

“There Is Salvation in No One Else”
(Acts 4:8-12)

This morning, as I have mentioned already, we are here to celebrate the single most important event in human history, an event that took place about two thousand years ago in a small country called Palestine, an event that, no matter what we might personally believe concerning it, has forever changed the world in which we live, an event which all Christians everywhere hold very dear, for because of it, they know their future happiness is forever secured. That event is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without it there would be no Christianity. Paul tells us that if Christ had not been raised after His suffering and death on the cross, then there would be no salvation, then everyone who has died believing in Christ to this day has forever perished along with those who did not believe. Not only that, but we who believe in Him now will also perish, because if Christ has not been raised from the dead, we also are still dead in our sins. I think you would agree with me that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is important, as important as any other aspect of His work. Without it there would be absolutely no hope for anyone to escape the coming judgment of God. But because of it, we who have savingly believed in Christ are forever delivered from that judgment.

This is the message that Peter was trying to communicate to the leaders of his people so long ago. Peter and John had gone up to the Temple to pray. As they were about to enter, they saw a man who had been unable to walk from the day he was born sitting at the entrance, begging for some money so that he might buy some food. When they saw him, they said, “Look at us!” And as he looked up, expecting to receive something from them, Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene -- walk!” (vv. 4-6). They took him by the hand and raised him up. Immediately his legs were strengthened, and he jumped to his feet, walking and leaping and giving praise to God. This quickly caused a crowd to gather and provided the perfect opportunity for Peter to preach to them the Gospel of Christ, that they might possibly, if God willed, receive the gift of eternal life which God was offering them through His Son Jesus.

But there was a problem. The religious leaders of the people didn’t like this message and all the attention that was being drawn to the One they had crucified not long ago. This threatened their influence over the people, and opened up the possibility of losing their positions of authority. So they arrested Peter and John, and put them in jail. The next day they brought them out and began to question them as to who gave them the authority to do these things. Peter said to them, It was by the authority of Jesus Christ. This One they had crucified, was alive again. They could see that He was, for He was the One who had given them the power to make a sick man well. But they would also learn that He is even more powerful than this, for not only can He heal a man’s body, He can also heal a man’s soul. But how can He do this? How can He forgive the sins that a man commits against God and deliver his soul from destruction? ***The Scripture tells us He can because of two things -- His death and resurrection. Because Jesus died and rose again from the dead, He is now the source of eternal life to all who believe in Him.***

Now to see Peter standing before the leaders of the people, boldly proclaiming the death and resurrection of Christ, we might tend to think that Peter had always been a very courageous man, if we didn’t know any better. Actually, he had been quite a coward, until just recently.

When Jesus was on trial for His life, and Peter was waiting in the courtyard to see the results, he denied three times that he even knew Jesus, at least once in the face of a mere servant girl. He wasn't brave. He was like any of us would have been in that situation: afraid for his life. But look at him now, filled with boldness, preaching Christ to the rulers and elders of the people. What made the difference? He had received the gift of the Holy Spirit, that gift the Lord said He would give to all who believe in Him. Now he was filled with power from above, power to be a witness of Christ and for Him. Now he himself had become a powerful testimony to the reality of Christ's resurrection, for where did this power come from except from the same fountain of life that had earlier cleansed him of all of his sins and gave him an inheritance in the heavens: through the death and resurrection of Christ? It was the same power by which he had healed this man.

Where did this power come from? This is what these men wanted to know. Peter, where did you get the authority to make a lame man walk? We know that it didn't come from you. You're just a man like we are. How did you do it? The answer he gave is not what they wanted to hear. He said, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead -- by this name this man stands here before you in good health" (vv. 8-10). "You're right," Peter says, "This power didn't come from us, but from outside of us." It came from the man you crucified. It came from Jesus Christ. But He isn't dead anymore. He's alive! You know that He is, because you know that we couldn't have done this by ourselves.

Now this certainly would have struck them with fear to the very core of their being, if it hadn't been for their hatred of Jesus. It was probably only a little more than three months ago that they had crucified Him, because of their envy of Him (Matt. 27:18). Jesus had gone around preaching and teaching the people about the kingdom of heaven. To prove that His message was from God, He healed just about everyone who came to Him. He even raised the dead on more than one occasion. The leaders knew that He was from God, for no one could have done what Jesus did, if God wasn't with Him (John 3:2). But because His teaching also convicted them of their wickedness, they couldn't bear to listen to Him anymore. And because they were falling out of favor with the people, they had to do away with Him. And so they did, by falsely accusing Him and having Him put on trial by the Romans, who then took Him and put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. This was a terrible crime, the worst miscarriage of justice that has ever taken place in the history of the world. Jesus was not guilty. He had done nothing wrong to deserve such treatment. These men killed Him only because they were jealous of Him. But yet the Bible tells us that Jesus was guilty, guilty of having committed many severe crimes against God, an innumerable number of crimes that were infinitely wicked in God's sight, and He was justly being put to death for those crimes. But the thing we need to remember this morning was that these crimes had not been committed by Him. They had been committed by His people, and the Father was laying the guilt of them on Jesus and punishing Him for them.

This is the wonderful truth of the Gospel. Man owes God perfect obedience, because God made him and provides for him. But man rebelled, and fell under God's judgment and curse. There was no hope for him. But God was so moved with compassion, He sent His Son into the world to die in the place of all who would believe on Him. Let me explain this just a little more fully.

God originally made man in His holy image, so that He might have fellowship with him. And Adam did have fellowship with God in the beautiful garden God had made and put the man

in to cultivate and protect. But Adam sinned against God by eating from the tree that God told him not to eat of, and in doing so brought God's curse upon himself and all of his children. Because God had appointed Adam as our representative in that garden, He holds us responsible for Adam's sin. If Adam would have obeyed God, we would all have been blessed and would be living today in a perfect paradise on earth. But because he disobeyed, he and all of his children have fallen under God's curse. God told Adam, "But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17). Adam ate and Adam died, not physically, at least not right away, but he died spiritually. He no longer loved God, but now feared Him and tried to hide from Him. He also fell under God's judgment, and would have been sentenced to an eternity in hell for his crimes, if God had not graciously stepped in and saved him through His promise to send a Redeemer, who would one day die for his sins. This condition that Adam fell into is the same condition that every one of us in this room was born in -- dead in sin and separated from God. This was the future each one of us had to look forward to -- an eternity in a place that burns all around with fire. Each of us deserved this because of Adam's sin and because of the numerous sins we have committed. And this is what each of us here would have received from God, if God had not graciously stepped in by sending His Son.

Jesus had to come, and He had to suffer and die, if anyone was to be saved. And this is what He did. But how could this one man's suffering satisfy God? How could He ever suffer enough to fully satisfy God's justice against so many sinners? God is infinitely holy and infinitely worthy. Any crime committed against Him is an infinite crime. How could Jesus even suffer for one of these infinite crimes, not to mention countless such crimes committed by the countless multitude He came to save?

The answer is that this man Jesus Christ was also God. The Bible says He is the second person of the Triune God -- the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He is the Son of God who became a man by taking to Himself a human nature. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and was born into this world. He lived a perfect life. He kept His Father's commandments perfectly, something which we should have done, but didn't. And He willingly went to the cross and suffered and died for all those who would believe in Him. Because He was a man, He could die. And because He was God, His death was infinitely satisfying to the Father. God accepts what Jesus has done on behalf of anyone who will come to Him now through Jesus. He will forgive all your sins, even the very worst of them, reconcile you to the Father, and give you eternal life, if you will only believe in Him.

But how do we know this is true? How do we know that the Father will accept what Jesus did? This is why the resurrection is so important. When Jesus died, it looked as though His enemies had conquered Him. It looked as though death and the grave were His captors. It looked as though the devil, who had filled the heart of Judas to betray Him, the leaders of the Jews to hate Him, and the people of Israel to deny Him and cry out for His crucifixion, had overcome Him. But when Jesus was raised from the dead through the power of His Father, these things were no longer possible. This was God's declaration that He had received His Son's sacrifice and that His people were now safe. Paul writes, "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. . . . If Christ has not been raised your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ

all shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:14, 16-22). Paul writes in Romans 1 that Jesus “was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead” (1:4). Christ’s resurrection was His vindication by the Father that the Father had accepted His sacrifice, and at the same time it is our assurance that what Jesus did for us who believe has been accepted by the Father on our behalf. The Father laid the sins of His people upon Jesus on the cross. Jesus bore those sins and His Father’s punishment against them there. And the Father raised Him up again to show us that He has accepted His Son’s work, and that He has accepted those of us who are in His Son by faith.

Peter says that Jesus is the stone which was rejected by the builders, the religious leaders of the Jews, the builders of God’s spiritual house, the church. They were the ones who should have been leading God’s people into the truth. But when the One came who was the most important part of the building, the One who was the stone upon which the rest of the house should be built, they rejected Him; they put Him to death. But this was a part of God’s plan, for in so doing Jesus became the very corner stone of His church when He was raised from the dead. This is why Peter tells us now that “There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved” (v. 12). Only Jesus could have done what was needed to reconcile lost sinners to God. And now He is the only way to God. Jesus tells us this morning, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Have you come to the Father through Jesus Christ His Son? Have you washed away the guilt of your sins in Christ? Is He your Savior and your Lord? Does your life show that He is through your love for Him and your obedience to His commandments? If not, I would invite you to come to Him this morning and to take hold of Him by faith. Jesus says, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Believing in Jesus is not just knowing the facts about Him or believing that those facts are true. Certainly, you need to do this, but many have done this much and have still perished. Believing is actually trusting in Jesus and resting in Him alone to save you. It is turning away from everything that you have done, to rest in everything that He has done to save sinners. It is looking away from yourself to the One who alone can save you. And it is loving Him with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. If you have not done so, then I would urge you to do so this morning. You never know when your time will run out and you will stand before God. Isaiah writes, “Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (55:6-7).

But for those of us who have come to the Father through Christ, let us rejoice this morning for His infinite mercy. We had earned hell by what we have done, but God has given us heaven because of what Christ has done. Let us then purpose in our hearts to love and serve Him with all our time and strength, until the day He takes us up into heaven to be with Him forever. May the Lord grant us the strength to do so. Amen.