

2nd Sunday of Easter
Acts 3:12-20
Sermon #684
April 12, 2015
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¹²When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

¹⁷“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. ¹⁹Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus.

In the name of our risen Savior, dear friends and fellow redeemed:

Now what? Easter is over. The huge crowds have left the building. The massive choirs and brass instruments won't play for awhile. Special Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services are filed for another year. Now what? Doesn't it feel like a big let down? Doesn't it feel like its back to normal, back to the old way of life? NO! Easter is not just a one day celebration. Easter is a day to celebrate every week and every day of the year - even in our everyday, personal lives. Too many of us go on living our lives as if Easter had never happened. Not this year. This year we are going to

LIVE IN THE POWER OF JESUS' RESURRECTION

Don't you wish you had unlimited power to help you through life? You do. And Jesus' resurrection doesn't give us power for just one day. Jesus' resurrection gives us power

1) for this life and

2) for eternal life.

After Easter Peter, John and the other disciples certainly did not return to their old way of life, but rather lived in the power of Jesus' resurrection. And just before our text Peter and John displayed the power of Jesus' resurrection in the life of a lame man. This man was born paralyzed. He never crawled, never stood up and never took one single step for over forty years. When he became an adult, his friends carried him to the Temple gate so that he could beg for money. When Peter and John passed by, he asked them for money. They stopped and asked the man to look at them. Then Peter looked directly into his eyes and said, **“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk”** (6). Then Peter grabbed him by the hand, and the man stood up. He tested out his feet and began to walk. He went into the Temple walking, jumping around and praising God. He learned first hand what it means to live in the power of Jesus' resurrection.

Soon a crowd formed and came to Peter and John asking, "How did you do that?" Peter responded with the words of our text. The first thing he did was point out that the power did not come from Peter and John. Nor did he want the people to think they were so godly that God gave them special power. No, this power came from Jesus. Peter said, **“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus”** (13).

“The power to change that lame man's life came from Jesus,” Peter said, “the same Jesus you killed.” Then Peter went on to remind the people just how they killed Jesus. They falsely arrested and accused him, then handed him over to Pilate. They completely rejected Jesus as their king before Pilate and demanded that Pilate crucify him. Even the heathen Pilate wanted to let Jesus go. Then the people demanded that Pilate release the murderer Barabbas. They preferred a murderer over the Holy, Righteous Son of God. And they killed the author of life. They put to death the very one who had the power to change their lives.

Do you want power to change your life? I'm sure the lame man wanted nothing more than to walk. What do you want? Do you want God to take

away your cancer? Give you children? Give you a spouse? Give you a date? Do you want God to fix your marriage or your friendships or your money problems? What do you want? There is only one place to find such power - in Jesus' resurrection.

The power to change our lives comes from Jesus, the same Jesus we killed. You do realize that we are just as guilty for Jesus' death as the crowd that shouted "Crucify!" Our sins nailed Jesus' to that cross. We didn't arrest him, but we do deny him as our King. We sometimes think that life would be easier and more fun if we could just live it our way. We didn't ask for Barabbas, but we do exchange the Holy, Righteous Lord for a murderous leader. We invite Satan into our heart. We let our sinful nature decide what's good for us. We think they can give us a better life. Sometimes we just plain deny Jesus. We say with our lips that we want his help, but we go on living as if he's dead. We don't truly believe that he has the power to help us live this life.

"NO!" Peter said. **"You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this"** (15). Just when it looked as if Jesus had no power...just when it looked like sin and death and Satan truly did rule this life - then the one, true God glorified his servant by raising Jesus from the dead. Jesus displayed his almighty power by conquering the strongest of enemies. He conquered the one enemy that ended life and took it away. He conquered death.

Now God has glorified his servant Jesus by giving power to his name. Peter said that it was the power of Jesus' name that comes through faith that healed that lame man. And it is the same power of Jesus' name that comes through faith that changes our lives.

Live in the power of Jesus' resurrection. Quit acting as if Jesus is dead or has no power; quit acting as if Jesus cannot help you. What do you want? Ask! Jesus has all power and he displayed his power in the resurrection. If he can conquer death, he can give you anything you want. That doesn't mean he will. Jesus also has all wisdom and knows what's best for you. But if he chooses to deny your request, he will give you something better. And while you wait, he promises to give you strength to live. You don't have to

lie down depressed or frustrated or worried or anxious. Jesus is with you and gives you strength to live in the power of his resurrection.

And more importantly, the power of Jesus' resurrection will also give you power to live for eternal life.

God foretold all that had happened. The betrayal, the arrest, the trial, the crucifixion, the death and the resurrection - God foretold all of it. He spoke through the mouth of all the prophets. Moses said that God would send a prophet like him to speak God's word. David said that his best friend would betray him and that God would not let his Holy One see decay. Isaiah foretold of all the suffering God's servant would endure. The entire Old Testament pointed to one person - Jesus. As the Christ or the Messiah Jesus suffered just as prophesied.

God used the ignorance of sinners to fulfill his plan of salvation. Peter told the crowd before him that when they killed Jesus, they acted in ignorance just like their leaders. Obviously, they knew that they were putting someone to death. But what Peter means is that they did not realize WHOM they were putting to death. They knew that Jesus claimed to be the Christ, but they did not believe him. Jesus himself acknowledged that they did not know what they were doing.

When we reject Jesus, we too often act in ignorance. In our minds we know what God promises. He promises to be with us. He promises to make all things work for our good. He promises to give us all we need, to protect and care for us. In our heads we know what he says, but in our hearts we do not always believe him. That's ignorance. The ironic thing is that we do believe Satan, the father of lies. He tells us that God doesn't love us and we believe him. He tells us that we can enjoy life more if we ditch God and we believe him. He tells us that Jesus has no power and we believe him. That's ignorance.

In response to ignorance Peter pleads with his crowd and us to repent and turn to God. Peter begs us to deny Satan and believe God. He asks us to turn away from Satan and turn to God. The best way to do this is to renew your baptism. Rather than drowning out Jesus and living according to your

sinful nature, drown your sinful nature and live in the power of Jesus' resurrection.

Peter describes what it means to live in the power of Jesus' resurrection. First, he says that God will wipe out your sins. Imagine a notebook that records all of your sins. Every time you sin in thought, word or deed God writes it down in your file. God records pages and pages of your sin. Then you repent and ask God to forgive you. You confess that you are sinful to the core and certainly don't deserve God's forgiveness. But you trust in God's promise to forgive you because Jesus died on the cross for you. Imagine God erasing every sin in your file one by one until the book is completely clean.

Second Peter says that God will send you times of refreshment. When I was in college I worked at a bakery where I fried donuts. Whenever I came home from work, I smelled like grease and was covered in grime. Nothing felt more refreshing than a clean shower. Every day you and I work hard in this world. When we come home at night we are covered in sin and smell like filthy guilt. Nothing feels better at the end of the day than a clean shower in God's forgiveness and grace. That forgiveness and grace refreshes us. And it gives us a new attitude to live the next day in the power of Jesus' resurrection.

Finally, God promises to send Jesus to us again. After this life has ended, God has appointed Jesus to come back to get us. At that time the Christ will raise our dead bodies just as he raised himself. And he will take us out of this sinful world to live in his perfect home.

Now what? Now we know the power of Jesus' resurrection. Now we know that Jesus has the power to help us live our lives here on earth. Now we know that Jesus has the power to forgive our sins and take us to heaven. We will not return to the old way of life. Now we will live in the power of Jesus' resurrection for this life and for eternal life! Amen.