

Text: Acts 2:22-32. Second Sunday of Easter. **April 27, 2014.**

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Do you know someone who, no matter what you are talking about, always brings it back to the same subject, like that is all that matters? Maybe it's politics. That's always fun, talking with someone who thinks that politics is all that matters. Maybe it's sports. Every time we go on a vacation, no matter where it is, my brother always asks, "Did you see the football stadium? Did you go to a baseball game?" like that is all that matters. Maybe it's how your mother remembers that one birthday when you said you liked that one kind of dessert and now she makes it every birthday, even when you are 42, like that is all that matters on your birthday. Let me just say, God bless my mother for still making my favorite dessert on my birthday. One of Jesus' closest followers was a guy like that. His name was Peter. For Peter, the resurrection was all that mattered. Not in an annoying way, but in a wonderful, amazing way. Peter was so happy about the resurrection of Jesus, so filled with joy about the resurrection of Jesus, Peter just couldn't stop talking about it. The Bible records many sermons Peter preached and as you read them, they all focus on, are centered on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is all that matters. The resurrection is all that matters.

There's real, solid evidence of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus was accredited by God to you. His life was full of miracles, signs and wonders of every kind. You know about them. You heard about them. You are witnesses of them. You can't deny them. His life is solid evidence. His death is solid evidence. His death, horrible as it was, happened by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge. Even Jesus' death happened by God's plan and under God's control. Think about that when you are suffering and you won't suffer as badly as Jesus did.

But there's an aspect of Jesus' death that's terrible, almost too terrible to talk about, but it's a terrible truth we need to hear. It's hard to hear it. Hard to read it. Hard to talk about it. It's almost impossible for me to say this, it's so horrible. You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Man, I don't like to hear that. You, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross. That stabbed a dagger in the hearts of the first hearers. You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. It still brings tears to the eyes today. You, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. We can blame the wicked men. Everyone does it. He started it. But that doesn't change the evidence. I am the wicked man! I nailed Jesus to the cross! I am holding the nails. I am driving them in. I am using the hammer. I, without the help of anyone else, put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross!

But God raised him from the dead. The resurrection is all that matters. My sins are buried. The resurrection is all that matters. God freed Jesus from the agony of death. The resurrection is all that matters. The agony of death was only temporary for Jesus. The agony of death is only temporary for you. Intense, yes. But only temporary. The resurrection is all that matters. God raised Jesus from the dead. God will raise you from the dead. The resurrection is all that matters. The resurrection is all that matters. It was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. That's a really cool sentence. It was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus. It will be impossible for death to keep its hold on you. Death will release you. Life will grab you. Jesus will grab you and keep his hold on you forever. We saw Jesus place his firm hold on Hudson this morning. Jesus won't let go. It's impossible for Jesus to lose his hold on Hudson. We will see another young man, Kaven, promise his faithfulness to Jesus this morning, promising, "I won't let go of Jesus." Hudson, Kaven, Jesus won't let go of you. Don't let go of Jesus. Jesus rose. That's all that matters.

You see, without the resurrection, we have no reason to believe in Jesus. Without the resurrection he's just another teacher, just another martyr. But because of the resurrection we see everything differently. We see Jesus' life differently. He wasn't just a good teacher who did a few magic tricks. He lived a perfect life and his miracles are God's evidence of that. We see Jesus' death differently. His death wasn't God's plan gone out of control. His death was God's deliberate plan under God's perfect control. The resurrection proves Jesus was perfect. The resurrection is God's solid evidence to you, that your sins are forgiven. The resurrection really is all that matters.

The Scriptures themselves back this up. When Peter preached, he wasn't just putting forth his own ideas. He preached the Scriptures. He quoted from the Scriptures. These verses are part of a longer sermon in which Peter quoted from several different parts of the Bible. I know that preaching seems outdated and we even say, "Don't preach to me." But God used this one sermon of Peter to change the hearts of 3000 people in one day. God has always used preaching. God is still changing hearts by preaching. I am in no way claiming that I'm one one-millionth the preacher Peter was. But we still have the same tool to change hearts: preaching God's Word.

God's Word gives evidence of the resurrection. Peter pointed to one piece of evidence, verses from Psalm 16. A man named David, who was the king of Israel, spoke these words. Did you catch his joy, his happiness when he thinks about, talks about the resurrection? My heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest in hope. You will fill me with joy in your presence.

When you think about the resurrection, you can't help but be happy. The great enemy of death is defeated. My greatest fear is literally buried and dead. I'm going to rise. I'm going to be in the presence of God, in perfection, for all eternity, all because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ!

Yes, we can pick out some parts of David's words that express his joy, but notice that David isn't really talking about himself. David is talking about Jesus! Peter made sure to make that perfectly clear. David was looking ahead and by another of God's miracles, David saw Jesus. David saw the resurrection and David saw that the resurrection of Jesus was all that mattered.

Look at how complete Jesus' victory over death was. We already mentioned it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Jesus. Sorry, I just had to throw that sentence in again. It's just so cool. There was no chance that Jesus was ever going to lose. There was no way that death could ever keep its hold on him. Jesus' victory was so complete that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. Stop and think about that. This was a time without refrigeration. Funerals were usually held the same day as death to take care of the body quickly and bury it before decay set in. Yes, they had spices and balms, but they still couldn't stop the decay, or the smell. Just a couple of weeks ago in one of our Scripture readings, we read about a man named Lazarus who died and he was dead for four days, only one day more than Jesus. The people were very concerned that Lazarus and his grave were going to reek! There was going to be a bad smell from a dead body. But not Jesus' body. His body did not decay. His body completely defeated death. His body totally rose back to life.

Let's be clear and let's say it confidently. God has raised this Jesus to life! I find it striking that Peter can speak with such confidence, such boldness, that Peter feels he has the right to say everything to these people. Look at what he just told them, "You, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing him to the cross." It's amazing anyone was still around to hear the rest of the sermon after that. But Peter spoke with a confidence that people could not ignore. God worked in the hearts of these people the conviction, "What Peter says is true. Maybe I don't like to hear it, but it's true." As they listened, they were glad they stuck around. Peter didn't end with that painful message of the law. Peter ended with a wonderful proclamation of good news, what we call the Gospel. The Gospel is God's news: Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose. Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose.

Jesus lived. Jesus died. Jesus rose. Those are the facts. Those facts give us confidence to speak. Right, I mean, Peter ended this section with these words, "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it." We are all witnesses of it. A witness doesn't have to follow some cleverly invented story. A witness simply tells what he has seen and heard. A witness doesn't have to travel to Africa. A witness tells the people she already knows. A witness doesn't really even need coaching or training. A witness has evidence and facts and joy spilling out, that others can't help but see. You are all witnesses of the resurrection. You are all witnesses that the resurrection is all that matters.

Kaven, today you are a special witness. It might be the only time in your life you got a dozen people to come to church for you. And today is a wonderful day, in the white gown, like maybe you wore at your baptism, standing before Jesus and making your promises, receiving Christ's body and blood for the very first time. But in an hour, the white gown will be off, in a day, the promises will get sketchy, in a year or two a job and car will come calling, throw a girlfriend and a few late Saturday nights in the mix and it will be easy to forget today. It will be easy to think that job and car and friends and school and cool are all that matters. But remember. The resurrection is all that matters. The resurrection is the only evidence you need. You are a witness of the resurrection. The resurrection is all that matters. Amen.