

### ***Both Lord and Christ***

In the name of him who was raised from the dead, has ascended into heaven, and now reigns at the right hand of the Father, dear friends in Christ: This morning's reading from the Book of Acts is the second half of the sermon Peter preached on that first Pentecost after Christ's ascension into heaven. We heard the first part last week when we celebrated the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that happened on that day. So, in order to better understand what Peter is saying in today's installment, it will be helpful to review what led up to it.

Recall that the Holy Spirit made his grand entry with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and tongues of fire that appeared over the heads of the now Spirit-filled faithful. Attracted by the commotion, a large crowd of curious people gathers to find out what's going on. Some are Judeans who live in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas; but even more of them are pilgrims who have come from all corners of the Mediterranean world to attend the festival, Jews living in the Diaspora and Gentile proselytes to the Jewish faith. These visitors are astonished to hear the Apostles – a group of rustic Galilean fishermen – speaking proficiently in each of their native languages of the wondrous works of God. They understand that they are witnessing something truly miraculous, which inspires them to ask that most Lutheran of questions, “What does this mean?”

Calling for silence, it's Peter who stands up to address the crowd – presumably in Koine Greek, the one language they all hold in common. This is noteworthy: this is the same Peter who only 52 days before had three times fearfully denied even knowing Jesus when questioned by a servant girl. But now, emboldened and enlightened by the Spirit, he publically proclaims the truth of Christ with power and conviction. He explains to his eager onlookers that what they are seeing and hearing is the fulfillment of the promise which the Lord made through the prophet Joel that he would in the latter days pour out his Spirit on all flesh, enabling even the most humble and common people to prophesy in his name. *This* is the miracle you are witnessing, Peter tells them.

Put yourself in the crowd. This explanation sounds reasonable enough. If the Spirit of God is speaking through common people, he can speak in any language he chooses – even languages the speakers themselves don't know. But this in turn will raise other questions in the mind of Peter's hearers. “Okay, we can see that the Spirit has been poured out on you, but why is the Lord doing this *now*? What's changed? What made it possible at *this* time?”

The answer, we know, is the life and ministry of Jesus, the atonement he made for sin, and his subsequent resurrection and ascension into glory. We know that; but Peter's hearers don't. He has to connect the dots for them. And that's where today's reading begins.

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know ...” There's no denying any of that. Everyone present, even those who traveled great distances to be here, have heard of Jesus. His three year ministry directly touched the lives of thousands, and through their testimony many thousands more. It's a safe bet that there are standing in the crowd people who were healed by Jesus of some dread disease or injury. And almost all of them, if not healed by Jesus themselves know one or more persons who were. Even the enemies of Jesus don't deny his miracles. They just stubbornly deny the obvious conclusion they should have

drawn from them; namely that Jesus was a true man of God. Fortunately, not everyone is so obstinate.

Having established that point, Peter continues, “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, *you* crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” Some of this is well known to the crowd. Jesus was a major celebrity. And they all know what happened to him, at least as far as his arrest, conviction, and crucifixion are concerned. And that must have caused some mental incongruity. Why would our religious leaders be so thoroughly opposed to a man so clearly sent by God that they would seek his death? It wouldn’t make much sense, would it? Peter explains that this was God’s plan, that the Lord had a purpose in this.

This revelation really piques the curiosity of his hearers. Remember these are people well acquainted with the Scriptures. They know that one of the recurring themes of the biblical storyline is that what men intend for evil, God means for good. They’re going to want to know what good was accomplished by the death of Jesus. A bit harder for them to swallow is the charge Peter makes that they are all personally accountable for crucifying Jesus. It’s likely that some of them *were* part of the crowd that, stirred up by the high priest and his cronies, called for Jesus’ death before Pontius Pilate. But others could argue, “I wasn’t even in Jerusalem when that happened.” In Peter’s mind it makes no difference. He understands that every sinner is guilty of Jesus’ death, including himself (and you and me too. Let that sink in).

Peter doesn’t linger on the point, though. He moves right on to the resurrection, saying of Jesus, “God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.” And it’s interesting how he proves this. Because Jesus removed his visible presence from the Church at his ascension, Peter can’t point at Jesus and say, “And look folks, there he is, alive and well.” So instead he proves the resurrection of Jesus from the Word of God – the Word of God that cannot be broken. He quotes from Psalm 16, a passage written by David in which he speaks of his soul not being abandoned in the grave or the Lord’s Holy One seeing corruption, by which he means bodily decay.

Though written in the first person, Peter points out that David could not possibly be speaking of himself. David is dead and buried. His tomb is here in the city. And after 1000 years, there isn’t much of him left. Clearly, therefore, David was speaking prophetically of someone else, and not just *any* someone. The Lord had promised David a son, a descendant, who would also be *God’s* Son, and who would rule over the kingdom on David’s throne forever. This person, the One known as the Christ, the Anointed One, that’s who David wrote of, Peter declares. *He* would not be left in the grave or have his body decay – which means that he had to be dead and then raised to life again.

Having established that fact, Peter now makes the connection: “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.” This is where the eyewitness testimony to Jesus’ resurrection comes in. The apostles of Jesus and quite a number of others saw him alive. Over a 40 day period they spoke with him. They touched him. They ate with him. It was no illusion or wishful thinking. The sheer number of eyewitnesses – eyewitnesses who in many cases later died for their testimony about Jesus – makes the resurrection of Jesus one of the most thoroughly established facts in legal history. It’s compelling evidence that ought to be believed.

And Peter has *more* evidence than just his and the other apostles’ testimony. The outpouring of the Spirit is also evidence that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and has been glorified at God’s right hand. As Peter says, “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.” The crowd doesn’t get to see Jesus; but they do see the results of his exaltation. Again Peter goes to the Scripture to prove the point. This time it’s Psalm 110, another psalm of David that everyone recognized as speaking of the Christ, where it says, “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet’.”

It just happens to be the same Psalm that Jesus used when arguing with his opponents to prove the divinity of the Christ. He asked them, “Whose son is the Christ?” Having studied the Scripture, they answered, “He is David’s son.” Jesus shot back, “Then how can David call him Lord?” That would have been unheard of in a culture that honored parents above children. The only way David could refer to his descendant as Lord would be if that Son happened also to be God. So, when David says, “The Lord said to my Lord”, he was listening to a conversation between God the Father and God the Son. And the indication is that the Son is seated at the Father’s right hand, the place of highest honor and authority.

So, Peter has now connected all the dots: Jesus, a man who exercised God’s power on earth, crucified, killed, raised to life, exalted, and from his glorious throne above has sent the Holy Spirit, the proof of which his hearers can see for themselves. All of this supports Peter’s concluding statement, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Again, put yourself in the crowd. The hope of all Israel was the promise of the Christ to come, the Savior and Redeemer of Israel. He came as promised in the person of Jesus as true God and true man. And we killed him. His blood is on our hands.

Today’s text cuts off the crowd’s reaction to Peter’s sermon. I’m not sure why. Maybe because it’s Holy Trinity Sunday and what we read reveals the separate and distinct roles of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Just the same, I think we should go there.

The people in the crowd were filled with holy terror. The Spirit working through Peter’s words convicted them of their complicity in Jesus’ death. In wretched fear of God’s righteous judgment they cried out, “What shall we do?” And Peter preached to them pure Gospel: “Repent and be baptized each one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you too will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

I suppose that in our day and in this church, we hold these truths to be self-evident. They’re not. Just as Peter had to connect the dots for his hearers on the day of Pentecost to show that Jesus is both Lord and Christ, someone had to connect the dots for you to show you who Jesus is, what he did for you, what you did to him, and how you are saved through faith in him. In the same way the mystery of the Holy Trinity had to be revealed to you through the teaching of others who proved to you by God’s own Word that he exists eternally as three persons in one divine essence. Trust me, you would not have figured that out on your own. It took God’s Word and the work of the Spirit. And it still does.

Therefore glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. In our One God’s Triune name. Amen.

***Soli Deo Gloria!***