Lent 5 • Ezekiel 37:1–14 • April 6, 2014

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Recommended Citation
Available at: http://scholar.csl.edu/cj/vol40/iss1/17

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Gallery.html#0). After describing what Jesus will go through, the sermon retells how Peter answers correctly Jesus’s question about whom the disciples say he is only to be quickly told to get behind Jesus when he tries to stop Jesus from going to Jerusalem.

The servant declaring that he will give his back to be beaten highlights Jesus’s determination to go to Jerusalem—his face set like flint. He will not hide his face from the degradation. He is in control of all that will happen to him. Philippians 2:8 is quoted here.

The sermon turns to the question of why Jesus would go through this suffering and humiliation. The picture used is of Jesus, his face bowed down in death on a crucifix. Jose Fuentes de Salamanca’s line drawing captures the drama and emotion well (www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.434983796589450.1073741829.393293137425183&type=3). The sermon moves beyond Jesus’s words to the weary, important as they may be, to the deeper purpose of Jesus’s work: forgiveness and eternal life.

The last verses of the text focus on the servant’s vindication. God will help him. No charges against him will stick. The ultimate victor against the servant’s enemies is certain. Indeed, the Father brings his Son from the grave and will not let him see decay.

The sermon finishes with a picture of Jesus as a shepherd holding a lamb in one arm and reaching out in invitation with his other hand, the scar from the nail visible. The proclamation is that because he lives we too will live. The sermon concludes with the encouragement to see ourselves pictured with Jesus because he is the Good Shepherd who not only laid down his life for us but also took it up for us.

Glenn Nielsen

Easter Sunday • Acts 10:34–43 • April 20, 2014

In this pericope, Peter portrays Christ’s resurrection as God’s vindication of his identity and his work. In the resurrection, God gives assurance that Jesus is Lord and the judge of the living and the dead. The resurrection also gives assurance that through his name sins are remitted (cf. Lk 5:20–25). The Jews who rejected Jesus did not believe that he was anointed with the Spirit and that “God was with him” (Acts 10:38), but instead believed that he had an evil spirit (see Lk 11:14–20) and regarded him as one who did not keep the law (see especially Lk 6:1–11). They also did not believe that he could forgive sins (Lk 5:17–26). These reasons were reflected in their taunt at the cross: “Others he saved; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, the chosen One” (Lk 23:35). But God showed that Jesus was his chosen One by raising him from the dead (cf. Acts 2:22–36), and that good, redemption, and forgiveness come through him.

Peter shows that the good news is not only for the “sons of Israel” but for anyone from any nation (Acts 10:35–36). To this point, Jesus has been identified usually with Israel’s redemption (e.g., see Lk 1:54; Lk 1:58; Lk 2:8–11; Lk 24:21; Acts 1:6). To be sure, the universal reach of God’s blessings through Christ had been signaled (e.g., see Lk. 2.32; Lk 7.2–10; and Ac 1.8), and God had promised this even to Abraham (Gn 12:3, 22:18). But the realization of God’s impartiality comes to light at this point in the narrative.
Notes for preaching

When Peter preached, his hearers spoke in tongues and praised God (Acts 10:46). An appropriate goal for this sermon is that your hearers will also praise God for his favor upon them.

You can do this by including your hearers in this story, just as Peter included Cornelius into the story of Christ. “Including your hearers” means assuring them God had demonstrated his impartiality to each of them by bringing each the preaching of the gospel and in the administration of the means of grace. “Including your hearers” also means promising them the good that the risen Lord will do and the redemption he will provide when he comes once again. Tell your hearers to expect Jesus to do for them what he did “starting in Galilee” and when he was “in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem.”

In doing this, be clear about Jesus’s death and resurrection as the reason for faith and hope. The theme is summarized in Psalm 118:22, “The stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.” Some who saw and heard Jesus firsthand did not believe but instead killed him. God, however, raised him from the dead, justifying the faith and the hope of all who believe in him.

Collect: Almighty God, grant that we who have celebrated the Lord’s resurrection may by your grace confess in our life and conversation that Jesus is Lord and God; through the same Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever. Amen.


There is a sense in which we all know this story, not just because it turns up in the lectionary every three years, but because what Peter and the apostles say has become a kind of “prime directive” for living out our Christian faith in this world. It helps us to make sense of St. Paul’s statement: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom 13:1 ESV). St. Peter’s call to honor the king (1 Pt 2:13–17) and even the fourth commandment are explicated by this statement.

That is good and proper, but on the second Sunday of Easter that really is not the emphasis. Rather this is a call, on this and every day, to be witnesses to Christ’s resurrection, his enthronement at the right hand of God, and the gift of repentance and forgiveness of sins which he gives. So that with the apostles we can say, “We are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him” (Acts 5:32).

As we read the story of those first days and weeks of the rest of our life it becomes obvious that Peter and the apostles really lived by the credo of our text. Remember how