

Bible Class - Nov. 10,2019 - Pastor John Schierenbeck

How can we most effectively preach the gospel to our modern ages? Sometimes the answer to the question is to stress the ways the gospel can be proclaimed. We are urged to make the presentation of Jesus exciting or use gimmicks to draw people in. The Bible reveals that our task is simply to be witnesses. Each of us as individuals has the privilege of telling others about Jesus and what he has done. The gospel is intended to be proclaimed and preached to a world full of dying sinners. The results of our work can only be seen by God. The results of our speaking about Jesus receive their power and effectiveness from the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes we are surprised by the opposition of the world to Jesus and his saving word. We shouldn't be! This is the it always has been since the days of Noah and the times of Jesus himself. The apostles and early church in the book of Acts faced the opposition of the leaders of God's own people, the Jews. They also faced the ridicule of the Greeks or Gentiles, who worshiped many different idols. In fact the morality of the later days of the Roman Empire surpassed even the immorality we face in our day. Yet the word of the Lord grew not simply in spite of the persecutions but through the persecutions.

The message of the book of Acts that Jesus who was crucified, God raised from the dead. This means that Jesus was confirmed as the promised Messiah. It means that Jesus' sacrifice for the sins of the world was accepted by God as full payment for our sins. And finally it means that we too shall physically be raised from the dead to life everlasting.

In the resurrection chapter, 1 Corinthians 15, the Holy Spirit gives the simple gospel, "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses." Acts 2:32

The Proclamation of the Early Church (Acts) Centered in Jesus' Resurrection

1. Jesus Is the Promised Messiah

When the living Lord Jesus triumphantly ascended into heaven, he empowered his disciples with the Holy Spirit so that they could be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. The book of Acts reveals how this command was carried out as the gospel spread like wildfire through the Roman empire and beyond. The Apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles. The Apostle Peter addressed the many Jews and converts gathered in Jerusalem. He preached that God had fulfilled his Old Testament promises of the Messiah-Savior. God sent his son Jesus to his covenant people; however they crucified and killed their Messiah. The story did not end there. God raised him from the grave because it was not possible for death to hold him.

This was in fulfillment of King David's words in Psalm 16, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol (the grave), Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption." (Psalm 16:10) David was not speaking of his own body escaping the grave because his tomb was still in Jerusalem.

David by inspiration was speaking about the physical resurrection of the Messiah whose body would not see corruption. Peter concludes, "God has made Jesus both Lord and Christ."

The resurrection of Jesus is God's assurance that he was the promised Messiah and our Savior. The resurrection is God's declaration that Jesus is both Lord and Christ. Today in our proclamation of the Gospel we need to emphasize that Jesus conquered death and now lives and reigns as our Lord and Savior. A dying world needs to hear what the resurrection of Jesus means. Jesus lives! He is both Lord and Christ.

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.... Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:10-12)

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2. There Is Salvation in No Other Name

After the Day of Pentecost Peter and John went up to the temple, where they healed a man lame from birth in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When the people recognized what had happened, they were filled with wonder and amazement. Peter made it clear that they had not healed this man by their own power. Peter laid it on the line, "You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know." (Acts 3:15-16)

The result was that the Sadducees (group who denied the resurrection of the body) were greatly annoyed because Peter and John were proclaiming Jesus' resurrection from the dead. So they had them arrested and summoned them before the high priest and demanded, "By what power or name did you do this?"

Peter testified, "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole." (Acts 4:10)

There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. We also proclaim to people the power of Jesus' name to deliver us from our sins and save us from death. Jesus' resurrection is God's assurance of our eternal salvation. People are looking for answers to death. We have them in a living Lord Jesus.

"And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God *to be* Judge of the living and the dead. To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:9-15)

The Proclamation of the Early Church (Acts) Centered in Jesus' Resurrection

3. Whoever Believes in Jesus Receives Forgiveness

Peter was sent to a Gentile Roman centurion named Cornelius. God overcame Peter's reluctance to preach Christ to the Gentiles (non-Jews) by sending a vision commanding him to eat Old Testament unclean food. Peter preached the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, to the Roman centurion. He told him that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. God's chosen people put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day. The gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on these Gentiles, and Cornelius and his family were baptized.

We are commanded to preach and to testify that Jesus is the one appointed by God to be the judge of the living and the dead. This Jesus, who died for the sins of the world, will return in glory on the Last Day. On this day, all believers, Jew and Gentile, will participate in the resurrection of the body to life everlasting.

The resurrection of Jesus confirmed the witness of all the Old Testament prophets that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins through his name. We also have the privilege of telling everyone that because Jesus lives, whoever believes in him receives the forgiveness of sins he purchased at the cross. The death and resurrection of Jesus are a proclamation of peace for all sinners.

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter." (Acts 17:32)

The Proclamation of the Early Church (Acts) Centered in Jesus' Resurrection

4. Jesus' Resurrection Is the Answer to the World's Scepticism

Paul's missionary journeys brought him to Athens, the center of Greek intellectual thought and philosophy. The Greek philosophers were intrigued with hearing something new. In Athens there were altars to all the gods, they had found. There also was an altar to the unknown god in case they had missed one. Paul proceeded to tell them about the one true God. He told them about the God who created the world and gave life to his creation. This God is not an idol of gold or silver or stone. Paul then called the people to repent because God had appointed a man to judge the world. God raised this man, Jesus, from the dead.

This was as far as Paul got because when he mentioned the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. Others were polite enough to put him off saying, "We will hear you again on this matter." The Epicureans (eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die) and the Stoics (endure suffering) did not believe in the physical resurrection of the body. Their answer to death was being freed from the physical body. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 emphasizes the importance of Jesus' physical resurrection from the dead as he lays out the hope of our physical resurrection on the Last Day.

Today also people have no answer for death. For many, death is the end so enjoy life as you can. Others have no idea of what lies ahead after the grave. We have a message of life in the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead to life everlasting. Our message needs to center on the heart of the gospel. "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

"Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23)

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5. Paul Was an Eye-Witness to the Fact of Jesus' Resurrection

An apostle of Jesus Christ was one who had been with Jesus and was an eye-witness that Jesus was alive. He was sent out to testify to these facts. Jesus had twelve apostles. Paul is called the thirteenth apostle. This is because Jesus had appeared to Paul on the way to Damascus. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 testifies, "Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

Saul was the Pharisee who in his zeal persecuted the church in Jerusalem scattering the Christians who, as they fled, preached the word. Saul then set out for Damascus to arrest these Christ followers. It was on the way to Damascus that Jesus appeared to Saul in that light from heaven. Jesus called Saul to be his apostle to the Gentiles. We know Saul by his Roman name Paul. Paul's missionary journeys proclaiming Jesus crucified and risen finally brought him to King Agrippa where he witnessed that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead. This resulted in Paul's arrest and journey to Rome. Paul used his arrest as an opportunity to proclaim Christ.

This is the message of light and life that we have the privilege to proclaim to a dying world. We have received these facts in the Bible. These are facts we need to share with people who have no hope or peace in the face of death.

"These are the facts as we have received them, These are the truths that the Christian believes, This is the basis of all our preaching, Christ died for sinners and rose from the tomb." (WS 759)