Easter 3 • Acts 2:14a, 36–41 • May 4, 2014

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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.

David Wollenburg
Peter’s command to repent is in the second person plural: “you all repent!” It is the whole faithless people of Israel who are here called upon to repent; there is no distinction when it comes to this command. It is given for all. Reference to the “crooked generation” shows that this command to repent goes far beyond those present, and the book of Acts as a whole will show that the whole world stands under this command.

Yet, Peter’s next command is in the second person singular: “Be baptized every one of you.” Note the same pattern in the epistle: “If you (all) call upon as Father the One who judges impartially in accord with the actions of each (person). . .” This proclamation of the crucified and risen Lord and Christ encompasses all in its call to repentance but addresses each individual personally in its offer of salvation. It encompasses all the world in its expansiveness and draws in each individual in his or her situation. It is for “all those whom” the Lord our God calls, and, again, the rest of the book will make clear to apostle and reader alike just how many that is.

Peter refers to the world as a “crooked, dishonest, unscrupulous” generation. We may think back only as far as the gospels when we hear these words, but they go back much further. Moses decried the Israel of his time, the Israel who beheld the salvation of the Lord in the exodus from slavery in Egypt, as a crooked generation (Dt 32:5). Now this generation has not only seen and rejected the ministry of our Lord, they have seen the exodus that he accomplished in Jerusalem (cf. Lk 9:31)—and still they refuse him.

It is unfortunate that the text ends with the addition of 3,000 souls and does not include the description of this new community’s life together. Today’s preacher will likely be preaching to an already baptized congregation; vv. 43–46 would allow for greater application of this word to his people. Whether read or assumed, the inclusion of these verses could result in the following outline:

I. A Word for All
   A. Jesus is Lord and Christ!
      1. Crucified by/for you
      2. Raised and vindicated by God
   B. Repent!
      1. It is not too late
      2. The invitation is for all

I. A Word for Each One
   A. Be baptized!
      1. Each person joined to Christ’s death and resurrection
      2. Forgiveness and the spirit of life given to each one
   B. Rejoice!
      1. The Lord saves from this crooked generation
      2. The people of God are reborn, raised to a new life of devotion to their Lord and “fervent love toward one another”

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