

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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First Sunday After Trinity, June 11, 2023

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)
Hymns: 10, 59:1, 353, 339, 130:1.
Lessons: Numbers 6:22-27, Romans 5:1-5, John 3:1-18.
Sermon Text: Acts 2:22-36.
Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltrittter

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Jesus himself frequently explained how the Old Testament scriptures applied to him and how they pointed to him as the promised Messiah, the Savior from sin.

But that was a message that Jews who had not listened carefully to him had not heard or understood.

Could we compare that to our time, when many have heard part of the Word of God but not the whole truth? Jesus' disciples, now that he was gone, were to be his witnesses and to teach everything he had commanded them. Their teaching was to start right where they were in Jerusalem. We hear or read every day – sometimes in our personal experiences – of people who only know part of the message of God. Or of people who want to hear only part of God's message. Of course, everyone by nature does not want to hear God's message.

Christians today also have the commission from Matthew 28 to teach all nations about Jesus and to obey everything Jesus taught. The urgency of that is found in Jesus' words in Mark 16:16: ***“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”*** And how does faith, believing come? ***“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”*** (Romans 10:17)

Today let's listen carefully as

PETER TEACHES THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS OF NAZARETH

1. **He goes to the source – the Words of God.**
2. **He tells how Jesus saved you from your sins.**

On Pentecost Peter's hearers had heard about Jesus Christ. ***“Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.”***

He speaks in such a way as to get their attention: ***“Men of Israel, listen to this.”*** Listen up! Mark well these words! And then he starts with the name of Jesus. Jesus' name is first! In Peter's sermon, Jesus is the center of his discussion. Many claiming to be Christians don't make Jesus Christ the center of their “theology” or “devotions” or “meditations” or sermons. But Jesus must be first, and must be the center of our preaching and teaching. Jesus was approved by God in their midst. How could he have done so many and such great miracles if God had not been with him? He was God's ambassador. There were demonstrations of Jesus' power in the words he taught and the works he did throughout his ministry on earth. As an example, listen to what happened when he raised Lazarus from the dead: ***“Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.’”*** (John 11:45-48)

Peter in our sermon text summarizes what God, the God they claimed to follow and believe in, did through Jesus.

He lays out their sin of rejecting Jesus: ***“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and fore-knowledge; 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 goes to their holy scriptures, the records from what we call the Old Testament, and testifies of Christ as David’s Son and Lord. He gives them proof from the great king David: He quotes verses from Psalm 16. We read those words here from the Old Testament: David said ***“I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.”*** (Psalm 16:8-11)

Through the words of David, the Messiah declares that he always sees the Lord Jehovah before his face. God spoke to David in 2 Samuel 7:12-13: ***“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”*** So although David looks forward to resurrection for himself, we see the prophetic words of Jesus Christ being dead and buried but his body did not decay! The Messiah has God the Father at his right hand, as defender and helper, so he would not become permanently depressed or dejected. As a result of this, the Messiah’s heart is full of gladness. And his tongue is full of exultation and his soul full of confidence.

Peter goes on: ***“Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”*** Jesus suffered death because of the clear, pre-ordained purposes of God, and Peter was a witness, and we who read and study the Holy Scriptures are also witnesses! Christ’s Ascension into heaven and his Exaltation at the right hand of God were a necessary consequence of his resurrection.

Peter again quoted David, this time from Psalm 110: ***“Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’”***

The words in Psalm 110:1 read: ***“Of David. A psalm. The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’”*** David did not ascend to heaven, and so his words have their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ who did ascend to heaven. Just as Psalm 16 verses 8-11 was a prophecy of Jesus’ resurrection, so this verse is a prophecy of his exaltation. Jesus also quoted these words of Psalm 110 about himself in three places, and we here quote only one of them: ***“While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.”’ David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son? The large crowd listened to him with delight.”*** (Mark 12:35-37)

These words demonstrate that David’s Son is also David’s Lord. In the psalm the Lord Jehovah speaks to David’s Son and calls him David’s “Lord.” He promises to give him victory over his enemies. That is the meaning of the picture of the footstool, for it was the custom of victorious kings to place their feet on the necks of those whom they conquered. God has given Jesus power and authority to subdue sin and death and Satan. The Son of God hid much of his power when he came as a servant to redeem us. Now the work of redemption is completed and God has exalted him by inviting him: “Sit at my right hand.” The sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost is a sign that this has happened. The final manifestation of this victory will occur on the day of judgment. This is what David said about Jesus and what God did for Jesus.

Jesus' glory had been hidden during his earthly service. Now God made it public and open by exalting him. Peter told the Jews on this day, ***“You crucified”*** this Lord and Christ. Their representatives had done it by their insisting: “Crucify him!”

“For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”’ Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Peter was reminding his fellow Jews of something they knew: God had acted through Jesus. As God-fearing Israelites they would want to know the significance of those miracles, wonders and signs. Those works, said Peter, were God's certification that Jesus came from God and did God's work. Those works bore witness that Jesus' message was God's message. They attested to the fact that he was the promised Messiah, Israel's hope.

David had prophetic knowledge that his holy descendant would rise from death. Peter and his fellow apostles had firsthand knowledge, historical knowledge. They had seen the risen Christ, spoken with him, eaten with him. More than 500 persons had seen him at one time. Peter points out that God has raised this Jesus to life. Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures, the whole meaning of Israel's religion and the heart of Israel's faith.

“God has raised this Jesus to life” was the heart of the message which the apostles preached in all the world and which they recorded by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in the pages of the New Testament. It is the foundation of our faith. His death was the sacrifice for our sins and God raised him to life to declare that the sacrifice was accepted. His death was for our forgiveness and God raised him to life to declare that we are forgiven. He died to destroy the devil and God raised him up to declare that hell has been defeated.

Did you notice that all three persons of the trinity – the triune God – are mentioned here, separately and distinctly? ***“Exalted to the right hand of God, he [Jesus Christ] has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.”*** That is the specific connection of this Pentecost text to the Trinity Season. But we can never preach the truth of God's Word without also preaching, or at least implying the fact of the triune God. Our God is three persons in one God. How this we can be, we can't explain, but if God says so, that settles it. In faith we believe this.

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Peter quoted their holy scriptures, and told them more about this Jesus of Nazareth. He is Lord of all. He is the Christ, the promised Messiah.

Peter was preaching the law of God to them to show their sinfulness, to convict them of their sin. That this had its effect, we see in the verse following our sermon text. ***“When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’”***

The answer? ***“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call.”*** There you hear the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. Could it be any clearer? May God open our hearts to grasp and believe! Amen.

(Revised from a Ministry By Mail Sermon for June 15, 2014)