

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobnier, Illinois
Holy Trinity A
June 7, 2020
Acts 2:14a, 22-36

The Church's Essential Message

But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, . . . 36 Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:14a, 36 ESV)

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Praise be to God! God's people gathered in His House to receive His gifts. Alleluia!

Last week we heard St. Peter declare, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). As he continues preaching, he tells more about this Jesus, the Lord who saves those who call upon His name. This Jesus had done "mighty works and wonders and signs" which should have been evidence enough that He was God in the flesh, the promised Messiah, the Savior of the world. After all, who but God can restore sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, walking to the lame, cleansing to lepers, casting out demons, feeding the multitudes, controlling nature, and, even, restoring life to the dead?

Yet, according to God's definite plan and foreknowledge, Jesus was turned over to lawless men. Indeed, we see and hear every day what lawless men can do – the destruction of property and life beyond comprehension. But in the case of Jesus, these lawless men killed the only person to ever keep God's whole law perfectly in every way by executing Him on the cross. But don't think that it was an accident, a tragedy, that God didn't know what was happening. For everything happened as it was supposed to happen so that sinners could be forgiven and saved. Everything happened according to God's plan.

Now, it's easy to point fingers at the lawless men who killed Jesus. But don't miss that those hearing Peter that day were told that this Jesus "you crucified and killed." Though they used lawless men to do it, they are guilty of Jesus' death. There's no getting around it. They should have known better. But instead of receiving Him, they rejected Him and even had Him killed, crucified like a common criminal. And God knew what was happening all along.

And what was the great plan or purpose that required the death of God's own beloved Son? It was your salvation. It was your forgiveness. Because you had blown it, too. No, you weren't there in Jerusalem shouting for Jesus to be crucified. But it was because of you that Jesus had to suffer and die. You see, it took the death of God's own Son to be the atoning sacrifice for your sins. Your sins had separated you from God, and there was nothing you could do to make

it right. Only God could fix your problem. And that is why God the Father sent His Son in the flesh, so He could suffer and die as your perfect substitute. Jesus took the full punishment for all sinners, in all times and in all places. Including you. Christ's sacrificial death – the shedding of His holy blood on the cross, His innocent suffering and death – purchased and won your full, free forgiveness.

And the proof of that is seen in Christ's resurrection. "God raised him up," Peter says, for it was not possible for the Son of God to be held by death. God the Father approved so much of what His Son had done by dying for the sins of the world, that He raised Jesus from the dead, victorious on Easter Day. Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

And this is the essential message that the Church proclaims, for it gives life. For though Jesus died He was not abandoned to Hades, the place of the dead. He was not left to see corruption, to rot and decompose. No, He rose from the dead on the third day. And all this according to God's Word. For death could no longer hold Him. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23), but Jesus had overcome sin. Without sin, death has no power.

The apostles had seen Jesus raised from the dead, bodily, over the forty days from His resurrection to His ascension. This was all part of the Father glorifying and exalting His Son, giving His stamp of approval to what Christ had accomplished, the mission for which He was sent.

This Jesus, exalted to God's right hand, now rules and governs all things with divine, royal authority. So Christ is victorious over all of His enemies – sin, death, the devil, hell – all defeated and conquered by our mighty Lord Jesus Christ. All that remains is for the final outcome of that victory to become evident at the Last Day.

That is when God will raise up you, dear Christian, you who believe in Christ Jesus your Savior. By God's grace, you and I will share in Christ's victory over death and the grave, the victory He graciously gives us. We will be raised from the dead unto life everlasting. Beloved, Christ Jesus has defeated your enemies for you! What wonderful news this is!

"Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing." You see, it all ties together. The exalted Son receives from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and then bestows the Spirit upon His Church.

That is what happened at Pentecost, and it continues to this day. Jesus gives the Spirit to His Church, to empower her preaching of the gospel, to bring salvation to untold millions of people around the world. This has been going on from the day of Pentecost, and it will continue to the day of Christ's return. God is doing something magnificent in our day. He is actively rescuing sinners, giving us salvation, bringing us the saving gospel. You yourself are among those recipients. The Holy Spirit is at work through the ministry of the church, through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, creating and nurturing faith in you and saving you for eternity. By

the Spirit's working you believe in your Savior Jesus Christ, you share in His victory. And by that same faith you know that you have a loving heavenly Father, who cares for you under all circumstances. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit--the triune God, on your side. It's all good!

That's why we are glad to sing, "Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener