

THE STARTING PLACE

Make a list of the strongest things you can think of.

LISTENING TO PETER

1 Peter 5:12–14

Through Silvanus, whom I consider a faithful brother, I have written this short letter to encourage you, and to testify that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. Your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

In this week's closing comments, 1 Peter closes the letter by grounding the community in the true grace of God. They are steadied, named, and connected with believers beyond themselves; this is strength understood as firm standing and shared belonging. These are real people, living real lives of faith with whom we have journeyed these last seven weeks.

LISTENING TO THE GOSPEL AND TO ACTS

- [John 20:19–23](#)
- [Acts 2:1–21](#)

What do you notice about the two different experiences of the Spirit in John 20:19–23 and Acts 2:1–21?

THE THRESHOLD

Reflect on your own experience of strength and of sending. Do you recognise it more in Jesus breathing peace and the Spirit on his disciples in John 20 or in the Spirit coming with wind, fire, and speech in Acts 2?

MOVING FORWARD

Across these seven weeks, we have been moving through a series of crossings that began with the resurrection of Jesus. Each Sunday has carried us from one place into another, as Acts, John and 1 Peter have shown how the earliest believers learned to live on the far side of Easter. What began with the shock of resurrection has unfolded into a pattern of life that still shapes the church today. Our first crossing was resurrection itself. Acts and John showed the risen Christ alive among his people, and 1 Peter described this as a new birth into a living hope. Hope rises wherever Christ is present. But hope cannot remain a feeling. It draws us

into holiness, not as pressure or perfectionism, but as the shape hope takes when it becomes embodied. Holiness is hope learning to walk.

From holiness we moved into witness. A holy life cannot be hidden. The early believers lived in such a way that their shared life was its own proclamation, and John's image of the shepherd showed that those who know his voice stand out. Holiness creates distinction, and distinction creates visibility. Visibility then carried us into suffering. Stephen's death showed that witness is costly, and Jesus' words showed that truth provokes resistance. Peter insisted that suffering is not failure but participation in Christ's own path. Yet suffering did not leave the early church isolated. Instead, it opened the way into community. Paul in Athens, the disciples awaiting the Advocate, and Peter's call to humble care all revealed the same truth: pressure exposes our need for one another. Community is the life that forms when suffering is shared. From community we moved into strength. At the Ascension, Jesus entrusted his followers to one another and to the Father. They stayed together, prayed together, waited together. Peter reminded us that strength is not self-made but God-given. Community is the form, and strength is the life that grows within it.

And now, at Pentecost, we reach the final movement of the season. From strength flows sending. In 1 Peter's closing words, the community is steadied and named, rooted in the true grace of God and connected with believers beyond themselves. In John, the risen Christ breathes peace and Spirit upon his disciples. In Acts, that same Spirit fills the gathered church and sends them outward with courage they did not possess on their own. The movement we have traced is clear. Resurrection gives birth to hope. Hope matures into holiness. Holiness becomes witness. Witness leads to suffering. Suffering forms community. Community becomes strength. Strength becomes sending. This is the life of the church.

A Prayer for Pentecost Sunday

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises of Easter by sending us your Holy Spirit and opening to every race and nation the way of life eternal: open our lips by your Spirit, that every tongue may tell of your glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.