

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Second Sunday After Easter, May 1, 2022

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 284:1-3, 209:4, 210, 385:1-4, 50.

Lessons: Isaiah 55:1-11, Acts 3:1-12, Matthew 15:29-31.

Sermon Text: Acts 3:11-20.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehlretter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Peter isn't afraid to speak truth. He knows the danger of saying something and not following through. He knows the danger of continuing to do your own thing and not doing what is right. After all, he publicly denied even knowing Jesus Christ.

Today you heard him lay out the truth about what happened to Jesus Christ and the blessings that can come from that. Peter's sermon today happened shortly after Pentecost, when he boldly spoke the truth about Jesus Christ and told his hearers that they are the ones who crucified Christ. He did this today after

A CRIPPLED MAN IS HEALED THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS

- 1. Peter and John point to Jesus as the healer,**
- 2. The Jesus whom the Jews crucified,**
- 3. The same Jesus who gives forgiveness of sins and eternal healing.**

Peter and John are often mentioned together in the book of Acts. Today in our Epistle lesson you heard of a man who was healed. He had been crippled from birth, and was carried every day to a gate area in the temple courts to beg. He asked Peter and John for money, but they didn't ignore him, which is so easy to do when someone begs something from us. When Peter had his undivided attention, he *“said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”* Acts 3:6-8 (NIV)

Because this was a time for prayer, many people saw this and were amazed. When people came running up to Peter and John, Peter *“said to them: ‘Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?’”*

He addresses them as *“Men of Israel”*. They were people who had been especially blessed in receiving God's Word, both the written Word and the Word of God spoken by God's prophets.

He then makes it absolutely clear that it is by the power and the name of Jesus Christ that this man was healed. He said to them: *“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.”* The pride of our human nature makes us want to take credit for something we have a hand in. But Peter defers to Jesus Christ and does not want any credit.

But before he makes it clear that it was the power of Jesus Christ that did what they saw, he bluntly reminds them that they are the ones who killed Jesus, the very servant of God, whom he calls *“the Holy and Righteous One”*. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, of whom the Jews would boastfully speak as the God of their fathers, had glorified his Child, his Son, in this miracle, for this miracle of healing the lame man was performed in the name, in the power, of Jesus Christ.

Listen again to Peter's words: ***"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."***

He makes it very clear that it was their God, the very God they had come to this place literally next to the temple building to worship and pray to, who was responsible for this healing. Peter reminds them that it was their God, naming their honored ancestors as among those who worshiped the true God.

The words ***"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers"*** is the way they had long spoken of the true God who ***"has glorified his servant Jesus."*** Then he doesn't mince any words. He bluntly tells them that they handed him over to the Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate to be killed. They can't blame Pilate for killing Jesus, because Pilate decided to let this Jesus go free. There may even have been people in this very group of people listening this day who were present demanding that Jesus be crucified.

The Word of God plainly says that ***"All the people answered, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children!'"*** Matthew 27:25 (NIV) Those very words have been omitted from the history of the suffering and death of Jesus for decades in many Christian churches because they are considered anti-Semitic, that is, these words are considered prejudiced against or hostile to Jews. But you also know that the Jews are not the only people responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus. All men, because ***"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*** Romans 3:23 (NIV) are responsible for the death of Jesus. His blood is also upon us and on our children!

But the Jews were the people who disowned Jesus and asked that a murderer be released to them instead of this Jesus, who was completely sinless. If any of them knew Jesus, if any of them truly knew that Jesus was a good man, yes, even a sinless man – the only human being ever to be sinless – they would realize the injustice and sin of their wicked actions and must recognize their sin in crucifying, in killing Jesus.

But this was the way it had to be in God's plan of salvation. Scripture tells us that ***"it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."*** Hebrews 10:4 (NIV) The blood of animals sacrificed at this very temple did not cleanse them from their sins. It had to be the blood of Jesus the sinless Son of God that redeemed them from their sins.

Peter goes on ***"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."*** Not only John and I are witness of this, but you Jews are, too! Don't you remember that it was only months ago you saw this?

And it was this Jesus who is responsible for the remarkable healing you just saw! Peter makes it very clear that Jesus is responsible for this healing and for healing and forgiveness of sins for all men!

Could he have been any more direct? In this way, Peter is bold and direct, proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, in much the same way and for the same purpose as his sermon on Pentecost.

They shouted when Pilate wanted to free him: ***"Crucify him!"*** Matthew 27:22 (NIV) It was not only the Pharisees or the chief priests or the Sanhedrin who did this. You killed this Jesus.

You killed the author of life. What man was required to do and could not do – keep God's Law – God came and did for us. He came as a man to do it. The work of salvation is God's divine work, and the one who lived and died for our salvation is divine. The God-man's work was successful and accepted by the true God, for God raised him from the dead.

Peter and John were witnesses to the fact that God had done this, and the healing of the crippled man was further testimony. And the Jews who heard this saw the same thing and are now being reminded of it.

The name of Jesus is the revelation of his grace and power. That name, that revelation, created faith in the crippled man. It created the faith which enabled the man to receive this complete healing which you now see. The words ***"name of Jesus"*** are mentioned twice to show and emphasize that Peter and John had no power to do this.

Peter leads them into the thought that God in his grace had used their evil act for his good purpose and that the gracious Lord was ready to forgive their sins. Peter exhorts them: ***"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus."***

Repentance in Scripture in the broad sense is sincere sorrow over sin, faith in the forgiveness of sins which Jesus brings, and then bringing forth fruits of faith. Peter's words were in the spirit of Jesus' words on the cross: ***"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*** Luke 23:34 (NIV)

Jesus' suffering was God's way of delivering all sinners from eternal suffering.

Times of refreshing are times when sins are wiped out and there is peace with God, especially when you realize that it is for me and all my wickedness that Jesus Christ died!

And each day when we hear or read in the Scriptures again the words of forgiveness, when we realize again, that Jesus died for my sins, we are refreshed, not through anything we do, but because of the forgiveness that comes from Christ.

The healing of the cripple was an example and a foretaste of what God will do when his appointed time comes to take all believers to heaven.

Peter urges them to repent, to have a complete change of mind and heart take place in them, and, to turn again to God that they may personally receive the forgiveness of their sins. Every one who turns from his sins to Christ, the Savior of sinners, will have the assurance of his sins taken away, blotted out completely. Faith receives the forgiveness of sins, and where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Today we must realize that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, as Paul writes to the Corinthians: ***"I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation."*** 2 Corinthians 6:2 (NIV)

This beautiful message of salvation is for you.

Unfortunately, not everyone appreciated the words Peter spoke! The very next chapter begins: ***"The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand."*** Acts 4:1-4 (NIV)

But Thanks be to God for his message of grace, of love, and of mercy! And that is the message that is preached to you today!

"Many who heard the message believed!" That is God's grace. That is God's love. That is God's mercy. Lord refresh us! Amen.

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail sermon for April 24, 2016.)