

Common Christianity

Easter 2

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Acts 4:32-35

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our Lord had told Thomas that “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” It wouldn’t take long for this to be a reality. Before our First Reading text from Acts chapter four, Luke records two influxes of new believers—people who had not seen what the apostles had seen, and yet who came to believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection.

The first influx is recorded in Acts chapter two. Those who heard the proclamation of Peter “were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:42, 47b).” So first three thousand heard from Peter and believed; and then even more “day by day.”

But that doesn’t include influx number two. We learn about that influx in Acts chapter four: “many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand (Acts 4:4b).” Again, five thousand men—not counting women or children.

Added together, that makes at least eight thousand who heard the word of the Apostles and believed. And what did our Lord say about those who had “not seen and yet have believed”? That they were “(b)lessed.” That is how we find them in our First Reading text, blessed by God’s Word. Let’s take a look.

Verse 1

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common.”

The full number of those who believed—all eight thousand plus of them—“were of one heart and soul.” Is that really possible? Is it really possible to be of one heart and soul with others? Well, let’s consider: Is it possible for the universe and everything in it, and the whole heavenly realm, to be created in just six, twenty-four hour days? Is it possible for the entire world to be flooded? Is it possible for wooden staffs to become serpents and return to wood? Is it possible for a virgin to give birth to the Son of God?

With God all things are possible. And God has said that He will not let His Word return empty but that it will accomplish all the things He wants it to do. That is the work of the Holy Spirit: to work through the means of grace—the Word and the Sacraments, including the breaking of the bread—to bring us to and to keep us in the one true faith.

With God all things are possible which with men is impossible. Just consider how well Communism has worked out from a human standpoint. Communism, as Karl Marx had intended it, sounded very close to this passage. The problem was that it was attempted by sinful human beings rather than through the power of God through His Word. Here, in our text, we have Paradise-like conditions because the one who is working it out is not mankind but God. We can read that this is the case because it was not everyone of the time living this way but who? Only the Church. The community of those in one heart and mind about the Word of God.

This is not to say that we should expel capitalism from our government. After all, Paul would remind us that every government on earth has been established by God so we should not interfere with it, except as we are permitted through voting and the like. Rather, we are called to live as ones in the world, but not of it. We are

called to use our material blessings in the service of one another. That's what was happening among the Church as the apostles continued to proclaim the Gospel.

Verse 2

“And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.”

The apostles were using the authority to spread the Word about Jesus' resurrection that Jesus had given to them. Jesus had given them this great authority at the end of the Gospel of Luke. In addition, just before our text, the apostles had prayed saying, ““Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”” The apostles prayed this prayer just four verses before this one and here already we hear about God granting this petition. The apostles were proclaiming God's Son's resurrection with “great power.”

They were proclaiming the grace of God in sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for the sins of all people, and how God had done that in allowing His Son to die on the cross on Good Friday, and in raising His Son back to life on the Third Day, that very first Easter Sunday.

This is the same grace which we have received. Jesus' death was for the sins of all people throughout time, including you. Is this such a hard thing to believe? Is it difficult to believe that the very God who created time and who lives outside of it could not see your sins and place a Savior into the timeline of humanity even before you would be born? With man, this might be impossible. With God, all things are possible.

And God has given you the ability to believe that He sent His Son to pay for your sins, just as He has given you the faith to believe all the other things which His Word tells us which might sound impossible to us. Because it is by God's power that we are able to believe these things, it is also His power that He helps us all to believe the same things and to have one true and common faith. When He does this, He blesses us, just as Jesus had told Doubting Thomas.

Verse 3

“There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of land or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.”

Having heard the apostles' witness of Jesus' resurrection, those who came to faith as a result loved God and loved each other. They began to consider their possessions as God's possessions of which they had simply been made stewards. They made great efforts to help any of their brothers and sisters as “any had need.”

God has given us this foretaste of how things will be when His Son returns. Just as in the Garden of Eden, there will no longer be any sin. There will no longer be warring over property or rights because everyone will have everything in common. There will be no killing either, neither animals or people will harm one another. Everyone will be “blessed,” just as Jesus said.

By His death and resurrection, Jesus has paid the price for our sins and has given us assurance that we will rise from the dead to this paradise. To us, this seems far off and only a distant hope. But for God, who sees all and knows all, it is already a reality—we just aren't there yet. With God all things are possible, so

when He says that your sins are forgiven for the sake of His Son, they are already forgotten. In Jesus' Name.
Amen