

**4.16.23 – Easter 2**  
**“More Good News!”**

The United Baptist Church, Annandale, VA

**Acts 2:14a, 22-32 (GNT)**

*Peter's Message*

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: “Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means.

<sup>22</sup> “Listen to these words, fellow Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. <sup>23</sup> In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. <sup>24</sup> But God raised him from death, setting him free from its power, because it was impossible that death should hold him prisoner. <sup>25</sup> For David said about him,

‘I saw the Lord before me at all times;  
he is near me, and I will not be troubled.

<sup>26</sup> And so I am filled with gladness,  
and my words are full of joy.

And I, mortal though I am,  
will rest assured in hope,

<sup>27</sup> because you will not abandon me in the world of the dead;  
you will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave.

<sup>28</sup> You have shown me the paths that lead to life,  
and your presence will fill me with joy.’

<sup>29</sup> “My friends, I must speak to you plainly about our famous ancestor King David. He died and was buried, and his grave is here with us to this very day. <sup>30</sup> He was a prophet, and he knew what God had promised him: God had made a vow that he would make one of David's descendants a king, just as David was. <sup>31</sup> David saw what God was going to do in the future, and so he spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah when he said,

‘He was not abandoned in the world of the dead;  
his body did not rot in the grave.’

<sup>32</sup> God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact.

**Leader: These are Affirming Words from God.** All: Thanks be to God!

**1 Peter 1:3-9 (GNT)**

*A Living Hope*

<sup>3</sup> Let us give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Because of his great mercy he gave us new life by raising Jesus Christ from death. This fills us with a living hope, <sup>4</sup> and so we look forward to possessing the rich blessings that God keeps for his people. He keeps them for you in heaven, where they cannot decay or spoil or fade away. <sup>5</sup> They are for you, who through faith are kept safe by God's

power for the salvation which is ready to be revealed at the end of time. <sup>6</sup> Be glad about this, even though it may now be necessary for you to be sad for a while because of the many kinds of trials you suffer. <sup>7</sup> Their purpose is to prove that your faith is genuine. Even gold, which can be destroyed, is tested by fire; and so your faith, which is much more precious than gold, must also be tested, so that it may endure. Then you will receive praise and glory and honor on the Day when Jesus Christ is revealed. <sup>8</sup> You love him, although you have not seen him, and you believe in him, although you do not now see him. So you rejoice with a great and glorious joy which words cannot express, <sup>9</sup> because you are receiving the salvation of your souls, which is the purpose of your faith in him.

**Leader: These Words through Christ Bring New Life!** All: Thanks be to God!

**Please pray with me:**

Dear Lord, you are risen! Be present to us now as we study these Scriptures that tell again of your Resurrection. They continue to give us hope and courage to be the storytellers you have called us to be. Let us receive Peter's assurances to the gathered people. Move us past the cross and first news of the resurrection on toward Pentecost when the Holy Spirit will come. Thank you for Peter's strong faith upon which your church is built. Let us share our salvation with those who do not know you. May your voice be the one heard today as you speak through mine. Amen.

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Hallelujah! Christ is Risen! Hallelujah! You will see these banners up for awhile to remind us that our Easter celebration can be every day. You may have wondered why we are already in Acts, since Pentecost is fifty days after Easter Sunday, and we are not there yet! In the Old Testament, the Day of Pentecost comes during the Jewish festival "*Shavuot*", also known as the Festival of Weeks, honoring when God gave Moses the Ten Commandments, fifty days after the Passover. It was a Jewish festival that celebrated the initial harvest. We cannot think of it in our gardening terms but in Israel's. They began to plant after February 1, so late March or April would be the first harvest. So, suspend the church calendar for today to hear Peter's voice.

This passage is Peter's first speech to the people after they regathered in Jerusalem. Recall that most had fled. Peter had become a spokesperson for the Twelve (they had just selected Matthias to fill Judas'

place), and he was trying to answer their spoken and unspoken questions. He verbally documented Jesus' miracles to remind them of Jesus' role to fulfill God's purpose of salvation. Peter also explained the resurrection where Jesus defeated death! The proof included witnesses, Christ's appearances after the cross, the completion of the Old Testament prophecies, the fact that lives were changed through salvation, and the recent experience of receiving the Holy Spirit. Even though we will experience Pentecost at the end of May, I find these passages helpful to get the disciples' perspective after things had settled down. The distance of this speech also humanizes the week after Easter for me.

This is the first place where Peter blamed the institutional Jews (some of which who were in his audience) for the horrible crucifixion; there were Gentiles involved, but more indirectly. He refers to Psalm 16:8-11 where David prophesied the Messiah would not lay in the grave but would rise, just like the hymn we sing and heard as the benediction duet, "Low in the Grave He Lay." In that Psalm, David did not think of himself as Messiah but wrote of one who would come later. Jesus, one of David's own descendants would be the long-awaited Messiah! Recall that although Peter is the one speaking, Luke is the writer of Acts and only became a disciple after Jesus' death and resurrection. Luke is careful of his eyewitness accounts, even though he was not personally present. Peter's speech or sermon and Luke's recording of it affirmed the new community forming around this new covenant in Jesus' sacrifice.

We move on to 1 Peter as Peter continues to encourage the disciples, those converted, and the curious about their new birth in Christ by sharing the hope of eternal life with them. God's grace is proven to us

and to them by the resurrection we celebrated last week. This eternal life can never perish or fade. He rejoices over this good news and shares it with the others. Although trials may cause temporary grief, **joy** comes in the morning as it did for the women first at the tomb. This was particularly relevant as I stood on the hill at Arlington Cemetery, overlooking those thousands of graves of our service men and women who sacrificed their lives for our country. Families go there to mourn and to remember their family members, and some are strengthened by their faith and memory. Some died in battle, but many died after a long natural life. Trials exist for both: for Sue Korcel, it was Alzheimer's, a vicious disease that destroys the brain. For other families, trials may have been cancer, old age, or the wounds of war.

Trials of any kind refine one's faith and prove the reality and application of that faith. We hate to hear those words, but Peter is claiming it as truth. Even metals like beautiful gold or durable iron must be placed into the fire to be refined and made beautiful or useful. Peter reassures that we will understand more in the last days when Christ returns. The result and purpose of the trials was to glorify God, especially in the case of the Resurrection. The most important reward, of course, is salvation, and for that we should rejoice!

The new covenant, which we memorialize with every Lord's Supper, is our inheritance as it was for the disciples. Peter also addressed "visiting strangers," or people who never settled in one place, nomads of sorts. They had no property and felt as if Canaan were their Abrahamic inheritance. He defines this new Christ Follower movement's inheritance of the **new** covenant in Christ as pure, undefiled, indestructible, and

eternal. Unlike a human financial or property inheritance that Jesus taught about in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ's inheritance is permanent: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal,<sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.<sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-24 NRSVue)." Isn't that an important message for us to remember after Easter?

With the growing persecution of Christ followers, the people were concerned about their safety. Peter's job (and sometimes mine) was to encourage the people that God's powerful hand would protect them, and if they trusted God during their trials, whatever those might be, God would **reward** them with the inheritance of eternal life and being with him always. That is a difficult concept to grasp here on earth. That's why we cry out in prayer sometimes, not even knowing the words to speak, especially when a news story seems so vile. We believers have a Christ who died for our sins, our human mistakes, and we must rely on God's strength and promise that because of our belief and our surrender, He guarantees eternal life with him. Peter warns the people not to give in to the culture's worship of pagan gods or narcissistic rulers; I say the same to us. Christ's resurrection proves the reality of our faith; through him we are reborn and can cope with anything. Let us remember God's promise of love, strength, hope, and eternal life now and forever. Jesus transformed us, and we are redeemed through the miracle of resurrection. Rejoice! Amen. |/

**Will you pray with me?** Lord, we are sometimes overwhelmed by our trials and difficulties in life; we ask you to strengthen us for life's

battles in sickness, finance, employment, or temptation. Forgive us and show us the reality of your power, strength, love, and mercy. Help us to receive the grace and eternal life you promise. Let us use our testimonies of overcoming or enduring trials to prove to others this extra good news. Be with those here only in spirit. Today, we rejoice and pray in Jesus' name, **Amen**.