

JESUS IS RISEN, INDEED!

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter

May 1, 2011

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

Hecla, SD

**Text: Acts 2:14a, 22-32 *But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: "...Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'* Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses."**

Theme: EASTER CONFIDENCE

- Jesus' confidence about Easter
- Our confidence from Easter

In the name of Jesus Christ who lives, and was dead, and behold is alive forevermore; dear fellow redeemed in His name,

Confidence is a tricky thing, isn't it. Confidence can be a great attribute or it can be a great weakness. On the night of Jesus betrayal, Peter sounded pretty confident in himself. Though Jesus warned Peter that he would deny Him three times that night, Peter confidently asserted that he would face death with Jesus rather than denying Him. We know well how that evening went for confident Peter, as he folded under the pressure of a servant girl and denied knowing who Jesus was. Peter's problem was that he had confidence in himself and his own strength to stand side by side with Jesus. However, life without confidence can be paralyzing. Lack of confidence makes one afraid to ask for a raise at work or ask a girl out on a date.

But what about confidence as a Christian? Are we confident about our faith and about our future, or are we paralyzed by uncertainty? When we talk about confidence

as Christians, it is very important that we recognize where our confidence lies. God wants us to be confident about our relationship with Him and about our future with Him. But where do we find our confidence as Christians? Does our confidence lie in ourselves, in our abilities, and in our perceived strength of faith? If so, we are no different than Peter on the night he denied Jesus. Rather our confidence is to be found outside of ourselves. It lies in Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. Let us therefore consider this morning “Easter Confidence” by looking first at the confidence which Jesus had about Easter and the confidence Easter gives us. May the Holy Spirit strengthen our confidence in the words and promises of God!

#### JESUS’ CONFIDENCE ABOUT EASTER

Would you describe Jesus as being a confident person? Absolutely! While He was humble, loving, and gentle, He was by no stretch of the imagination wishy-washy or milquetoast. He was confident in His teaching. He was confident in His work. He was confident in His mission in life. In the weeks leading up to His suffering and death on Good Friday, Jesus tried to prepare His followers for what was coming. In Matthew 20 we read, **“Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify.”** (Mt 20:18-19a) Jesus knew exactly what was waiting for Him in Jerusalem - death. And not just any death, possibly the most cruel form of death man has ever conceived of - death by crucifixion.

But Jesus never ended the discussion of His crucifixion by just saying that He would die. No. He always ended it by confidently saying, **“And the third day He will rise again.”** (Mt 20:19b) Every time He told His disciples about what was going to happen to Him, He always ended by saying He would rise from the dead. Jesus was confident that He would rise from the dead on Easter.

Where did this confidence of Jesus come from? As the omnipotent (all-powerful) Son of God, Jesus certainly had every right to be. He had all power in heaven and on earth. If that doesn’t give one confidence, nothing will. Yet, when Jesus humbled Himself and took on the form of a servant, He relied on His Father. Unlike Peter, Jesus found His confidence in the words and promises of His heavenly Father. We hear of that in our text for today. Our text is taken from the Pentecost sermon of Peter, but is quite fitting to consider on the Sunday following the resurrection. In his sermon Peter speaks at length about the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Peter says in verse 23 that Jesus was, **“delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”** Jesus’ death and crucifixion was part of God’s plan from eternity. While God didn’t make the unbelieving Jews or the Romans do what they did to Jesus, it was all part of God’s plan.

Jesus betrayal, beating, and crucifixion was God’s plan to redeem us and Jesus knew this because He knew the Word of God. He knew Isaiah was writing about Him in chapter 53, when Isaiah wrote that He would be **“stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted.”** Jesus knew that Isaiah had written that He would have to be **“wounded for**

***our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.***” (Is 53:4-5) Therefore Jesus was confident of the suffering and death that awaited Him in Jerusalem, because He was confident of God’s plan of salvation as laid out in Scripture.

But as we said early, Jesus always ended the discussion of His Passion by saying that on the third day He would rise again. This too Jesus was confident of and His confidence came from the words and promises of God. Peter tells us of this when he quotes from the words of King David in Psalm 16 in our text, ***“For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption.”***

Peter makes known in our text that David was not writing of himself in this text because David is dead and buried and had been decaying or corrupt for many centuries. David was not writing of himself in Psalm 16. Rather the Holy Spirit was using David to write of Jesus. God would not abandon the soul of Jesus to Hades, or the realm of death. God would not let the body of Jesus decay or become corrupt. David was prophesying of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

This is where Jesus got His confidence. He knew the Word of God. He knew God would not abandon Him in the grave but would raise Him to life again before decomposition set in. Jesus was confident because of the words and promises of God. He knew the word of God could not lie. Therefore, David prophesied of Him in verse 25 and 26, ***“I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope.”*** Jesus always kept the LORD before Him. His Word and will was always foremost in His life. He confident He would rise from the dead because the Scriptures said He would. And when Jesus appeared to His disciples on Easter eve He told them the same. ***“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day.”*** (Lk 24:46) Jesus’ confidence about Easter was grounded in the words and promises of God.

## OUR CONFIDENCE FROM EASTER

At the end of verse 25, we hear David speak of Jesus saying, “the Lord ***is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.***” That word “shaken” is a word rich in meaning. It refers to something that was thought to be very stable unexpectedly and disastrously shaken. It would be a fitting word to use after an earthquake. You never expect the earth beneath you to move. But the people of Japan could tell you a much different story. Jesus did not expect to be shaken because the Lord was at His right hand. He always kept the Lord before Him. He knew the words and promises of God, and because of that His confidence in the resurrection would not be shaken even as nails were pounded into His hands and feet.

There are many things that shake our confidence. Things that we think are stable and certain in this life. We think our parents, spouses, or friends will always be there for us. We think that we will always have our health or our finances. We think those things are stable and not going anywhere. But then those things that we thought were very

stable in our lives are suddenly shaken up. Cancer hits us or a loved one. A parent, spouse, or child dies and it shakes up our whole world. Suddenly nothing seems certain anymore.

***“The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.”*** (Is 40:8) Every aspect of our lives in this world is affected by sin. Sin affects our health and our finances. Sin affects our families and our marriages. ***“The grass withers, the flower fades,”*** God says. But let us learn from the events of Easter to find our confidence in the words and promises of God that stand forever.

Now if Jesus had not risen from the dead on Easter, we have many things to worry about. Paul writes to the Corinthians, ***“If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!”*** (1 Cor 15:17) If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, none of God's promises are valid. Our faith is worthless and we are still accountable to God for our sins.

But, Peter writes in the last verse of our text, ***“This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses.”*** God DID raise Jesus from the dead. Jesus used the 40 days between His resurrection from the dead and His ascension into heaven to PROVE that He was alive and had really risen from the dead. He wanted witnesses that were CONFIDENT that He was alive. And Peter says, *we are all witnesses. We saw it. It is true. He has risen, just as He said He would.*

What does this mean for us? Easter means that we can now be confident that ALL of God's promises will be kept. God has promised that His Son's sacrifice on the cross paid for all your sins. Easter proves it. Paul writes to the Romans, ***“(Jesus) was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification.”*** (Rom 4:25) The reason He died was to take away all of our sins. When He was raised to life, it was God's declaration that we are not guilty in His sight. We have been reconciled to God. Through Jesus we are at peace with God. He is our loving, heavenly Father and we are His children. As His children God has many precious promises for us in His Word. As He says in Jeremiah, ***“For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”*** (Jer 29:11) This is the confidence we gain from Easter.

What is it that has shaken your confidence right now? Finances, crops, health, family, marriage? God has much to say about these things in His Word. Let us search diligently His Word and learn those precious promises He has made to us. If Jesus rose from the dead, that means God means every one of them and will keep every one of them. Let us learn not to place our confidence in ourselves, but in the words and promises of God who loved us, gave His Son into death for our sins, and raised Him from the dead on the third day for our justification. This is our Easter confidence. Praise be to our risen Lord! Amen.