

**“Fifth Sunday of Easter”**  
**May 3, 2026**  
**American Lutheran Church**  
**Pastor Scott Klimke**

**Acts 2:55-60**

**1 Peter 2:2-10**

**John 14:1-14**

I want to see if we can replicate something a few of us experienced in Las Vegas about a year ago. When the congregations under our local bishop’s care gathered for their annual meeting in Vegas last June, one of the presenters implemented this practice. Whenever someone wished to ask a question or make a comment, he would ask them to share their name. Then he would prompt everyone in attendance to call the person by name and say, “Beloved child of God, you matter.” Let’s see if we can do something similar here today. Way to go! We did it! We just called some people by name and identified them as beloved children of God who matter. Now what’s the point of this practice?

Right off the top I can think of two purposes which might help us internalize some of what’s shared by this week’s appointed group of scriptures. As people are identified by name, the names Scripture assures us Jesus knows, the first of these purposes is to uplift the person addressed with the Good News that there’s a place for just for them in the heart and house of God. We’ve heard this Good News a lot this weekend.

In our reading from John, Jesus says he’s going to prepare a place for us in house of God. Each of us matters so much to Jesus that he freely and willingly suffers under Pontius Pilate, is crucified, dies, is buried, and descends into hell so a place might be prepared for us in the house of God. And if thanks to Jesus there’s a place for each of us in the house of God, there’s also an eternal place for each of us in the heart of God. You might put up with someone you don’t love for a day or two, but not for eternity. Beloved child of God, you matter. There’s a place just for you in all of your particularity in the house and heart of God.

Not to be denied, our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter says the same. It says we matter so much in the house and heart of God that no one with the Holy Spirit’s gift of faith in Jesus will ever be put to shame in any kind of enduring

way. It says that we matter so much in the house and heart of God that God has chosen to be merciful with us even though we're all lifelong sinners. It says we are honored in the house and heart of God. Beloved child of God, you matter. There's a place just for you in all of your particularity in the house and heart of God.

But beloved child of God, you also matter because the practice of your faith in our here and now matters a lot too. This too is emphasized this weekend. In our reading from John, Jesus says we shall do even greater things than him. Wow! It sure sounds as if the practice of our faith will not be inconsequential. In our reading from John, Jesus also says that our prayers shall also count, provided their intent is to redound to glory of God. And this emphasis upon how much the here and now practice of our faith matters is also taken up in our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.

This is a reading that exhorts to be living stones. This tells us that faith in Christ, the stone or rock on which the Church is built, is meant to live and breathe and move and act and love. When this happens, our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter says we live out our identity as members of a holy and royal priesthood. And friends, holiness and royalty are to be used. They aren't meant to gather dust and cobwebs on a shelf, and this was something Martin Luther emphasized.

Martin Luther was an educated person. He held a PhD in Old Testament. But he knew the faith of everyone mattered; that we're all members of a holy and royal priesthood. Though he was priest who went on to marry a nun, Luther never for a second thought that the faith of popes, priests, nuns, and monks mattered more than the faith of the people they were to serve. For Lutherans, the Church is the priesthood of all believers. For Lutherans, the Church is a community of equals. We all have different gifts and therefore all have different functions. But in the end, we're all members of a holy and royal priesthood where the here and now faith of every priest matters a lot. Beloved child of God, you matter and our reading from Acts tells you to never doubt just how true this is.

In our reading from Acts, we meet the biblical personality responsible for the name of our Stephen Ministry program. Like those who are Stephen Ministers here at ALC, the first Stephen wasn't an apostle, a pastor, a priest, a monk, or a nun. The first Stephen was a lay person like almost everyone here today. But this in no way limited the power and the potency and the importance of his faith.

In our reading from Acts, the Holy Spirit who gifts us with faith enables Stephen to see who's in charge now and forever. Far up in the heavenly places, towering over all rule and authority and power and dominion, Stephen sees Jesus at the right hand of God. Faith enables Stephen to see that Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of lords. Faith enables Stephen to see that ultimate glory and honor belong to Jesus. As I've said, the faith gifted by the Holy Spirit enables Stephen to see and to know and to trust and to believe that Jesus is in charge in this age and in the age to come. And this faith blessed Stephen with the peace and the assurance to hand his spirit over to Jesus calmly and confidently. This is faith. No matter who practices it and no matter where it travels, faith has the power to bring peace, assurance, serenity, calm, and confidence just where it's needed. Beloved child of God, you matter. But there's more. Knowing that Jesus is in charge in this age and in the age to come also enabled Stephen to plead for the forgiveness of those stoning him to death. This also is faith. No matter who practices it and no matter where it travels, faith can bring grace and love and mercy into a vengeful, hardhearted, stiff-necked world. Beloved child of God, you matter. You matter because there's a place just for you in the heart and house of God. You matter because the practice of your faith in our here and now matters a lot too. So, beloved child of God, go act as if you do matter this week.

But as you do, don't ever forget who makes you matter in heaven and on earth. In our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, it's said that we're all newborn infants whose development will stall without the right milk. It's what you get when for your entire life you're simultaneously saint and sinner. Without Jesus who's just the milk we need to grow and remain spiritually healthy, we lifelong sinners and saints will cease to matter in the way Jesus wants us to matter. It's always Jesus who makes us matter so much. He's restored our place in the heart and house of God, and he makes our faith powerful, potent, and important. And some of the time it would seem we're pretty good about remembering this.

Polling indicates that people of faith are much happier than everybody else. This would suggest that through the Holy Spirit's gift of faith in Jesus we've found the peace, the assurance, the serenity, the calm, and the confidence that Stephen finds in our reading from Acts. Polling also indicates that Protestants fear death much less than everybody else. Through the Spirit's gift of faith in Jesus, we seem to know who's in charge in this age and the age to come—that Jesus shall always be the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And likely

reflective of a more spirit more hopeful than others, people of faith also believe in the power and importance of education much more than everybody else. When it comes to trusting that there's a place just for us in the heart and house of God, polling indicates we've done a pretty good job of imbibing the spiritual milk who is Jesus. But the same polling indicates there's room for growth when it comes to letting Jesus direct the ways in which we practice our faith down here under the sun. Too often, we're listening to the talking heads who want to divide us rather than listening to Jesus. Too influenced by the talking heads, too often we're drinking skim milk rather than the whole milk who is Jesus. As is not surprising for people who are simultaneously saint and sinner, the glass is half full and half empty. So beloved child of God, do go act as if you matter this week. But always remember that it's always Jesus who makes you matter so much in heaven and here on earth. Amen!