

Grace, mercy and peace are yours in abundance through faith in our Risen Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹² When 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? ¹³ The 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. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By 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. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. **This is God’s Word.**

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Last week we celebrated Easter. It was a great Sunday as we sang a lot of Alleluia’s, and had a special liturgy. The front of the church was decorated with Easter Lilies and Palms and the Easter banners have been hung. Our focus was on the resurrection of our Savior and how that is essential to our faith. So what now? What do we do for the next 6 weeks of the Easter season of the church year?

We don’t want to let the excitement of Easter to die so we are going to continue to sing Easter hymns, this week the front of the church is still decorated with Easter Lilies and Palms and we still want to keep our focus on Jesus – our Risen Savior. As we focus on our sermon text this morning, it won’t be hard to see that this is another one of, **“Peter’s Post- Easter Sermons.”** Peter helps us to, **“Keep the Focus on Jesus,”** and **“Just as He Calls the People to Repentance, so He also Calls Us to Repentance as well.”**

I. The event that led up to Peter’s sermon was very simple. He and John had been going to the temple for afternoon prayers. There was a man begging at one of the temple gates – he had been crippled for a number of years and couldn’t walk. Most of the people knew this man because he was a regular fixture at the gate.

Peter and John stopped in front of this man and got his attention. the man was expecting a few coins but Peter said to him, **“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”** ⁷ **Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.”** (Acts 3:67). The man followed them into the temple and people were amazed when they saw this.

Peter asked them, **“Why are you so surprised?”** We did this in the name of Jesus – the same man many of you had seen do similar healing in the past. But Peter’s next words might have been somewhat unexpected.

With his next words Peter was asking, **“Remember Jesus?” “You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”** The same man they had hailed as king when he rode into Jerusalem and a few days later they were yelling for his crucifixion. Peter reminded them that when Pilate was trying to let Jesus, who was innocent go, they rejected Jesus and said to let his blood be on them and their children. This was the same Jesus who was righteous and gives life who you traded for a murderer who takes life. And the final blow, “You killed the author of life.” Pretty harsh words – words the people didn’t want to hear but needed to hear if they were to understand the meaning of Peter’s next words and what it meant for them.

“God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.” Even though these people had a hand in the death of Jesus, God raised him from the dead. Peter and John and others were witnesses. They had seen the risen Christ. Peter also pointed out, **“¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.”** Jesus finished what he had come to do and God glorified him. Paul in his letter to the Philippians testified to this as well, **“⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:9-10).

II. This seemed like a some pretty harsh words but Peter did not leave them to despair over their sins – his witness for Christ wasn’t yet complete. There was more.

First he points out, **“¹⁶ By 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.”** Faith brought this man healing – both physical and spiritual healing as Peter says that he was given complete healing. But then Peter tells the crowd that they acted in ignorance; encouraged and pushed by those who hated Jesus. But God used their actions for his purpose. It was necessary for Jesus to go to the cross to redeem the sins of the world.

But now it was time for the people to consider what they had done and to take action. Peter told them, **“¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”** There is hope. Acknowledge your sin and turn from it and the Lord will forgive your sins – wipe them out and bring you times of refreshing.

That is what we all need. As Peter was preaching the Law – talking about how the people were responsible for the crucifixion and death of Jesus – what was going through your mind? Were you cheering Peter on – Yeah, get em Peter. Or did the Law touch your heart as well? Too often we are willing to point out someone else’s sins but want to hide our own.

Peter's sermon was for us too. We are just as guilty as the people he was talking to because our sins were right there pounding the nails into our Savior's hands and feet. He was on the cross to pay for all of our sins and they aren't always done in ignorance. Sometimes we know what we are going to do is wrong but we do it anyways.

But Peter doesn't leave us in despair. He encourages us to **"Repent and turn to God."** As we turn to God he wipes our sins away as he forgives them and he wants to refresh us through this forgiveness. That is what Easter is all about – God's love for each one of us that brings us renewal for our soul by the assurance that our sins are forgiven.

Not only does God renew us but he continues to speak to us and guide us in our lives. So Don't forget the Easter celebration but rather look forward to coming to church and celebrating our Risen Lord and Savior for the next 4 weeks. He is the one who brings us complete healing, especially healing for our soul. He is the one who refreshes us through his Word. Amen.