



April 14, 2007

## Transformation

It really is a phenomenal story. If you were here last week you might be saying, "Uh oh he's repeating the sermon of last week." But it is, it's a phenomenal story, the Easter story. Last week we focused on one aspect that is phenomenal, Jesus dies and rises on the third day. It just doesn't get any better than that; or does it? After all Jesus is the Son of God true God and true man. So, the really amazing thing is not that Jesus rose He had already shown His power over death with three previous miracles. No, the amazing thing is that He was willing to die. Paul sums it up in Romans 5:7-8 where he says, "Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die but God demonstrates His own love for in this while we were still sinners Christ died for us." Die for a good person, maybe, die for a convicted criminal, not hardly, unless you're Jesus. Now that's the remarkable message of Easter, that Jesus willingly dies for us even though we didn't deserve it and that he then rose and through His resurrection gives us eternal life.

But there is another remarkable message, one that maybe is a little more personal for us right here and right now. In our Gospel this morning we heard that the disciples were gathered together in a home. The doors were locked because they were afraid of the Jews not all Jews. John often uses this simple identification for the religious leaders, the disciple were afraid of those who had killed Jesus because they could also have the disciples killed. So they did two things. They first hid inside where no one could see them and second they locked the door so that no one, neither the Jews nor their friends could get in. Please remember they had heard from the women that Jesus had risen and Peter and John had both seen the empty tomb. When they locked the door out of fright they were also locking out Jesus. You see, fear paralyzes. Think of a rabbit, deer a dog out in the road at night the headlights of a car hit them in the

eyes. What do they do? They freeze they're paralyzed. Fear is one of Satan's greatest tools to stop God's people from doing what they should do. But Satan could not stop Jesus. He comes and He addresses the fear of the disciples. He says, "Peace be with you." Peace, the antithesis of fear, peace that which Jesus had promised to His disciples in John 14:27. It's a lasting, eternal, enduring peace. He doesn't rebuke them or scold them He comes in peace to take away their fear. He shows them His hands and His feet, His side, He ate food to show that He was flesh and blood not a ghost or spirit as they has thought. John records, "the disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord." Then Jesus gets down to work. John Chapter 20:21, "As the Father has sent me I am sending you." As the Father has sent me, God sent His Son with a specific purpose and goal, that's how God sent His Son with a purpose and goal and that purpose and goal was to redeem mankind. As the Father sent me God sent him with a purpose, God was not willing to negotiate this purpose either.

When we look in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus asked, "Father if it be your will let this cup pass from me." But God had sent Jesus with a purpose. His answer to His own Son was no the cup will not pass from you. So when we hear Jesus saying, "As the Father has sent me," He is prefacing his comment as the Father has sent me I am sending you. Uh-oh, think of what that really means. God doesn't negotiate His will His will is His will and we are to do it. There is a purpose and it must be met. What is the purpose? How will the disciples know or be able to fulfill this purpose? Well the very next verse has the answer, "and with that He breathed on them and said, 'receive the Holy Spirit'." The spirit will give them power, the spirit will guide and direct them. Then verse 23 Jesus gives the direction too, "If you forgive anyone their sins they are forgiven if you do not forgive them they are not forgiven." What are they supposed to do? Preach forgiveness; we look at Luke 24:47 that's exactly what Jesus said, "Repentance and forgiveness will be preached to all nations." They are sent with a purpose and that purpose is to bring God's message of repentance and His forgiveness to all people.

Did the disciples get it? Were they transformed from the scared men hiding behind locked doors to preachers of repentance of forgiveness? Absolutely that's what the book of Acts is all about. The title really is not Acts; the title of the book really is the Acts of the Apostles; what the Apostles did. It begins with Christ's dissention

and is quickly followed by Pentecost where Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, stood up and gave a powerful sermon in Acts Chapter 2. The basic message and flow of that sermon was man's sin, God promised a Messiah, God provided the Messiah, you killed the Messiah, He rose, He ascended, He offers you forgiveness and eternal life if you will just believe and repent. 3,000 were added to the church that day.

In Acts Chapter 3, Peter and John are met by a cripple in the temple. The cripple who is over 40 years old and crippled from birth was begging and asked Peter and John for money. Peter's response, "silver or gold I do not have but what I have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And the cripple did. Boy did that get the crowd's attention. Then Peter launched into sermon number two, the message, the exact same we sinned, God promised a Messiah, God provided the Messiah, we killed the Messiah, He rose, He ascended and now He offers eternal life, repent be forgiven. It ends with those words, repent, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out. The result was two fold. We see the growth of the church. At that time it grew to 5,000 men, in the previous chapter 3,000 were added to the church now we're up to 5,000 men so there are 10-20 thousand people total.

The second result is Peter and John were arrested. Why? Well, Acts 4:2, "They were greatly disturbed." I bet they were, because the Apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. Who were they? We see "they" was the priests and other religious leaders those who didn't believe in the resurrection. Peter and John are saying look there is a resurrection there's proof Jesus rose you know it. The leaders couldn't get anywhere trying to stop them. They had no charge Peter and John had just healed a crippled man so they ended up releasing them. From there we see a phenomenal story a scary story about Ananias and Sapphira, two early "Christians". Infact, they obviously were Christians, they sold their property and they gave the proceeds to the early church. The only problem was they made a publication about it. They told people, "We're selling this property, and we're giving it to the Lord." When in reality they were keeping a fair chunk of change for themselves so they wanted to take the glory. Look at what a marvelous thing we have done in service of the church but really they were benefiting from it. The result, they both dropped dead.

You see there are consequences for sin in this case, doing what looked noble, taking credit for what looks noble but then making a profit and still claiming to be noble is wrong. What was the reaction to that? Well, we see in Acts 5:15 no one else dare join the disciples. What? Its really simple, no pretenders or halfhearted followers wanted to risk being associated with the disciples. People still joined but only people who were totally committed. The disciples continued to heal, they do miracles and they are arrested again. An angel released them from jail in the middle of the night. The next day the Sanhedrin called the jailer and asked the jailer to bring the men so they could judge them. The cell was locked they opened it up and the disciples were wrong. The question was where are they? One of the soldiers from the temple said, "They're preaching in the temple." They were arrested again. Why? We see in Acts 5:28, We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." The charge, you're preaching when we told you no and why did we tell you no? Because you're pointing the finger at us and you're trying to make us guilty of crucifying Jesus, response, "We must obey God rather than men." How's that for transformation? Deny Jesus three times, lock yourself in a room out of fear and then go toe to toe with the message to the Sanhedrin.

He is truly transformed, yes he points the finger but he continues and says, "God exalted Jesus to His own right hand as prince and savior that He might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel." Peter remembered Jesus' words, "as the Father as sent me I send you." Jesus came with a purpose to bring forgiveness to bring redemption. Peter stood there went toe to toe with the Sanhedrin his message repent Christ will forgive you. As the Father sent them He has also sent you. You have a purpose, repent and bring a message of repentance to all people. Repent and live for Him.

In our Savior's name, Amen.