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Easter 2 • Acts 5:29–42 • April 27, 2014

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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.

First Lesson: Acts 5:29–42, Acts 5:29: “Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men.””

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

it went: following the resurrection and ascension came the day of Pentecost and the powerful witness of the Holy Spirit through Peter and all the others. Then Acts reports Peter and John's encounter with the crippled beggar whom they healed in Jesus's name. This miracle caused many to believe but also ended with Peter and John before the Sanhedrin saying of Jesus, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 ESV).

Later there was another imprisonment and a miracle release that resulted in the apostles standing in the temple courts teaching the people. As they were being arrested, the high priest addressed them, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (Acts 5:28 ESV). And so we arrive at today's lesson and are able to reflect on the meaning of all these things.

That leads to the realization that Acts 5:29 really is not primarily about our relationship to authority. What it is about is our relationship to the Triune God who calls, gathers, and enlightens us because of Jesus's resurrection. It is today's psalm (Psalm 148), which calls on us and all creation to "Praise the LORD!" It is the gift of peace offered and received on the day of resurrection (Jn 20:19–31) and our response to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

And even our response is not really our own—that would fail. It is rather the gift of God and the call of his Holy Spirit; it is the fulfillment of Gamaliel's prophecy that "If this is of God, you will not be able to overthrow [the apostles]. You might even be found opposing God!" (Acts 5:39). Thus, we are encouraged and enabled to preach that Jesus is the Christ whom God has exalted as leader and Savior to give repentance and forgiveness of sins.

HE IS RISEN! He is risen indeed.