

Confirming the Resurrection
The Manifestation of a Changed Life
Easter Sunday 2023

Text: Acts 4:1-12

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. ⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (ESV)

Introduction:

- We are gathered here this morning to celebrate the greatest event in the Christian Faith – the physical resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.
- While you and I gather here this morning to celebrate an event that we believe really and truly happened – there are thousands upon thousands of people who will attend Resurrection services who either do not believe that the resurrection actually happened or else they are unsure that it happened in the literal way it is described in the Gospel account.
- They go to church on this day in order to observe a religious custom – that is what good, decent, moral people do on Easter Sunday.
- So, does the resurrection really matter? And if it does – how do we actually go about confirming that it really and truly mattered?
- Without a doubt, the NT writers argue that the resurrection was of supreme importance – in fact, Paul argued that if you deny the resurrection, you can't have a Christianity that is really and truly Christian in a biblical sense. (1 Cor 15).

· The reason the Resurrection is so important is related to the claims made by Jesus Christ Himself. On multiple occasions He predicted the Jews would deliver Him to the Romans who would crucify Him, and then on the third day, He would rise from the dead. Let me give you one of three specific occasions in Matthew's gospel where we have such a statement recorded for us.

Matthew 20:17-19 Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ¹⁸ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹ "and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

· ***So, the resurrection is the single greatest proof of His claim to be Messiah, the Son of God. But what is the single greatest claim that the resurrection is true?***

· There are many ways in which Christians have tried to make the case for the resurrection of Christ. But there is ***one undeniable way in which the Apostles and the early Christians made the case for the resurrection of Jesus Christ – they pointed to the lives of people that had been radically transformed by the power of the name of the Resurrected Christ!***

· The greatest evidence of the reality of the resurrection is a life that has been genuinely transformed by the power of the resurrected Lord!

· We are here as “Christians” – we give testimony that we are His followers. We claim to believe that as the Son of God Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We are gathered here this morning to celebrate and to proclaim His resurrection.

· ***The single greatest evidence we can offer the world to back up our claim that Jesus is alive and Lord over all – is the evidence of a radically transformed life!***

· That is exactly what Peter and John do when they are called to give an account for proclaiming the truth of the resurrection of the dead by pointing to Jesus as the primary example of the reality and the power of God to raise His people from the dead!

· ***If He raised up His own Son, then He would raise up those who believe on His name – and those people are marked in this life by a radically transformed life!***

I. The Miracle of a Changed Life: 4:7-9 & 3:1-7

4:7-9 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed,

3:1-7 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

- In chapter four, Peter speaks to the Rulers of Israel and points out the obvious – they have been arrested and are being called to give an account for the miraculous healing of a lame man that had taken place on the temple steps and in the sight of all Israel.
- To understand this miracle, we need to go back to chapter 3:1-7 where it is recorded for us by Dr. Luke. There we observe 3 things about this miracle:

A. *It was a Verifiable Miracle (3:1-12)*

- We are given very specific information
- Location – temple
- Time – ninth hour, 3 p.m. – the time of evening prayers
- The specific place – the gate “beautiful”
- The particular individual – a particular man lame from birth who was brought daily to the temple to beg for alms.
- And this person was healed on this occasion, at this place, at this time!
- And everyone was witness to it– “and all the people saw him”!

B. *It was a Notable Miracle*

- A man who was born lame and was well-known in Jerusalem as the man who begged daily at the temple gate was healed.
- And Luke records the reaction of the crowd in 3:9-12.
- They recognized the man, they were filled with wonder and amazement, and they were utterly astounded and ran to meet them at Solomon’s Porch for an explanation.

C. *It was a Permanent Miracle (4:9-10)*

- This was not a temporary change – this was a permanent healing that resulted in a life change that continued.
- When they were standing before the Council they point to the man, and he is standing with them in the presence of the court, and he has been made well – emphasis on the permanent transformation.
- When a person truly encounters the power of the resurrection – His life is permanently transformed!
- This room is full of people who were at one time just like this lame man – and then they encountered the power of the risen Christ – and their lives were transformed!
- And their transformation, like that of this lame man, is verifiable, notable, and permanent!
- ***BUT – How would such a life manifest itself?***

II. The Manifestation of a Changed Life: 3:8-11

⁸ *And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.* ⁹ *And all the people saw him walking and praising God,* ¹⁰ *and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.* ¹¹ *While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. (ESV)*

A. *Manifested by a New Physical status – and leaping up, he stood and began to walk.*

- Before he was unable and incapable – now he has God-given ability and capability to do what he could not do before – walk.

B. *Manifested in a New Spiritual status – and entered the temple with them*

- Before he was unclean and unable to enter in the place of worship – now he can enter freely and worship as a man made qualified to do so!

C. *Manifested in a New Emotional Condition (Joyful praise) – walking and leaping and praising God!*

- He is manifesting praise to God personally and thankfully.
- He is magnifying praise about God – he is living proof that Jesus is Messiah – because he is doing precisely what Isaiah said lame people would do when Messiah appeared! (Isaiah 35:6)

D. *Manifested in a New Relational Commitment* – “he clung to Peter and John”

- He was continually with the People of God and in chapter 4.
- He is standing with Peter and John before the Sanhedrin willing to suffer persecution for His new faith.

· These then are the marks by which a transformed life manifests itself – personal transformation, spiritual life and change, joyful praise to God, and continual commitment to the people of God.

· But how does such a change come into the life of a person like this lame man? By what means is such a transformation accomplished?

III. The Means to a Changed Life: 4:10

¹⁰ *let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead--by him this man is standing before you well.*

A. *The Historical Reality* – Jesus Christ of Nazareth

- His Ministry – Sinless and powerful
- His Message – personal repentance for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

B. *The Theological Atrocity* – Whom you crucified

C. *The Divine Affirmation* – Whom God raised from the dead

- This is what you said and did – crucifixion
- This is what God said and did – resurrection

D. *The Personal Application* – by him this man is standing before you well.

- So, what did this man have to do to receive such a miraculous transformation? He had to believe on the name of Christ!

Acts 3:16 "And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all. (NAS)

- Faith in His name = personal commitment to the person of Christ and the work that He did by His death on the cross!
- This is what Peter and John were insisting the crowd of people needed to do (Acts 3) as well as the Jewish leaders (Acts 4) – and it is what you must do!

IV. The Message of a Changed Life: 4:11-12

This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

A. *The Audience – Religious People who thought they were righteous*

B. *The Accusation – you rejected the One God sent*

C. *The Implication – There is salvation in no one else*

D. *The Invitation – you must be saved!*

Conclusion:

- At some point in every person's life, it comes down to one decisive moment – what will you decide about the Person and Work of Jesus Christ!
- These were very religious people – they were at the right place (church/temple) doing the right thing (good works) and saying the right words (praise and prayer to God).
- And none of this mattered when it really counted – they had to do what God told them to do about their sins (Repent) and they had to believe what God told them to believe about His Son (Faith in His name).
- And until they did this – they remained nothing more than religious sinners looking for their own road to heaven!

There are really two kinds of people here this morning:

1. People who are very much like this crowd Peter was addressing – religiously pursuing a path to Heaven that was right in their own eyes – moral uprightness, good deeds, religious participation, etc.

- You need to repent of their sins and believe!

2. People who have come to believe on Christ and repent of their sins – initially. But they have really never experienced the power of a transformed life because they have refused to repent of a sin of which they are particularly fond, or they have refused to repent of a disobedient behavior or life pattern they have fallen into – and they refuse to believe what God has said in His Word about this!