

We Are Witnesses

Acts 5: 27-32 NRSV

This morning message will be coming from, Acts 5: 27-32,

*27 When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, 28 saying, “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,^[a] yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man’s blood on us.” 29 **But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than any human authority.^[b] 30 The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.” (NRSV)***

Let us pray, God the one who see us, Christ the one that saved us, and the Holy Spirit, the one who sustain us. Let the words of my mouth and the wrestling in my heart be acceptable in thy sight. O Lord our strength, O Lord our liberator, O Lord our freedom fighter. Asé and Amen.

This morning we find ourselves immersed behind the sense of a meeting between the Council of Sanhedrin and Peter, one of the Disciples of Jesus Christ. We all know Peter, Peter was a Jewish fisherman, while many also know him by the name of Simon, Peter was called to be a disciple of Jesus earlier stages of ministry. Peter is acclaimed to be from Bethsaida in Galilee and lived in Capernaum during the ministry of Jesus. This man was one that was both rash and loyal, hasty and firm, gentle and great to anger, and for quite some time has been on this journey with Jesus and his ministry. Peter was the one rebuked, and in turn was rebuked by Jesus when the Jesus prophesied that he would suffer and die. Peter was not perfect, and perfection was never on Peter mind. Peter experienced a lot in life, so much so that during the threat and arrest of Jesus, he denied the Lord, but among the Apostles, was the one who confessed the sonship of Jesus. Peter has experienced and has watched for almost three years, a man, one that is both human and divine travel through communities and towns of those that have been marginalized, exiled, and abused be set free, liberated, healed, and loved. Peter has broken bread with Jesus, worshipped with Jesus, prayed with Jesus, hiked with Jesus, and even has been challenged by Jesus. And just days ago, the very same man, that He have loved, work with, and grown deeper in community with has been sacrificed right before their eyes. And now Peter finds himself again with the Council of Sanhedrin.

It is important for us to remember that the Council of Sanhedrin, the council that Peter is speaking to in this text and that the Disciples have been incarcerated by and now facing judgement by is the same council that throughout the Gospel, is responsible for the scheme and death of Jesus Christ. And now Peter finds himself, in a meeting with the council because the Council does not want Peter and the other disciples to continue the teachings of Jesus Christ. And Peter declares, as Peter declares **We are Witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”** Peter and these Disciples have seen and experienced the very idea and

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prophecy of the Messiah, not only live and walk the earth, but also be raised from the dead! Peter and the Disciples have witnessed the horrors of the crucifixion but also the power of the Resurrection, and for some reason, they just can't loose of it. They cannot undo the things they have witnessed, and they have been transformed and convicted. Peter tells the Council of Sanhedrin, that the things that they have experienced as follower of Christ, and now the experience of the resurrection of Christ, has done something to the inside of them and their soul, it has changed their way of thinking, and being, and has stirred up something in their soul, so much so that they are to be Witnesses! Peter testifies with this simple declaration that the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is not just a one day celebration of an empty tomb, but the resurrection is something so much greater, that stirs something up in your soul. Like Paul says, there Fire shut up in my bones. Peter is making the claim that now that they have experienced the resurrection of Christ, they cannot do what they use to do. What do we do now, that Jesus has been crucified and has been risen as the Savior and as the Messiah? What changes now that Jesus has risen? How do we make sense of this?

These are the questions, that I believed, the Council and the Disciples was trying to figure out as they have attempted to arrest, incarcerate, and bring judgment on Peter, the Disciples, and others that continued to teach the teachings of Christ Jesus. Now that Easter has past, now that we have celebrated an empty tomb, now that we have been given grace and life, now that Jesus has been wounded for our transgressions, now that Jesus has been bruised for our iniquities, now that Jesus suffered, and now that Jesus risen! **How do we live as a resurrected people?**

Peter and the Disciples have seen the crucifixion and the resurrection, and they cannot keep silence about it. They have witness it for themselves, and they can't stop teaching about. They have seen Jesus in risen form and have become something greater than they were. And yet, Peter and the Disciples find themselves still facing backlash and resistance from the Council of Sanhedrin because the Council doesn't want them to teach in the name of the crucified one. But Peter says, with boldness and confidence that We are Witnesses. Peter makes it clear, that the reason they still teach in the name of the one who died on the cross is because the idea Jesus presented, the life Jesus lived, the justice that Jesus fought for, the agape love Jesus gave and the truth that Jesus exhibited could not be killed on a cross because it still lives today. And this is where, I believe we can answer the question, that to live as a resurrected people, we must be Witnesses!

The work and ministry of these disciples have changed and has been transformed, they are no operate in fear and doubt because they have evidence that they served a Resurrected Savior, and they no longer just go by belief that Jesus is their savior, but they now **KNOW** that Jesus is their Savior.

That's why they have continued the teach in the name of Jesus Christ, that's why they still go into impoverished communities and feed them. That's why they still go to those that are sick and heal them. Because they Know they serve a Risen Savior!

Can we just put a pause right here because I know that I am not the only one, that knows that Jesus is our Risen Savior! That the reason we are not where we could have been is

because of Who he is! That the reason we haven't given up is because we know how holds tomorrow. That the reason we are still here today, is because we know God to be a healer! We Know God to be a way-maker! We know God to be a comforter! We know Jesus to be a friend. Is there anybody, that knows- Because Jesus got up, Because Jesus has risen, Because Jesus now sits at the right hand- We have a Savior!

That's what Peter and the Disciples are trying to get us to understand, that we can no longer allow the normativity and status quo of life to oppress, stop, and consume the lives of people, ourselves, and others because we are now a resurrected people! We are witnesses, we have experienced the transformative power and love that God brings us each morning. We know what it feels like to be loved, even when we don't love ourselves And Peter is calling us today to be witnesses so that others can experience the affirmation and love that we have today.

How do we live as a resurrected people?

I invite you this morning to consider what it might mean to live in that joy as post-resurrected people. A joy that is not self-centered, but a joy that is people centered. A joy that embodies all both neighbor and stranger. A joy that celebrates not only the empty tomb on Resurrection Sunday, but for days after the resurrection. I invited you this morning to ask yourself, how do you plan to live and be in community knowing that Jesus is the Savior, and that we have newness because of the crucifixion and resurrection. Peter and the Disciples do not go back to their old ways of doing things, after knowing that Jesus has risen, better yet, they become more determined and firmer in their belief and knowing that Jesus is the Savior and continues the work of Christ. The resurrection may have happened once, but the impact and benefit of the resurrection occurs and has a opportunity to occur every day over and over in the lives of some many others, if we commit just like Peter. Easter is not just a one-day celebration or a celebration of an empty tomb, but it is a season and time that should remind us of the commitment of Christ to love, justice, and truth and the work that Christ started, and the power that we now have that Jesus has risen! So, Today, I charge you to not only celebrate the empty tomb, but I charge you to strive every day to be an example of love, justice and truth which is the power that was once inside of the empty tomb and provide love to the world that God loved so much, that God gave God's only begotten son.

How do you choose to live as a resurrected people?

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