Stephen, more markedly tying them to the dying words of Jesus:*

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Stephen: Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!

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Reader One: The witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Reader Two: While the people were stoning Stephen, he prayed:

Stephen: Lord Jesus, into your hands I commit my spirit.

Reader One: Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice,

Stephen: Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do.

Reader Two: When he had said this, he died.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“Something for Thee” [see Craig Courtney’s solo/duet setting of this in his collection  
MUSIC FOR THE MASTER – Beckenhorst]

“God, We Praise You” – W&R 3

“For All the Saints”

“Goodness Is Stronger than Evil” – FWS 2219

Hymn – “When Stephen, Full of Power and Grace” – 8.6.8.6.D

This text by Jan Struther (pseudonym for Joyce Maxtone Graham, the author of *Mrs. Miniver!*) – 1901-1953 – sings well to the KINGSFOLD tune. It has a couple of archaic moments, but has some very strong lines: e.g. “*But only in his heart a flame and on his lips a prayer that God, in sweet forgiveness' name should understand and spare.*” Even if you choose not to sing this hymn, the printing of the text somewhere in your order of worship would be a nice touch, especially for those who (like I) love poetry!

When Stephen, full of power and grace,  
Went forth throughout the land,  
He bore no shield before his face,  
No weapon in his hand;  
But only in his heart a flame  
And on his lips a sword  
Wherewith he smote and overcame  
The foemen of the Lord.

*With those he smote and overcame  
Opposers of the Lord.*

When Stephen preached against the laws  
And by those laws was tried,  
He had no friend to plead his cause,  
No spokesman at his side;  
But only in his heart a flame  
And in his eyes a light  
Wherewith God's daybreak to proclaim  
And rend the veils of night.

*God's daybreak boldly to proclaim*

When Stephen, young and doomed to die,  
Fell crushed beneath the stones,  
He had no curse nor vengeful cry  
For those who broke his bones;  
But only in his heart a flame  
And on his lips a prayer  
That God, in sweet forgiveness' name  
Should understand and spare.

Let me, O Lord, thy cause defend,  
A knight without a sword;  
No shield I ask, no faithful friend,  
No vengeance, no reward;  
But only in my heart a flame  
And in my soul a dream,  
So that the stones of earthly shame  
A jeweled crown may seem.

*Let me, O Lord, your cause defend,*

*To stand for Jesus without shame,  
His light my guiding beam.*

Reading from John 14:1-7

Leader: Let us consider together these words of our Lord: Do not let your hearts be troubled.

Believe in God, believe also in me.

People: In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you.

Leader: I go to prepare a place for you.

People: If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.

Leader: I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

People: If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you know him and have seen him.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled” – Bob Burroughs anthem

“Nothing Can Trouble” (Taize)

“And Jesus Said” W&R – 635

### **New Hymn Based from John 14:1-7**

“Let Not Your Hearts Be Troubled So”

L.M. (8.8.8.8) –

Suggested Tune: GIFT OF LOVE (O WALY WALY)

Let not your hearts be troubled so.

Believe in God. Believe in me.

I go prepare a place for you,

That where I am, you too may be.

And if I go prepare a place,

I will return to take you there.

My Father's house has many rooms;

There's plenty room within his care.

I am the way, the truth, the life.

By me salvation comes to you.

Through me the Father is made known.

If you know me, you know him too.

(R. G. Huff – 04/11/08)

## Psalm 31

Responsive Reading from Psalm 31: 1-5, 15-16

Leader: In you, O Lord, I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame. In your righteousness deliver me!  
People: Incline your ear to me. Rescue me speedily! Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me!  
Leader: For you are my rock and my fortress. For your name's sake you lead me and guide me.  
People: You take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge.  
Leader: Into your hand I commit my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.  
People: But I trust in you, O Lord, and I say aloud, "You are my God."  
Leader: My times are in your hand. Rescue me from the hand of my enemies and from my persecutors!  
People: Make your face shine on your servant. Save me in your steadfast love!

Unison Reading from Psalm 31:9-10, 13-16

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress.  
My eye wastes away; so do my soul and my body.  
My life is spent in sorrow. My years have been full of sighing.  
Because of my great misery, my strength fails me.  
I hear whispers of terror all around me.  
There seems to be a scheme plotted against me.  
My life is about to be taken from me, I just know it!

(silence)

But I trust in You, O Lord!  
I say, "You are my God!"  
My times are in Your hand.  
Deliver me from the hands of those who persecute me.  
Let Your face shine upon Your servant.  
Save me by Your steadfast love. Amen.

Song/Hymn Suggestions:

"Out of My Bondage, Sorrow and Night"  
"Shine, Jesus, Shine"  
"Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus"  
"We Have Heard the Joyful Sound" [LIMPSFIELD](#)  
"Shine on Us"  
"The Rock That Is Higher Than I"  
"Rock of Ages"  
"A Mighty Fortress"  
"God Is Our Refuge and Strength" (Allen Pote anthem)  
"Guide My Feet" (FWS 2208)