

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church
Shobonier, Illinois
Easter 3B
April 18, 2021
Luke 24:36-49

Taking a Stand

Then [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, 46 and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:45-47 ESV)

In the Name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world.

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!]

The Scriptures say, “Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” (Heb. 10:23-25).

That's what Martin Luther did 500 years ago today, during the week after the Third Sunday of Easter, as he stood before a meeting of the emperor, electors, and German princes at Worms. He was asked, no, he was commanded to recant, to take back, everything he had written. His response was courageous:

“Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason, . . . I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen.”

He refused to be moved from his teaching except by the Holy Scriptures' correction, because in the Scriptures we hear the voice and promise of Christ Himself—He who promised, who alone is trustworthy. The Scriptures are that trustworthy testimony of God to us, a promise that brings God with His benefits to us. Yes, Luther had taken his stand on God's Word.

Jesus did too. After all, the Bible is all about Jesus and His death and resurrection in order to save sinners. Thus, that's what the Church emphasizes in her preaching. For when Jesus appeared to His disciples that Easter night, He was preparing them for their work after His ascension. He reminded them that He had spoken to them concerning “everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms.” This is a way of referring to the three main divisions of the Hebrew Bible: the Law of Moses or the Torah; the Prophets, which included the historical books; and the Psalms, which stood at the head of the section

called the Writings. Jesus here says that the entire Old Testament is about Him. He is the Christ, the Messiah, the one prophesied throughout the Hebrew Scriptures.

How so? How does that thread run through the Old Testament? Well, think of the first promise of a deliverer, given by God right after the fall into sin: the seed of the woman who would strike the serpent in the head, even as the serpent strikes His heel. Or think of the promise to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth would be blessed. The seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham—that's Jesus. Then there are the types of Jesus found in Israel's history, those who prefigured His ministry: Moses, who led the children of Israel out of bondage. Joshua, Moses' successor, who led them into the Promised Land. Aaron, the High Priest, who offered up sacrifices by which the people's sins were forgiven. David, the King, to whom it was promised that one of his sons would be the great King, the Messiah, who would have an everlasting kingdom. The Scriptures of the Old Testament are full of promises, prophecies, types—persons, institutions, and events—that all pointed ahead to what would finally be embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

It was all there in the Scriptures that the disciples had, it was right there under their nose, but still the disciples didn't get it. They didn't put it all together until after the resurrection, when Jesus here meets with them and opens their minds to understand the Scriptures. And that's why Jesus gives his "Thus it is written" statement, as a short summary of what it all boils down to if anyone is going to understand the Bible aright. He sums it up as follows: "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Jesus is saying this is what the Bible is about, what it's aiming at. If you don't understand the Bible this way, you don't understand it.

Thus, Jesus took His stand on God's Word since He came to fulfill all that was written there. He came as the Christ to suffer and to rise for our salvation, so that there would be forgiveness of sins for the Church to proclaim. This He did, the eternal Son of God coming in the flesh to suffer and die and rise again on our behalf. In the four Gospels, after establishing His person, who Jesus is, namely, the Christ, God's Son in the flesh, the focus is on His sacrificial suffering and death. And that's because that's where the salvation is. Jesus came to be the one who delivers all of sinful mankind from the bondage of sin and the curse of death—to deliver you and me by means of His atoning death on the cross. Only that would get the job done, to free us from the impossible death-trap we had gotten ourselves into. So that's where the emphasis lies, in the gospels, in the Creed, and in accord with the summary that Jesus gives right here, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer."

"And on the third day rise from the dead." Jesus came to fulfill that, too. The resurrection from the dead is the proof that what Jesus suffered was sufficient to take the sting out of death and give us life, eternal life, in its place. This is what we are celebrating during this Easter season—Christ's resurrection. For it's the guarantee of life not only for Him but for us as well. Christ shares His resurrection life with us and with all who trust in Him and are baptized in His name. This too is what is written in Scripture and fulfilled in Christ.

Therefore, the Church's preaching, what it should be about naturally follows. "And that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations." Repentance —the realization that you are stuck in your sins apart from God's grace, that you have no hope in yourself, that you are damned and doomed and rightfully so. Repentance is when the weight of your sins comes crashing down on you and you cry out to God, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." The Law has to do its work on your heart if you are to see your need. But then the preaching doesn't stop there. Then comes the Gospel, the forgiveness of sins. This is what Jesus has won for you, and He wants you to have it, to know it, to receive it. And it is through the foolishness of preaching that the gifts get delivered to your door. The Word of God is alive and active, and as the forgiveness is proclaimed in Jesus' name, that same Word is effective to deliver the goods and to give you what it says.

As Peter so preached in today's first reading, so I proclaim to you here today: Jesus Christ died for you. It was your sins He was bearing on that cross. You have no hope in yourself; your sins would condemn you. Death and God's judgment is all you would face. But Christ died for you. He took your sins and carried them away, paid for them in full. God is merciful, and He forgives you your sins for Jesus' sake. Your Savior now is risen—Hallelujah!—and you will rise with Him. New life now, and an even better, eternal life after that—glorified bodies, restored creation, no more sin, perfect fellowship with God and with all His people—this is what is in store for you who trust in Him. And I preach this now to you in Jesus' name. You can take it to the bank. This is the sure hope you have in Christ.

We live in an increasingly troubled and troubling world. We face troubles, trials, and tribulations of many kinds. Standing up for Christ, living as His people, saying what His Word says, is becoming more and more difficult as the world (and the devil) demands that we renounce God's Word and promises. The leaders and power brokers of this world refuse to listen to that Word and order their lives to it. And they demand that we don't either.

But, God help us in our day to be bold, to stand on the sure testimony of the Holy Scriptures alone as the source and norm of faith and life, to repent of sin and pride, and to trust in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. By God's grace and power, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."

Alleluia! Christ is risen! [He is risen indeed! Alleluia!] Amen.

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

Rev. Timothy J. Landskroener