

Friends of the Chapel Weekly Scripture Study

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 3, 2026

New Testament Reading

Acts 6:1–9; 7:2a, 51–60

English Standard Version Scripture Text

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen.

And Stephen said:

7:2a “Brothers and fathers, hear me.

51 “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced before hand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

The Stoning of Stephen

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." 57 But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. 58 Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Historical Context

Acts 6–7 describes the early Church's growth and the emergence of internal challenges. Stephen is appointed as one of the first deacons and becomes a powerful witness to Christ. His bold proclamation leads to opposition and ultimately to his martyrdom.

Verse-by-Verse Exegetical Commentary

Acts 6:1–3 – A dispute arises within the growing community, leading to the appointment of leaders to serve.

Acts 6:4–6 – The apostles devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word.

Acts 6:7–9 – The church grows, but opposition increases, especially against Stephen.

Acts 7:2a – Stephen begins his defense by recounting God's work in Israel's history.

Acts 7:51–53 – Stephen confronts the leaders for resisting the Holy Spirit.

Acts 7:54–56 – Stephen sees a vision of Christ standing at the right hand of God.

Acts 7:57–60 – Stephen is stoned, becoming the first Christian martyr, and prays for his persecutors.

Thoughts to Consider

- Service and leadership in the Church
- Faithful witness under opposition
- The cost of discipleship
- Forgiveness in the face of persecution

Epistle Reading

1 Peter 2:2–10

English Standard Version Scripture Text

2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

4 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, 5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For it stands in Scripture:

“Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” 7 So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”¹

8 and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Historical Context

Peter writes to believers scattered throughout the Roman world, encouraging them to grow in faith and to understand their identity in Christ. He uses rich imagery to describe the Church as a spiritual house and a chosen people.

Verse-by-Verse Exegetical Commentary

Verse 2 – Believers are to long for spiritual nourishment like newborn infants.

Verses 3–5 – Christ is the living stone, and believers are built into a spiritual house.

Verses 6–8 – Christ is both cornerstone and stumbling block, depending on response.

Verses 9–10 – The Church is described as a chosen race, royal priesthood, and holy nation.

Theological Themes

- Spiritual growth
- Identity in Christ
- The Church as God's people
- Proclaiming God's excellencies

Concluding Reflection

The Fifth Sunday of Easter highlights both the identity and the mission of the Church. Stephen's witness demonstrates the courage required to stand for truth, even at great cost. Peter reminds believers of their identity as God's chosen people, called to proclaim His goodness. Together, these passages call the Church to live boldly and faithfully in the world.

Discussion Questions

1. What can we learn from the early Church's response to internal challenges?
2. Stephen remained faithful even in the face of death. What gives believers that kind of courage?
3. How does Stephen's prayer for his persecutors challenge our own responses to conflict?
4. Peter describes believers as a 'royal priesthood.' What does this identity mean for everyday life?
5. How can we actively proclaim God's goodness in our communities?