

May 1, 2011  
Easter 2

*"We Have Seen the Risen Lord!"*

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### **Acts 2:14, 22-32**

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**T**hen Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: *"Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.*

*<sup>2</sup>Men of Israel, listen to this: 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. <sup>23</sup> This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. <sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> David said about him:*

*I saw the Lord always before me.*

*Because he is at my right hand,*

*I will not be shaken.*

*<sup>26</sup> Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will live in hope,*

*<sup>27</sup> because you will not abandon me to the grave,  
nor will you let your Holy One see decay.*

*<sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence.'*

*<sup>29</sup> "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.*

If I were to fill this pitcher with water and keep pouring it into this cup, the cup would soon start overflowing. So it was with the disciples after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. They were overflowing with joy when Jesus appeared to them with the words, "Peace be to you" and then showed them his hands and side. They were not afraid to share this joy in the risen Lord with other people, even their worst enemies.

You can see this powerful witness in the words we just read to you. They are part of that great sermon Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Later he would tell their enemies, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard!"

The Lord has given each of us a certain amount of time to live on this earth. Our job or mission or purpose in life is to let the world know we have seen the risen Lord.

## **We have seen Jesus' death and resurrection**

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he stood up with the other disciples and boldly gave witness to his faith. It says, "Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd." This is the same man who once cursed and swore that he never knew Jesus. If the Holy Spirit did that for Peter, the Holy Spirit can give the same boldness and courage to us as well.

Peter spoke to the crowd: "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through as you yourselves know." The people saw the evidence that Jesus was a man by the way he allowed himself to be tortured and nailed to the cross. Peter calls on them to look at the evidence that he was God, the miracles, the signs, and the wonders including his resurrection from the dead. Did you see the destruction from the powerful tornado that killed over 300 people this past week? That power is small compared to the power of God that Jesus showed by his miracles and resurrection.

In our Gospel for today from John 20 we heard why the Bible has recorded these miracles of Jesus for us. "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." You see, dear Christian, your life on this earth has tremendous value and purpose. The Lord leaves us here and fills us with his Holy Spirit so we can direct people to look into the Bible and see the words that are written that prove Jesus is our Lord and God.

When people read the Bible first hand, they will either hate what it says about Jesus, or they will come to believe what Peter and the others have told us about him. The book of Romans tells us, "How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?" The Lord leaves us here to ask people to examine the evidence in the Bible that will lead them to say to confess with Thomas, "My Lord and my God."

Peter is not afraid to tell these people the truth about what happened to Jesus. "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross." Jesus did not die on the cross because some mob went wild and crazy. Jesus died by set purpose and plan of God. From all eternity God planned the suffering that Jesus would go through to pay the price of our sin. Romans 4:25 says that Jesus was "delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification." Peter is willing to risk his life to let them know what Jesus did to rescue them. What a tragedy it would be if Christians never shared the good news of being justified through Christ which means being declared not guilty.

Imagine if someone were able to invent a wonder drug that would cure all forms of cancer, but that person never shared the amazing discovery. How tragic that would be. When I was a child we lived in very real fear of becoming sick with polio and being paralyzed. But then the miracle drug came along, the Salk vaccine. In a matter of months children all over the country were given shots to protect them from the disease. The battle cry was, "Let's get them vaccinated as soon as possible."

We have been seriously infected by sin. Look at your past week of life here on this earth. See the sinful thoughts that entered your heart. Think of the times when you failed to trust the Lord as you should. These are real sins that are deserving of eternal death and punishment. What did the Lord do for you? The night before he died Jesus prayed, "Oh, Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me, not my will but Thine be done." Jesus was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities by the set purpose of God. By the set purpose of God, 'the punishment for our peace was upon him.' How unfulfilled our lives would be if we spent a whole life on this

earth and never share with someone what the Lord has done to rescue us.

Peter was not afraid to witness to Jesus death and his resurrection. He boldly says, "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it is impossible for death to keep its hold on him."

It was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus. Imagine for a moment that I am holding a fly in my hand. I can hold the fly and keep it from escaping. I can squeeze it and crush it. Now imagine I am holding a firecracker in my hand, and the fuse has been lit. What will happen to my hand? Death held on to Jesus. It wanted to crush him like a bug. But then Jesus destroyed death with his power as God, and with the power of his Father, and with the power of the Holy Spirit. If you ever find someone who has difficulty believing that three persons are one God, then ask them who raised Jesus from the dead? Death could not keep his hold on him, and death will not keep its hold on you. That is the great hope of the Christian faith.

God knows how much time we have left on this earth to tell people, "We have seen the risen Lord." He knew how many heart beats of time we have before we are called home. This past week the Lord called Pearl Zoerb home to himself at the age of 103. He used her life on this earth to witness to Jesus and the love he has for us. How many years does the Lord have for us to bear witness to Jesus and his resurrection? We face another week on this earth as people who have seen the risen Lord, and the Lord will give us opportunities to witness boldly to what we have seen and heard just as Peter did.

### **We have seen him in the prophecies**

Now listen to Peter as he points to more evidence that Jesus rose from the dead. He directs the people to what had been predicted in the Old Testament Scriptures, specifically Psalm 16. Jesus is actually speaking through David when he said, "I saw 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 live in hope, because you will not let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me joy in your presence." Peter tells us that this is not David speaking in this psalm because David's tomb was here to this day. People could visit the tomb of David. They knew his decayed body was inside the tomb. This was not David saying "You will not let your Holy One see decay." This was Jesus. Jesus saw his heavenly Father always before him as he faced death. He ended his life with the words, "Father into your hands I commit my spirit." He prayed to his Father, "O give me the glory I had with you before the world began."

Jesus saw the resurrection from the dead the night before he died. He saw the resurrection from the dead as he spoke his last words from the cross. Jesus also saw the resurrection 1000 years before. Peter says, "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 corruption." The heavenly Father did not allow the body of Jesus to see decay. Jesus was buried in a freshly hewn tomb that had never experienced even the slightest hint of the smell of death.

Last Sunday, we took our Easter lilies home after worship. When you step into the house you can smell the Easter lilies. On that first Easter morning, there was the smell of spices in the tomb of Jesus, but not the smell of death. The prophecy was filled that the body of Jesus would not see any decay.

How can I be sure that the words of the Bible are true? How can I know that what it says about Jesus' resurrection is actually true? Some of the most detailed aspects of Jesus' suffering and

death and resurrection are found in the Old Testament, long before they happened. We can stand up like Peter and say, "Look at the evidence. Look at the evidence in the Old Testament. See where it says Jesus' body would not see decay. See where it says in Isaiah that he would suffer and die and then see the light of life." We are told in Luke 24 that on the same night Jesus appeared to the disciples and showed them the nail marks in his hands, he also opened the Scriptures to them and showed them from Old Testament how these things had to happen.

This morning we share that double joy with the disciples. With the eyes of faith we have seen the risen Lord and touched the nail marks in his hands. With the eyes of faith we seen the detailed prophecies about Jesus' resurrection carefully fulfilled by our heavenly Father. With Peter we can say, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of this fact."

Amen.