

Easter 2 2/28/19
Acts 5:12-32 C
Confirmation Sunday

BUT PETER AND THE APOSTLES ANSWERED, “WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN.”

Shortly before His ascension, Jesus said this to the apostles, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Ac 1:8).” When the Day of Pentecost came, the Holy Spirit came, and look what happened. They were in Jerusalem, they were at Solomon’s Portico, they were speaking about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for the salvation of all people. They were regularly doing great signs and wonders, and people were coming out in droves to see them. They were even bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and all these people were being healed.

Do you see what is happening here? The word of Jesus is being fulfilled. People are coming to faith in Christ in multitudes. The Apostles are held in high esteem. “But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy (v. 17).” They should not have been surprised by this because Jesus said it would happen, “But before all this, they will seize you and persecute you. They will hand you over to synagogues and put you in prison, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name (Lk 21:12).”

They should not have been surprised they got in trouble for preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus. They knew what Jesus said to them. But more than that, a chapter before our reading in Acts, Peter and John were at the temple they called Beautiful and there was a lame man there.

They healed that lame man, he leapt to his feet and began to walk. And they preached and taught the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The people were quite interested in that. But, the Priests and the Sadducees arrested Peter and John. And they brought them before them and questioned them about the healing. Peter and John gave this testimony: “by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom God raised from the dead – by Him this man is standing before you well (Ac 4:10).” That put the priests and the Sadducees between a rock and a hard place. They couldn’t deny his healing – the lame man was up, walking around. So, they gave them this warning: Don’t tell anyone about Jesus. Keep your mouth shut.

But Peter and John didn’t listen, and neither did the rest of the apostles because they were all locked up in prison. And the reason they are all locked up in prison is because of jealousy. Here the apostles are, out preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They are doing great signs and wonders and miracles. And the Sadducees said: now, our influence and power over the people is being threatened by these guys. So, they arrest the apostles. The best way to stop this is to throw these guys in prison. It was a good plan except for this: the apostles of the Lord are locked up in prison and at night an angel comes and frees them from the prison, “Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life (v. 20).”

What did they do? They returned to the scene of the crime – they went back to the temple and began to teach the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – again. What? Are these guys crazy? Think about it – You’ve already been arrested and warned, “Don’t tell anyone about Jesus.” Then, you go ahead and do it and get arrested and thrown into prison – again! Then, you get busted out of prison and what do they do? They go

back to the scene of the crime and start preaching about Jesus. This is a dangerous undertaking – telling people about Jesus to people who don't want to hear about Jesus.

In a few minutes, our catechumens will swear their confirmation vows, just as you did on the day of your confirmation. It will be easy for them to do their vows today, because the pastor will tell them what to say. The challenge for them, and for each and everyone of us, is living our those vows every day, because you know what its like to tell people about Jesus to people who don't want to hear about Jesus.

You know what it's like to say "Thus says the Lord," to people who don't want to hear what the Lord says. Thus says the Lord, I created the heavens and the earth and all that is in them in 6 days, out of nothing, simply by my Word; evolution is a lie of the devil. Thus says the Lord, "I knit you together in your mother's womb; Abortion and euthanasia are wrong, they are sins against the 5th Commandment. Thus says the Lord, marriage is the lifelong commitment between one man and one woman; two men or two women cannot be joined together in the estate of marriage; and in fact, all sexual activity outside of marriage, including living together, is a sin against the 6th Commandment. Thus says the Lord, if your neighbor offends you, grieves you, go talk to your neighbor, just the two of you; gossiping about your neighbor, even on social media, is a sin against the 8th Commandment.

You preach those words, and no you may well not go to prison, but you will pretty much get the same reaction the apostles got: people will look at you, despise you, and want to be rid of you. The day that happens, don't be surprised, Jesus said it would happen. When it does happen, take your cue from the apostles.

Take a look at these guys. They've been busted out of prison, they're back at the temple, preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The high priest and the Sadducees and the whole council of Israel have assembled. They don't know the apostles have been busted out of prison, so they send for them to be brought out. But, what do they find? A locked-up prison with no apostles. So, they send officers to bring them before them. The high priest confronts them, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us (v. 28)." Peter and the apostles' response is, "We must obey God rather than men (v. 29)."

We must obey God rather than men. That's why they went back to the temple and preached the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's why we are gathered here this morning. And that's why you keep telling people about Jesus, even when they don't want to hear about Him.

We have to understand something about this obedience: It is not law. Not law, we better do this, or God will strike us down. Not law, we have to do this so that God will reward us with eternal life in heaven. No, this is obedience borne out of the love for God for you in Jesus Christ. That love that He delivers into your heart and life by means of Word and Sacrament. Which is why in their vows, our catechumens say they will be faithful in their use of the Word and Sacraments, because there are the means God uses to do in His work in you, so that He can do His work through you.

God has raised up Jesus Christ from the grave to be your Savior. The **RED** carnations our catechumens wear today reminds them that Jesus went to that cross was because of you and your sin. There, He willingly shed His blood and died for you. On the 3rd day, God the Father raised Him to life again and that is proof positive that all of your sins are forgiven.

Forty days after Jesus was raised from the dead, He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God.

From there, He gives the gifts of repentance and the forgiveness of sins. And He does that through His Word. His Word comes to bear on you: "I have not kept my confirmation vows, I have not done the things God would have me do." That is the repentance God works in you through His Word so that you turn from your sin and turn in faith to Jesus Christ and He forgives all your sins. God the Holy Spirit works through the Word, that Word preached by the apostles and spoken by you in your dealings with other people, to bring it to bear on people's lives to work repentance, so that they receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation.

Do you see why the enemies of the Gospel told the apostles to stop telling people about Jesus and why they kept going back again and again to proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ over and over again? The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. And wherever and whenever that Word of Jesus' death and resurrection is proclaimed, people receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. That is why we must obey God rather than men.