

“GOD RAISED HIM UP”
ACTS 10:34-43

Every preacher, every week asks himself the same question, “what do you preach this week?”

- ✓ What do you preach to those who are suffering by walking through the valley of the shadow of death? (Six church members have had mothers die in the past 4-6 weeks.)
- ✓ What do you preach to those who are suffering physically — and they think they may be dying?
- ✓ What do you preach to young moms and dads who are struggling financially — and struggle to make wise financial decisions and provide for the family?
- ✓ What do you preach to teenage boys who are being tempted daily (hourly) with sexual allurements and with promises of a good life and easy life without problems and difficulties?
- ✓ What do you preach to an older person who answered the phone from an unknown number and gave her bank password to someone he didn’t know and lost hundreds of dollars (and he’s done it before) — and he is having trouble getting justice and sympathy from her bank? And he’s angry at himself?
- ✓ What do you preach to the sufferers, sinners, and sinned-against? Where is hope and encouragement?
- ✓ What do you preach on Easter Sunday when people have heard the story many times before and while an interesting story, it is an old and so familiar story it no longer seems compelling?

What you do is you preach the one truth, the one message, the one word of hope that will help. And if you can’t find a way to say it in a compelling way, you preach someone else’s sermon — which is what I am going to do today. But I’m not plagiarizing — I’m preaching Peter’s sermon in Acts 10.

Let me give you the context: a few days prior to this sermon, a Roman soldier named Cornelius who was “religious,” trying to honor God (10:2) received a vision from God in which he was told to send for a man named Simon. And the next day, Simon (Peter) had a vision of animals that were declared unclean by Mosaic law and God declared them clean (3x). And while he contemplated the meaning of that vision (v. 17), Cornelius’ men arrived and asked Peter to go with them to Cornelius in Caesarea. When he arrived there two days later, Cornelius said he was ready to hear Peter’s message. And vv. 34-43 are Peter’s answer. In this sermon, Peter reveals the centrality of Christ and the simplicity of the message of Christ —

CHRIST IS LORD. BELIEVE IN HIM AND BE FORGIVEN AND FREED.

Cornelius is one of the most important stories in the book of Acts; it takes two chapters to tell the story and give the report (chs. 10-11). Yet Peter’s sermon is a simple and concise explanation of the gospel. Peter provides **three characteristics** of the message of Christ —

- 1. The Message of Christ is For ALL PEOPLE (vv. 34-35)**
- 2. The Message of Christ is... (vv. 36-41)**
- 3. The Message of Christ is For PROCLAIMING (vv. 42-43)**

1. The Message of Christ is For **ALL PEOPLE** (vv. 34-35)

- When Cornelius' men came to Peter and then Cornelius explained his vision to Peter, Peter **understood** (v. 34) the significance of his vision (v. 17) — and he also understood a broader truth.
 - ✓ God has always had a love for all the nations of the world.
 - God promised Abraham that the nations of the world would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3).
 - God used Elisha to heal the Syrian leper, Naaman (2 Kings 5:14).
 - God sent Jonah to preach repentance and salvation to the wicked Ninevites (Jonah 1:2).
 - Christ healed Gentiles, including the Canaanite woman's daughter (Mt. 15:22ff; also Lk. 7:8).
 - Christ told the disciples that He had sheep that were from a different fold (non-Jews, Jn. 10:16).
 - ✓ What Peter now **understood** was that God still has love for all the people of all the nations. Specifically, Peter understood through the vision that **God is not one to show partiality...**
 - Yes, God has chosen Israel to be His eternal, covenant people (v. 36; Dt. 7:6-7).
 - But He also desires *all men* to have faith in Him —
 - ... "there is no partiality with God" (Rom. 2:11);
 - ... "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezk. 33:11);
 - ... "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also..." (Rom. 3:29). Cf. Lk. 2:32; 3:6.
 - This is the focus of the great commission (Lk. 24:47) and Christ's final admonition (Acts 1:4-8).
- So Peter emphasizes that God isn't partial (He is willing to save any from any nation) in v. 35 —
 - ✓ **In every nation, the man who fears Him...is welcome...** The word "nation" is "ethnicity." Anyone from any grouping of people — nationality, culture, tradition, people group — is welcome to go to Him.
 - ✓ Those who are welcome to God are those who **fear Him and do what is right.**
 - Peter is not saying that we are saved by works — even though Cornelius **feared** and **gave** (v. 2), he was not yet saved from his sin when Peter visited him. Peter preached the gospel to him because he wasn't saved (vv. 36ff) — and Peter later said Cornelius wasn't yet saved (11:14).
 - The point is not that Cornelius (or anyone else) is saved by fearing God and doing what is right.
 - Peter means that Cornelius was *ready for salvation* because he **feared God** (was humble) and was willing to follow God in doing what is right.
 - Only those who humble themselves underneath God will be made welcome in God's family.
 - But Peter also means that *anyone* who humbles himself will be welcomed; you don't need to be a special class of person or a particular ethnicity. God welcomes all broken, humble people.

- John MacArthur reminds us of what it means to be accepted into club membership with a reminder of an interaction between Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn —

Tom has just informed Huck that he is not welcome in Tom's gang. Huck protests, "Now Tom, hain't you always been friendly to me? You wouldn't shet me out, would you, Tom?" Tom replies, "Huck, I wouldn't want to, and I don't want to—but what would people say? Why they'd say, 'Mph! Tom Sawyer's Gang! pretty low characters in it!' They'd mean you, Huck. You wouldn't like that, and I wouldn't..."

- ✓ In other words, "I'd let you into the club, but you're not good enough."
- ✓ That's not true of God's family: He takes rich and poor, Jew and Gentile (that's ethnicities), and male and female. And He takes no righteous people (self-righteous). He only has sinners. He invites in and has a place for the lowest of characters, like Peter, Paul, and me! All have access to God through Christ. Everyone is a sinner and every kind of sinner can be reconciled to God.
- ✓ What is your situation, condition, or status? Hater of God? Repeated failure? At the top of the socio-economic scale (and still a sinner) — or at the bottom? Are you half-hearted?
- ✓ He takes all. But He only takes those who fear Him and obey (follow) Him. And believe Him...

2. The Message of Christ is... (vv. 36-41)

• His Provision: Peace (v. 36a)

- ✓ **The word** God *sent to the Sons of Israel* was the message about Christ — "there is **peace**."
 - This message that was preached was **through Jesus Christ** — it was preached by Christ, and even more, it was *about* Jesus Christ (peace comes *through* Him).
 - To say someone has peace is to say that he has no more strife, conflict, enmity, or war.
 - Which also means that without Christ/peace, we are God's enemies. He is against us. We are outside His family, we don't know Him, and He will pour out His justice against us (**Eph. 2:12**).
 - So to be given the offer of **peace** through Christ is to remove "war" and to grant blessing. It's to put us in a relationship of fellowship and harmony (**Eph. 2:13**). We are near.
- ✓ One thing our world knows well is war.

The New York Times reported in 2003 that humans had been entirely at peace for just 268 of the past 3,400 years, or an estimated eight per cent of humankind's documented time on Earth, which spans about 5,000 years. Estimates of the total number of people killed in wars over that time vary widely between 150 million and a billion....Between its founding in 1776 and 2020, America was at peace for all of 15 years, reported the news site *Medium*. It has been involved in at least 105 wars and rebellions... [["The Myth of the 'Long Peace.'"](#)]

- And that doesn't include interpersonal "wars" and conflicts. We are ready for battle.
- And we are ill-equipped to make peace and keep peace.
- But Christ gives peace. With our greatest enemy, God. That's why He came (**Lk. 2:14; 24:36**).

- His Position: Lord (v. 36b)

- ✓ Having made the comment about Christ's provision of peace, Peter editorializes: **He is Lord of all**.
 - He means, because Jesus is **Lord** (Master/Sovereign) over all people, He can provide peace for all people. No one is beyond His capacity to provide and offer peace for them.
 - There is no one over whom Christ isn't Lord. They may not acknowledge His Lordship. But He is their Lord. *You* may not acknowledge He is Your Master, but He is Your Master.
 - Jesus is called "Lord" 747x in the NT. In Acts, Jesus is called "Savior" twice; and "Lord" 92x.
 - This is a parenthetical thought, but it central to the theme of Peter's message. He is Lord.
 - The heart of the Christian message is that *Christ is Lord* (and we are not).
- ✓ To trust in Christ (to believe in Him for salvation) is to acknowledge that He is our Lord and Master.
 - We are wired, because of our sin, to believe and live as if we are the master and all people and things are given to this world to serve us (which is why we get angry at slow traffic, overcooked steaks, delayed packages, inattentive spouses, and disrespectful children).
 - But the world is created by Christ and for Christ's glory — *because He is the Master*.
 - When we say we believe in Him, we are also asking, "Will You be my Lord/Master to guide Me?"
 - Watson: "Those who will not have Christ's laws to rule them shall never have Christ's blood to save them." Which is similar to what Paul says: "...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).
 - He brings peace, He is Lord, and He is Spirit-Empowered...

- His Person: Spirit-Empowered (vv. 37-38)

- ✓ In verse 37, Peter begins recounting the history of Christ's life on earth.
 - Even to the Roman soldier Cornelius, these things were well-known — **You yourselves know...**
 - He starts with the **baptism of John** (v. 37) whose baptism message was repentance (Lk. 3:3) — turn away from sin and go to God. To identify with God one can't continue to identify with sin.
 - Then Peter emphasizes that Jesus operated under the control of the Holy Spirit — He was **anointed with the Holy Spirit** (v. 38), which happened at Jesus' baptism:
 - ... Jesus is identified with the message and approval of God (Lk. 3:21-22).
 - ... Jesus is identified with the Holy Spirit (suggesting the Spirit's empowerment; Lk. 4:1, 18)
 - Christ isn't acting on His own; He is operating in union with the Triune Godhead. He came to fulfill God's eternal plan of salvation.
- ✓ Out of the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus went about **healing** — and Peter particularly identifies the healing of the demon possessed. These people are sufferers, under the domination of a demon.

- For Jesus to cast out demons indicates the kind of work He came to do: to thwart sin and death and liberate people who are in bondage to sin (1 Jn. 3:18).
- Everyone is in bondage and slavery — either to Christ to obey Him, or Satan to obey Him.
- On March 29, 1849, Henry Brown stepped into a wooden box that was only 3x2x2½ feet small. A friend nailed a lid shut over top of him and he was loaded onto a railroad car, then steamship, and finally a wagon and taken 350 miles from Richmond, VA to Philadelphia. When the box was opened in an abolitionist's office, the slave Henry "Box" Brown was a free man.
- What would you do to be freed from the sins that ensnare you — Gluttony? Greed? Sexual sin? Anger? Worry/fear/anxiety? Conspicuous consumption? Guilt? Christ, under the power of the Spirit, came to set you free you're your every enslavement to sin. That's the Easter message.
- He brings peace, He is Lord, He is Spirit-Empowered, and He came to die...

- His Purpose: Death (v. 39)

- ✓ When Peter says ***we are witnesses***, he is speaking of himself and the apostles — they saw (witnessed) what ***Jesus did*** and heard Him teach and they testify (witness) now to that. To what do they particularly testify? They testify to His death — ***they put Him to death...***
 - Now think about the uniqueness of that statement. When people die and a eulogy is given, they talk about the person's life — their work accomplishments, their family, their influence on others... It's rare that they speak about the person's death. They *avoid* his death, if possible.
 - And the apostles had lots of information about Christ (read the Gospels; cf. Jn. 21:25).
 - But the detail of Christ's life that Peter chooses to talk about is *His death*.
 - And even more, Peter emphasizes that he died by ***hanging Him on a cross***. He is alluding to the OT — to die on a cross is to die under the curse of God (Dt. 21:22-23)? Why His death?
 - He wants us to understand that the very real Christ died a very real death. He *did* die. He was buried in a real tomb. There was nothing artificial about His death.
 - And to emphasize the curse of God is to remind us that when Christ died, He died as a sin-bearer. He was perfect God and sinless Son of Man, but He still died because He was bearing the weight of all those who would come to believe in Him (Is. 53:10; 1 Pt. 2:24). *Death is why He came*.
 - Remembering the cross and Friday night is sobering; it's also victorious. When Satan and the inhabitants of Hell were cheering, Christ was sealing their fate. His death was His victory.
 - It was His victory because He did not have it taken from Him, but He gave it (Jn. 10:18).
- ✓ We are not ashamed of Christ's death. We may hate that it was our sin that resulted in His death. But we love Him for His death because His death is the means to our life. We *remember* His death.
- ✓ He brings peace, He is Lord, He is Spirit-Empowered, He came to die, and He came to be resurrected...

- His Power: Resurrection (vv. 40-41)

- ✓ This is the second half of the Easter message: Christ died...and **God raised Him up...**
 - He died a real death for genuine sin. But He did not stay dead.
 - God — entire Godhead — raised Him up: the Father (5:30), the Spirit (Rom. 8:11), and even the Son raised Himself (Jn. 10:18) — which is no problem for the One who is self-existent & uncreated.
 - All the Gospel writers emphasize the resurrection (e.g., Mk. 16:6), as do Epistles (Rom. 4:24-25).
 - But it wasn't just the Apostles who told the story — it was widely known because Christ was widely seen after the resurrection: **He become visible** (40)...**to witnesses who ate and drank**.
 - He was seen after the resurrection by more than 500 people (1 Cor. 15:5-8).
- ✓ What is the significance of the resurrection? If He isn't resurrected, then God isn't satisfied with His death and provision for our sin. If He isn't resurrected, then we are still in sin. If we are still in sin, we must pay for our own debt of sin. And we can't pay for it. So we will never be resurrected.
 - If Christ isn't resurrected then we have wasted our lives in following Him (1 Cor. 15:14-19).
 - But He *is* resurrected. Our sin debt *is* paid. We have not wasted our lives (1 Cor. 15:20).
 - And we have hope.

"If ever death had appeared to be triumphant, it was when Jesus of Nazareth, disowned by His nation, abandoned by His disciples, executed by the might of imperial Rome, breathed His last on the cross....His faithful followers had confidently expected that He was the destined liberator of Israel; but He had died...and their hopes died with Him. If ever a cause was lost, it was His; if ever the powers of evil were victorious, it was then. And yet—within a generation His followers were exultingly proclaiming the crucified Jesus to be the conqueror of death and asserting...that by dying He had reduced the erstwhile lord of death [Satan] to impotence....This is the unanimous witness of the New Testament writers; this was the assurance which nerved martyrs to face death boldly in His name. This sudden change from disillusionment to triumph can only be explained by the account which the apostles gave—that their Master rose from the dead and imparted to them the power of His risen life." [Bruce, *Hebrews*, 49.]

- ✓ Whatever your problem, circumstance, failure, or sin, Jesus Christ and His resurrection is your hope. He is Lord over all (v. 36). If you have not yet believed in Him, would you believe today?
 - Believe that your sin deserves His judgment, but your sin is not greater than His grace.
 - Believe that He is the Son of God (v. 38), empowered by God, and very God.
 - Believe that He died a real death and was resurrected to real life (vv. 39-41).
 - Believe that He will liberate you from the penalty of your sin and the power of sin over you.
 - Trust in Him as your Savior and Friend today. Everything you need, He provides.
 - He brings peace, He is Lord, He is Spirit-Empowered, He came to die, and He came to be resurrected. There is one last message about Christ in this sermon...

3. The Message of Christ is For **PROCLAIMING** (vv. 42-43)

- Notice how often Peter talks about the importance of speaking the message of Christ:
 - ✓ We are witnesses (v. 39)
 - ✓ [We are the] witnesses...who ate and drank with Him after the resurrection (v. 41)
 - ✓ He ordered us to preach (v. 42)
 - ✓ [He ordered us to] solemnly testify... (v. 42b)
 - ✓ The prophets [also] bear witness... (v. 43)
 - ✓ If you know Christ, the message about Christ is worth speaking to others.
 - ✓ And that also means that if you don't yet believe, the message of Christ is worth hearing and heeding.
- And as a good preacher, Peter summarizes the message that is preached about Christ in two points:
 - ✓ Christ ***has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead***. One of His responsibilities as the One who is Lord over all (v. 36) is to judge all men. Judgment will come (17:30-31).
 - ✓ Or, ***Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sin*** (v. 43). The sin is wiped away. The record of your wrongs against God is obliterated. You are free from sin's power. You can do right. This is a consistent message in this book (2:38; 5:31; 8:22; 10:43; 13:38). But you must believe.
 - ***Everyone*** — there is no partiality with God; the gospel is for all people.
 - ***Who believes*** — there is only one way to be saved — belief in Christ alone.
 - ***Receives forgiveness*** — will be washed and cleansed from their sin. Liberation from bondage.
 - ✓ This verse also means that Christ will be either the judge or the deliverer for every person.
 - ✓ Which is it for you? Oh friend, don't let your pride and self-sufficiency keep Him as your judge. Repent and believe in Christ, the resurrected Savior.

CONCLUSION: Every good sermon ends with a good story to tie together the theme of the sermon. What's my story? I can't do better than this: **Mark 16:1-7**.

Christ died. Christ was resurrected. Christ is Lord. Believe in Him. You will never be disappointed.

BENEDICTION (Greg W): **Mark 16:6-7**