

Third Sunday of Easter
April 14, 2024
All Things though Christ Jesus
Acts 3:11-21

Life turns on a dime.

Just when things were looking up and going well things started to fall apart once again.

Yes, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan went extremely well and we were successful in accomplishing the objectives that were set, but now we see war after war exploding around the world. The wars we fought to make us secure over 20 years ago seem to have been lost for all we gained initially.

Sure, we survived COVID-19 and seem to be ok overall, unfortunately we have come to agree that there will always be various viruses and coronas to deal with.

Just when we thought we had a handle on most major diseases with inoculations and preventative measures and effective cancer treatments, now we have new diseases that can resist efforts to eradicate them causing many in the medicinal arts to be ever vigilant for more unknown viral evolutions.

And worst of all, just after we discovered thousands of unaccompanied children separated from their parents crossing our Southern border and finding success reuniting them with family back home or in the states, we discovered that tens of thousands are unaccounted for and we have no idea where they may be, with the very thoughts of what may have become of them reaching horrific levels in our minds but ever so hopefully not in reality.

In the Acts of the Apostles today the disciples Peter and John confront this evil head on when they are faced with a paralyzed man in Solomon's Colonnade. Just before our reading for today they find him sitting in the courtyard collecting coins thrown to him by people who showed compassion for a man that was not able to work and provide for his own livelihood.

Peter and John face him and ask him to look at them. He immediately complies, possibly waiting for the money that he thinks will be tossed in his direction. Then, by the power of God, they said to him, "...in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, get up and walk."

People watched in amazement and immediately wanted to be in the presence of these two men who seemed to have some magical power. In fact, they are so amazed they ran to them around the temple walls from the colonnade as they observed the crippled man, now able to walk, refusing to let Peter and John go for the miracle perpetrated upon him.

Then Peter and John do something shocking. They actually begin to *accost the crowds* for their interest in this power and the redemption of the paralyzed man. They point out to them that the

very power that was so amazing to them was from Jesus himself, the very Jesus that they just crucified. This power to heal and make whole came from the very man that they nailed to the cross and screamed out in frenzy before Pilate that Jesus should die a horrible and painful death and a murderer be set free in his place.

All the disciples knew this was an injustice done to a man that never knew any sin at all. Pontius Pilate the Roman Governor knew that this was an incredible injustice as well, and only allowed it to keep the peace in Jerusalem. But now it was time that the people for whom Christ died knew this as well. How ironic that the very people who needed him dead were the ones that made sure that he died. For even our unrighteous acts fell into God's plan for our redemption.

Just look at what sin can do.

It can take a world that seems to have health and longevity issues solved, yet sickness can still enter the world and kill whomever it encounters.

Sin can take normal, peaceable people, and cause them to lash out for selfish motivations and kill, hurt, and emotionally abuse innocent people.

Sin can even cause people to bite the hand that feeds them. Sin can even put God himself on the cross.

Sin does not ultimately win. Certainly, it causes pain, and we are definitely in a world of pain and suffering, and that will not discontinue just because our sins are forgiven. But what Jesus accomplished by rising from the dead, does prove that sin's ultimate ability to destroy and kill the body is not more powerful than our God who can raise that body from the dead.

Yes, children are hopelessly missing and likely dead or worse. We all suffer and are lost because of this sinful world and eventually if not immediately die. But because we believe that Christ has risen from the dead, we now have hope beyond the grave.

The tomb in Jerusalem was filled by the hands of sinful and wicked men. That tomb is now empty by the power and Glory of God over those who would seek to destroy the body.

The Body rose, the body was redeemed, and the body now has been perfected in glory, never to decay again. So, we who believe that Jesus did indeed die and rise from the dead, will also rise on the last day.

This is where the real power comes in knowing God. So many of us want control, we want our say, and our determination. But here in the account today, Peter and John make it clear that power comes from Jesus and is thereby channeled through us for His glory.

Just look at what Jesus' name means: salvation.

Salvation for the child that is lost forever. Salvation for the one too sick to be healed by our therapies. Salvation for a war-torn world with limited resources and a lost respect for life. Calling upon the name of our Lord means salvation for the sinner, who has no one left to call to.

And we cannot call on it, in and of ourselves. We must rely on the Holy Spirit Jesus sends to speak for us and through us. We may be confident and aware of God's limitless desire to spread to all who believe they are sinners that need to be saved.

But most of all we shall give Him the glory for any good thing that he does through us; being fully aware that we have the power of the Most High on our side, knowing there is no limitation to what we can accomplish if it is according to His will.

We have many challenges that face us as a congregation of Christ. Trust and believe that if God is for us who can be against us. For nothing is impossible with our Lord when we do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us.

Now may that peace which surpasses all understanding guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus always.
Amen.

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