

March 30, 2008

## The Foundation

Back in November we entered into a new church year as we began the Advent season. At that time I said that we would be exploring the significance of each season as we move through the year. As you will remember the church year is patterned after the Jewish religious year. The Jewish religious calendar revolved Holy days where the people would recall, remember and praise God for specific acts he had performed on their behalf. So too the church year helps us focus on the acts of God for our salvation. We began with Advent a time of preparation for Christmas and we saw how God prepared the way for Jesus through John the Baptist. Then came Christmas the celebration of God humbling himself and being born in a manger. This was followed by Epiphany a time where we focused on Christ being made known to the people. That was followed by Lent forty days of preparation, repentance and sorrow knowing that Christ died for us and because of us and our propensity to sin. Last week we entered the Easter season a celebration of the resurrection of the dead a sign of new life for people who are lost in sin. Easter, its a season that lasts for seven weeks, seven, in the Bible it's the number of perfection I guess you could say Easter is a week of weeks. What do we do in these forty-nine days? Well there are several traditions but one of the traditions is to follow the new life or the birth and growth of the Christian church. So I invite you to join me on a journey through the Easter season where we will investigate the New Testament reading for each Sunday. A reading that will come from the book of Acts a reading that will follow the growth of the Christian church as well as the faith and understanding of the Apostles themselves.

Where do we begin? Well probably the best place is at the very beginning at the birth of the church. Our reading from Acts chapter 2 deals with this beginning. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples and they began to preach. They were immediately met with opposition. Acts 2:13 tells us, "Some, however, made fun of them and said 'they have had too much wine'". Now a remarkable thing happens Luke's account continues, "Then Peter stood up with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd." Peter? Isn't he the one who was confronted by a servant girl than another girl and then a man while standing by a campfire on Maundy Thursday? Isn't this the same Peter who denied Jesus to all three of these individuals and the small band of people that was there warming themselves by the fire? Is this the same Peter now who stands

up, raises his voice and confronts a crowd? You bet it is. He does he is filled with the Holy Spirit and he has been transformed. He has gone from being a coward to being bold and then he does two things. First, as we just heard, he confronts the crowd he says to them, Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions; your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. Peter confronts them and says we haven't had too much to drink this is a fulfillment of prophecy.

But the second thing he does is he lays the foundation for the Christian faith and newly emerging Christian church. To lay a foundation you must first mark a point at which to begin. It is at this point that you lay your cornerstone and from this cornerstone all measurements and calculations are then made. Paul tells us in Ephesians 2: 20, that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone and so also Peter begins with Jesus Christ. He says, "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know." Peter says to them this Jesus he was made known to you by miracles. What's a miracle? Well I think Webster's dictionary does a fine job of defining it the dictionary says a miracle is, "An extraordinary event manifesting a super natural work of God." He was made known to you by miracles and wonders again, what does the dictionary say about wonders, "Effective far beyond previously known or anticipated." Christ was made known by miracles, extraordinary events, a work of God by wonders, things are so effective they are far beyond anything previously known or anticipated and signs. The signs, well, God gave us the signs throughout the Old Testament its called prophecy and Jesus Christ fulfilled every single prophecy concerning the Messiah. So Peter confronts the crowd and he begins laying the Christian faith foundation and the first part of that is Jesus. The second part of that begins like this he says, "This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge." Jesus came to fulfill what God had said and this was a sign he was handed over to you and the third step here or the third part of this foundation goes hand in hand with that, "and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. Follow what Peter is saying here Jesus is obviously the Messiah because of His

miracles, His wonders and His signs and one of those signs is that God handed Him over to you just as was prophesied and you killed Him. Which then leads to the fourth part of the foundation, "But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him. God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact. He rose, why? Because it was impossible for death to keep a hold on Him.

Peter points out that this is again another sign a sign that David wrote where he quotes David as he said, "I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence." You can see Peter's mind moving he knows what people will say, "David was talking about himself not the Messiah", so Peter continues and he says, "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay." Christ was raised from the dead the first fruits and we shall be raised too. But that's not the end of the Christian faith.

There's one more component and that comes in verse 33, "Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. Christ rules He reigns from His throne in heaven and has fulfilled another promise and sign He has poured out His Holy Spirit on us. Basically Peter is saying how else do you think that I could give a sermon like this? The cornerstone has been laid what happens next is the beginning of the first course of bricks. Verse 37, "When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The cornerstone is laid we realize what God has done for us. He gave us His Son He died He rose He reigns on high and we are now called to repent, to change, to change from your past to live for Christ to be baptized to become a member of God's family through that baptism. 3,000 people did and what do we see as a result of that? Well verse 42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the

breaking of bread and to prayer.” The apostles’ teaching that’s Bible study, fellowship, that’s the public gathering of God’s people what we’re doing right here right now breaking of bread that’s the celebration of the Lord’s Supper but it’s also the fellowship with each other of eating meals together and saying we are family. Prayer talking to the Lord and it continues, “Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. The miracles the signs the wonders continue and there was unity in ministry.

Last week I said it would be a pity if we didn’t embrace and live Easter everyday. Again it’s a pity if we don’t take the example given to us by Peter and the apostles and lay our foundation on Jesus, follow the example of the early church and live in unity and singularity and purpose of Ministry. May God give us the strength and the passion to live our faith and see Jesus as the promised Messiah.