

I.N.I.

Second Sunday of Easter
April 7, 2013
Acts 3:13-26

In Christ Jesus, whose resurrection from the dead is not just an historical fact, but a blessed power in our lives, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

This morning we are beginning a new sermon series. We will be discussing during this six week Easter season texts from the book of Acts. This book is a continuation of the story and life of Christ after His resurrection and bodily Ascension into heaven. It tells how the Good Friday and Easter message—that is the message of Christ crucified and risen again—spread throughout Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, Asia Minor and all the way to Rome.

Even though this book is the continuation of the life of Christ after His Ascension, it is not a day by day account of His life as we find it in the four Gospels. We see Christ in action, living in the hearts and lives of His believers and the wonderful changes and works that are done in His name.

Therefore in a very real sense, every Christian's life here on earth is a continuing of Christ's life, for it is Christ and the power of His resurrection in us that moves us and compels us to live in loving obedience, in self-less service to Him and to the glory of His name. Paul tells us in II Corinthians **THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATION; OLD THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY; BEHOLD, ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW... FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS US, BECAUSE WE JUDGE THUS: THAT IF ONE DIED FOR ALL, THEN ALL DIED; AND HE DIED FOR ALL, THAT THOSE WHO LIVE SHOULD LIVE NO LONGER FOR THEMSELVES, BUT FOR HIM WHO DIED FOR THEM AND ROSE AGAIN.**

We have entitled our 6 week sermon series:

THE POWER OF CHRIST'S RESURRECTION IN OUR LIVES

taking the words from those of the Apostle Paul in Phil. 3:10 where we read in verse 7-10: **BUT WHAT THINGS WERE GAIN TO ME, THESE I HAVE COUNTED LOSS FOR CHRIST. BUT INDEED I ALSO COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS FOR THE EXCELLENCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOM I HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF ALL THINGS, AND COUNT THEM AS RUBBISH, THAT I MAY GAIN CHRIST AND BE FOUND IN HIM, NOT HAVING MY OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH IS FROM THE LAW, BUT THAT WHICH IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS FROM GOD BY FAITH; THAT I MAY KNOW HIM AND THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION, AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS, BEING CONFORMED TO HIS DEATH.**

Our text this morning is Peter's sermon to the people after the healing of the crippled man at the temple gate. We are told that when the people saw this man, who had been crippled from birth, now jumping and leaping and praising God, they were amazed. Peter was quick to realize that their amazement centered in the fact that these two human beings (Peter & John) had performed such a wonder and therefore he had to set them straight as to where the power for this miracle came from. Peter asked the people: **MEN OF ISRAEL, WHY DO YOU MARVEL AT THIS? OR WHY LOOK SO INTENTLY AT US, AS THOUGH BY OUR OWN POWER OR GODLINESS WE HAD MADE THIS MAN WALK?**

Peter jumped at this opportunity to preach about Christ crucified and risen again, to lead the people to see that God, their God of Israel—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had glorified Jesus as the Promised Savior; and therefore it was in the power of the resurrected Jesus' name that this man now stood before them whole and healthy.

Now these were some powerful words. Also some very controversial, direct, accusatory words from Peter.

First Peter is telling His Jewish hearers that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament patriarch's promise. He was the suffering servant of Isaiah, the promised One of Israel, Abraham's seed, the Messiah. It was Jesus of Nazareth who was responsible for this man's ability to walk.

But secondly Peter also added this crushing blow to his startling statement: **HIS SERVANT JESUS, WHOM YOU DELIVERED UP AND DENIED IN THE PRESENCE OF PILATE... YOU DENIED THE HOLY ONE AND THE JUST, AND ASKED FOR A MURDERER TO BE GRANTED TO YOU.** You handed Him over to Pilate. You denied, disowned Him when Pilate was determined to let Him go. You instead chose a murderer to be set free.

The events to which Peter was referring were all too familiar to the people gathered around him. Who hadn't been involved with or at least heard about the sensational trial and crucifixion of a little more than 50 days ago. A pagan Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, wanted to let the King of the Jews go free, but the Jewish people would not allow it. They made the choice between the Holy and Righteous One and the murderer Barabbas! **YOU DID IT! YOU KILLED THE PRINCE OF LIFE!**

Yes the people were guilty of not just putting a good man to death, they were guilty of killing the God/Man Jesus, the Christ! When Jesus died on the cross, the Son of God died on the cross for both human and divine natures of Christ are perfectly united.

What powerful words from this once fearful disciple, who had denied even knowing Jesus, now boldly proclaiming for all to hear. Fearlessly he now preached the condemning and accusing power of the Law upon this stunned crowd.

But without a moment's hesitation, Peter, with as much boldness and clarity, now proclaimed the glorious truth of the Gospel---**WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD.** These same words Peter proclaimed a few days earlier on Pentecost when he said: **AND YOU, WITH THE HELP OF WICKED MEN, PUT HIM TO DEATH BY NAILING HIM TO THE CROSS. BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD, FREEING HIM FROM THE AGONY OF DEATH, BECAUSE IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR DEATH TO KEEP ITS HOLD ON HIM.**

Peter is saying two things. One: "you killed the Prince of Life. You are guilty." Two: "in that shameful action of yours, crucifying the Prince of Life, lies your hope, your freedom, your power over sin and death."

What a marvelous message for us today. For we too crucified the Prince of Life, Jesus. Our sins also drove those nails into Jesus' hands and feet. It was because of our sins that God the Father condemned His Son. It was because of our disobedience to God's Holy Law that Jesus had to be the sacrifice that atoned for our misdeeds and His blood had to be shed. For in that very act which our sins brought about we see our only hope of deliverance and salvation. **HE WAS DELIVERED UP BECAUSE OF OUR OFFENSES AND WAS RAISED TO LIFE FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION.**

So what should we do? What did Peter tell the crowd of people to do? Repent! This means a change of heart; doing an about face; turning around and away from sin to God. Repentance occurs when the Law condemns the heart and leads to despair and when the Gospel works in it a sorrow over sin and a looking to Jesus for forgiveness.

Therefore Peter's call for repentance to the crowd was for them to turn from their work-righteous attitude to the righteous One, Jesus. Turn from being crushed by their sins to casting all of their sins upon the crucified and risen Savior. Turn from being filled with guilt and pangs of conscience to the One who has taken all their guilt away and washed their conscience clean.

And these words still apply to us today. Without a godly sorrow over our sins and a trust in Jesus Christ for full forgiveness we cannot share in the blessings of His resurrection. Peter pleaded with the people to look back into the Old Testament and see in the prophet's writings that Jesus was the Messiah, the fulfillment of those prophecies. We too have read those Old Testament promises and have seen that Jesus is the Promised One, the Christ of God so our sins have been blotted out and times of refreshing have come upon us.

But note that Peter says these blessings of Christ come when God does the turning. In verse 26 we read: **TO YOU FIRST, GOD, HAVING RAISED UP HIS SERVANT JESUS, SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU, IN TURNING AWAY EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR INIQUITIES.**

With Christ as our Savior we have times of refreshing, forgiveness, peace, joy and the assurance of everlasting life. Without Christ there is nothing but condemnation, restlessness, hopelessness and the fearful thought of everlasting damnation.

Peter pleads with his hearers. "You are the sons of the prophets. You are the heirs of this promise. This promise was first made to you. And in the resurrection of Jesus, God has sent Him to bless you by turning you away from your sins."

What a blessed Gospel invitation. God through Peter is reaching out to the Jewish people who had crucified Jesus with the message of His love and forgiveness given only in Jesus' death and resurrection. We are told in Acts 4 that many heard and believed and the number of believing men rose to about 5,000.

But the priests and the Sadducees were so upset about what was said that they arrested Peter and John and threw them into prison.

This same blessed Gospel invitation goes out to you and to me this morning. The Lord is reaching out to us with the message of His love and forgiveness in a crucified and risen Lord and Savior.

May the Holy Spirit work mightily through this message upon our hearts to lead us again and again to make these blessings of Christ's resurrection our own through repentance of our sins and faith in Christ alone. That is

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Amen.