

The Resurrection Effect

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INI - SDG

Acts 5:29-42 ²⁹ But Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. ³⁰ "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. ³¹ "Him God has exalted to His right hand *to be* Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² "And we are His witnesses to these things, and *so also is* the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." ³³ When they heard *this*, they were furious and plotted to kill them. ³⁴ Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them: "Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. ³⁶ "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was slain, and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. ³⁷ "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census, and drew away many people after him. He also perished, and all who obeyed him were dispersed. ³⁸ "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹ "but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-- lest you even be found to fight against God." ⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

For a long time, astrophysicists were quite certain of the existence of black holes, even though they had never seen one directly. The truth of their existence was deduced by the effect they have on the objects around them. Similarly, long before they ever found Pluto, they knew it was there because of the effect that it had on Neptune. The effect of these things could be seen, and their existence known even when these things themselves could not be seen.

Similarly, the truth of Christ's resurrection is quite evident even if we have never seen the risen Christ, by the simple fact of the effect it had on not just the apostles but everyone anywhere near to it.

The effect of the resurrection is seen in our gospel reading and in our sermon text this morning. In our gospel reading Thomas who would not believe declare Jesus to be "Lord and God." In our sermon text the apostles who ran in fear in the garden of gethsemane, not only stand up to the Jewish council, but they do it without any fear. They are happy to be counted worthy to be persecuted for Jesus' sake.

Peter talks about this effect that Christ's resurrection has in our epistle reading:

1 Peter 1:3 [He] has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

This same Peter makes it clear in his sermon in front of the Jewish leaders that there is a threefold effect which Jesus' resurrection has on the life of the apostles and on our lives as well:

A Living Hope

The Gift of Repentance

Obedience To God

A Living Hope

The first effect in our lives is that Jesus is risen from the dead and the result is the living hope, or you could translate it "the hope which leads to life." This is the hope which changes everything.

In our text Peter mentions that "**the God of our fathers raised up Jesus**" and made Him "**ruler and savior.**"

In our epistle reading Peter mentions that "**He has caused us to be born again to a living hope.**"

If you knew that in one year you would receive 100 million dollars, would it change the way you live right now? I bet it would. You don't have any more money now, but it would almost certainly change the way you live. You wouldn't really have to worry about saving for the future. You would probably put off any major expenses, or some people might go ahead and buy on credit whatever they want, either way it would be a change. And most of all even if you did none of the other things, you would probably spend your time in conversation about what you are going to do when you get the money. Your thoughts would suddenly become all about what will be in another year.

The apostles knew that they were receiving a treasure far greater than 100 million dollars. This living hope most certainly changed their life. In our text you can see clearly how this living hope filled their lives. They weren't interested in building houses and settling down, they weren't interested in making sure to save for retirement. They certainly weren't ever going to stop talking and thinking about what they had seen and heard.

In our gospel reading we heard about Thomas, Thomas the doubter, Thomas who would not believe unless he touched the holes. There is a hill in India called Mount Saint Thomas. I've been up that hill many times. That hill is the spot where Thomas was martyred for proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus even to the end of the earth. That same Thomas who at first would not believe spent his life walking from village to village across the width of India proclaiming the simple truth that Jesus is risen indeed. Thomas did all this because he knew that Jesus was risen from the dead and that truth filled his life with that living hope.

The Psalmist talks about this same living hope in Psalm 46:5

Psalm 46:5 God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.

With these words the Psalmist describes the vast difference between those who stumble in the dark and those upon whom the light has risen.

The Apostles knew what was waiting for them in the life to come. That hope filled their lives.

The Gift of Repentance

The Resurrection of Christ also change our life by giving us the gift of repentance.

We don't usually think of repentance as a gift but that is precisely what Peter calls it in our text. It is not the call to repentance or the decision to repent but the gift of repentance. Look at the difference this gift makes in the lives of the apostles versus the Jewish leaders.

If you look down at verse 33 you will see that those who heard Peter, "were furious." The Greek word here is sometimes translated "cut to the heart."

We haven't had the Pentecost reading yet, but you may remember that at Pentecost Peter gave a sermon and they also were "cut to the heart." The words in Greek are different, but they are also similar in meaning. In both cases the people were cut to the heart, but in one case it led to repentance and in another to a life of hatred and anger.

God's word is the sharp sword which cuts to the heart. God's word confronts us with our sin. We saw on Good Friday the punishment of our sin. We can react to that cutting with anger or with repentance.

Because of Christ's resurrection we no longer have to be angry people instead we have received the gift of repentant hearts.

We probably all know someone like these Jewish leaders. Someone who always holds grudges. Someone who can never let go of the past. Someone who, no matter what happens in their life, is always someone else's fault. Someone who is always pessimistic. Such people refuse to accept blame, and refusing to accept blame turns them into angry people, like these Jewish leaders.

All of us have that sinful attitude which reacts in anger in us, but through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have been given the gift of repentance. We can accept blame for everything and still rejoice, because we know that we are forgiven through Jesus. We can be forgiven and forgive as we are forgiven.

The apostles are beaten and still walk away rejoicing. They don't live in anger at what has happened to them. They live in the joy of Christ's resurrection and the forgiveness they have received.

Obedience to God

Finally, Peter says these gifts are given to those who obey God.

This might seem very odd to us that Peter talks thus about God giving His gifts to those who are obedient. That sounds like work righteousness. However, remember how Peter began this sermon. Is it right to obey God or Man? He is drawing the line between those who follow human authority and those who follow Christ's authority. He is challenging the Jewish leaders, this is what Christ has promised to those who follow after him, what do you have to give to those who follow you?

In verse 31 he calls Jesus "ruler," that is one to be followed. He also calls Jesus "savior." We are obedient in following Him but only because He has forgiven our sins.

This obedience is not so much our doing as it is Jesus'. Just as the force of the sun's gravity pulls the planets into orbit, so too Jesus' resurrection pulls us into orbit around Him, and He gives these gifts to us. This is exactly what Jesus himself told His disciples:

John 12:32 "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself."

This is not the obedience of the law which demands and threatens but has no power to help. This is the obedience of the gospel which is Christ pulling us to Him through His word.

Even without having ever seen Jesus, the effect of his resurrection is quite obvious in the lives of the apostles, and in our lives as well. The proclamation of Jesus' death and resurrection draws us to Jesus. Drawn to Him through His word, His resurrection changes our life. His resurrection is the only thing to talk about. His gift of repentance allows us to rejoice in all things rather than be angry in all things. Amen