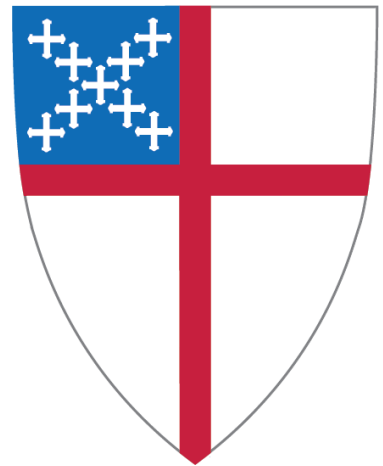


The Lessons Appointed for Use on the

**Fifth Sunday
of Easter**

Year A, RCL

May 3, 2026



(First Reading)

A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my

spirit.” Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”
When he had said this, he died.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

(People: Thanks be to God.)



(Psalm)

Psalm 23

Let's say it responsively by half verse.

**In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be
put to shame; ***

deliver me in your righteousness.

Incline your ear to me; *

make haste to deliver me.

**Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you
are my crag and my stronghold; ***

for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.

**Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for
me, ***

for you are my tower of strength.

Into your hands I commend my spirit, *

for you have redeemed me, O LORD, O God of truth.

My times are in your hand; *

*rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who
persecute me.*

Make your face to shine upon your servant, *

and in your loving-kindness save me.



(The Epistle Reading)

A Reading from first letter of Peter

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

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

**“See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;**

and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”

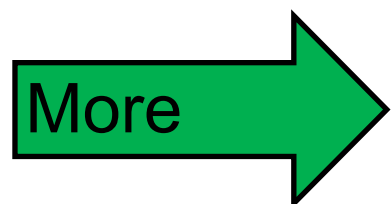
To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

**“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner”,
and**

**“A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall.”**

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.



**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.**

Leader: **The Word of the Lord.**

(People: *Thanks be to God.*





The Prayers of the People

Please stand, sit, or kneel as able for the prayers.

Intercessor: **Holy God, as we look at the life of Stephen, we ask for the boldness to stand for truth. Help us not to fear those who threaten us, but to trust our spirit into your hands. We pray for the Church and its mission. May the Holy Spirit convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment through our witness. Grant us the courage to speak your truth plainly and the grace to live as reflections of your love. Lord, in your mercy,**

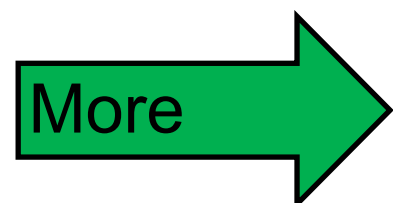
All: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. We pray that the Spirit would guide us into all truth, opening our eyes to see your word and our ears to hear your voice. May we be a people led not by our own understanding, but by your divine wisdom. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: Lord, fill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the grace to forgive, that we may look upon our enemies and those who hurt us not with anger, but with the forgiving love of Stephen. Give us the strength to pray for their salvation, rather than their punishment. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.



Intercessor: Lord Jesus, you warned us that in this world we would have tribulation, but you promised us your perfect peace. We pray for peace in a troubled world. We lift up all those facing trials, anxiety, or suffering today. Help us to "take heart," knowing that you have already overcome the world. Lord, in your mercy,

All: Hear our prayer.

Intercessor: Gracious Father, we pray for the weary and the grieving. Just as You promised the disciples that their sorrow would turn to joy, we ask for Your comfort to rest upon those in seasons of lament. Remind us that our trials are but for a "little while" and that Your joy is a treasure that no one can take away. We

**now pray for those in need as we remember
those who have asked for our prayers.**

(Please add your own intercessions or thanksgivings out loud or in the
silence of your heart.)

Intercessor: **Lord, in your mercy,**

All: Hear our prayer.

The Celebrant concludes the Prayers:



The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Jesus said to his disciples, “I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me. But I have said these things to you so that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you about them.

“I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to him who sent me; yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your hearts. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

“A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me.” Then some of his disciples said to one another, “What does he mean by saying to us, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and ‘Because I am going to the Father?’” They said, “What does he

mean by this ‘a little while?’ We do not know what he is talking about.” Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Are you discussing among yourselves what I meant when I said, ‘A little while, and you will no longer see me, and again a little while, and you will see me?’ Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. On that day you will ask nothing of me. Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

“I have said these things to you in figures of speech. The hour is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figures, but will tell you plainly of the Father. On that day you will ask in my name. I do not say to you that I will ask the Father on your behalf; for the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and have come into the world; again, I am leaving the world and am going to the Father.”

His disciples said, “Yes, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure of speech! Now we know that you know all things, and do not need to have anyone question you; by this we believe that you came from God.” Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each one to his home, and you will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!”

The Gospel of the Lord.