Acts 3:12..15 Men of Israel, why does this surprise you?...You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

During this past season of Easter a quote from a fairly famous person came across my social media feed that I thought was pretty astute. I like it because there are those who would say that Christianity is not reasonable or logical and yet what this man says shows that logic and reason can be applied to the points of Christianity. It is a quote from Charles Colson, he of Watergate fame. Those of my generation probably remember Watergate and the explosion that event caused in the political world. Here is what Charles Colson said,

“I know the resurrection is a fact, and Watergate proved it to me. How? Because 12 men testified they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, then they proclaimed that truth for 40 years, never once denying it. Every one was beaten, tortured, stoned and put in prison. They would not have endured that if it weren’t true. Watergate embroiled 12 of the most powerful men in the world—and they couldn’t keep a lie for three weeks. You’re telling me 12 apostles could keep a lie for 40 years? Absolutely impossible.”

I think what Colson reasons out is pretty interesting. Not only is it interesting, but as you read it, if you are like me, you recognize the truth of what he says. When our lives, our living, our world is on the line for a lie, we can’t keep the lie. The truth will always out, I like to say. Just keep asking and digging and sometimes, just wait, because the truth of a situation almost always shows itself. I say, “almost always” because I am aware of situations where the truth is not yet revealed…but give it time…give it time! Although we seem to so naturally lie, we just don’t like to put our lives, our beings, our livelihood in danger for a lie.

Needless to say, I mention this because it is the season of Easter. Here we are in Easter 2, another opportunity to speak of the wonder, the marvel, the life changing event of what our God and Lord has accomplished through his resurrection from the dead. Our theme for today will be: **God raised Him!**

I take it you noticed that our text is taken from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles? During the season of Easter the ILCW series of readings likes to use that historical book and take the opportunity to highlight some of the immediate history that took place following the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. It is important because it does show that these early Christians were not operating on lies and delusion but on fact and reality that they had been witness to.

What is the immediate context of our Words? Basically what happened is that Peter and John were headed into the Temple courts for the time of prayer. As they were approaching the gates, they ran across a crippled man, crippled from birth, who was being carried there that he might beg for money. The crippled man asked Peter and John for money but something else happened. Verses 6-8 say this: **“Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." 7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”**

There is what happened. This crippled man was completely healed. As they went into the Temple quite a few people gathered and I think you might guess why. First, these people saw this man jumping around and praising God, yes, making a spectacle of himself. Second, as the people came to take a closer look, they realized it was the man born crippled who was doing the jumping and praising of God. I have a feeling you would have gathered around too! It is just clear, that something awesome has happened.

The words of our text are then addressed to that crowd of people whom we are told **“are filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened.”** I believe our verses have a number of things stated that you and I need to note and consider.

Let’s start. **Peter said to them, “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you?”** Now by calculation, it is clear that this even happened shortly after Pentecost which was 50 days after the resurrection. Bear in mind that for the first 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus was busy showing himself to many people, including at one time a group of 500, that people might grasp He is risen from the dead. Then Jesus ascended and now, after Pentecost here comes this miracle by the disciples of Jesus. No wonder Peter starts by saying, **“Why does this surprise you?”** None of what I just mentioned happened in a vacuum. None of this history of Jesus is imagined or made up. Peter speaks, acts and relates things in such a way that it is clear that he assumes, more than that, he knows these people are aware of the events that have happened. And since the events that have happened are pretty awesome, his question is reasonable and pointed: **“Why does this surprise you?”**

And do note that these disciples of Jesus bring all the attention to Jesus. Our text goes on and says, **“When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.”**

Boy, talk about not pulling any punches. Peter just lays out the facts before them. And understand what I just said, “Peter lays out the facts.” There is no way, before a crowd like this, in the Temple of God, that Peter is going to stand there spouting off things of his imagination or things that he and his buddies have made up. Peter speaks the facts, facts that the people before him knew and participated in. Many of them were the ones at the trial of Jesus and had shouted **“Crucify Him”** or had shouted, **“Barabbas, release Barabbas!”** And did you catch those opening words of this set of verses? They said, **“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.”** Those words are reference to just about every aspect of Jesus’ life. The events of the birth of Jesus, his ministry, his miracles, his teachings, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension and Pentecost! Most of these people had heard of these things, I would think the whole life of Jesus, because of his resurrection and Pentecost are the talk of the town. And I don’t doubt for one minute that many of these people may even have seen the resurrected Jesus. It is the only way you could grasp and understand the words, **“God has glorified his servant Jesus.”**

Yet Peter doesn’t stop there. Next he says, **“You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”** What a stunning and sharp proclamation! What strikes me as absolutely important here is that little phrase “**The author of Life.”** That is what Peter calls Jesus. As far as I know this is the only place this phrase is used and yet it is clear that the crowd before Peter understood exactly what he meant. I believe it a phrase declaring Jesus is God, for the only one a Jew would ascribe the power of life to would be God. And I believe this phrase is enhanced by the just as sharp phrase, **“But God raised him to life.”** That fits with two of the great lessons of the Resurrection. The Resurrection proves Jesus is God’s Son and Jesus is our Redeemer from sin.

Now comes that most powerful of statements: **“We are witnesses of this.”** I suppose, if you wanted to be a bit shallow about things, you could understand these words to be just referring to Peter and John, the disciples of Jesus. But were they the only witness of the resurrection here? I doubt it. I believe many people in this crowd were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. They knew the facts, had experienced the facts, and knew the truth of this statement. It is a collective “we” referring to every single person in that crowd who knew that the dead Jesus was now alive. I think this significant. This is not a plea to believe or pretend Jesus is alive. This is not a part of an argument whereby I hope to convince you that Jesus is alive. This is a statement of fact spoken to a large crowd of witnesses. **“God raised him to life. We are witnesses of this.”**

Now comes a beautiful and wonderful confession. You know, when it comes to those today who claim to do miracles in Jesus’ name, I look for one thing. Do they behave and act as did the apostle here or do they use those miracles to draw attention to their ministry, knowledge, and truth? Here is what the apostles say. **“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.”**

All credit, glory and honor goes to Jesus. And here are a few more thoughts on these words. It starts by saying, **“By faith in the name of Jesus.”** Can you tell me whose faith? Note it does not say. There is no indication this is the crippled man’s faith. If you were to ask me, I would tell you this is a simple reference to faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. You could argue that this is Peter and John’s faith for surely they do believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. But does it matter? Do you think that God needs your faith: your faith to heal or your faith to be healed? No, God does not need us. What the Lord does here, as the Apostles’ testify is use them in this miracle to bring glory and honor to Jesus and His power. And note how that second sentence is structured: **“It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing…”** Jesus is the power and force behind this miracle just as Jesus is the power and force behind every soul that believes in Him as the Son of God.

Now if you have stayed with me in this, then how this will conclude in the next few verses should be quite evident. Please note the disciples use this miracle to bring the focus to Jesus. Really to the fact that Jesus is the Savior from sin, the giver of eternal life and salvation. Jesus is not pointed to as the doer of miracles or the giver of miracles but the forgiver of sins. Here is what is proclaimed: **“Now, brothers, I know you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But his is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.”**

A couple of things worthy of highlighting in these words. First, it is made clear that what has happened in and with Jesus was in accord with God’s Word. That God’s Word in all the prophets pointed to this and emphasized this as the very purpose and heart of the Christ….that the Christ would suffer. The next statement makes it clear what the Christ suffered for: to pay for our sins!!! Here is the heart of Jesus, his purpose and reason for being and coming! His purpose behind living, dying and being raised from death. Our sins are forgiven.

The text said, **“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord…”** Here the Apostles’ plead for the faith of those in the crowd. Repent. Turn to God, namely Jesus. Why? That your sins may be wiped out! You will be refreshed. Love that statement. I think of a long hard work out or maybe you’ve embarked on a marathon run or maybe you are just on a long trip and have been traveling for hours. You know what it is to arrive, to finish, to maybe take that first long drink of water or to just sit down in a comfortable chair and completely relax….refreshing…that cleansing shower, that tasty meal…whatever it is that makes your mind just think: Well, that’s over, what a blessing! That’s what Jesus is. Only that’s what he is for our soul. Complete refreshment…not because we get to do miracles, but because He has done the miracle and our sins are forgiven and heaven is our eternal home. Christ Jesus has risen from the dead and has shown He is the exact Savior that we need! That’s how the apostles bring things to focus. Jesus…Jesus refreshes with His forgiveness.

I wish I had more time. In truth, next week you will hear another part of this history, where the Jewish leaders arrest Peter and John and try to get them to shut up about this Jesus. Yet, I love what is said in chapter 4:14 **“But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.”** Jesus was proclaimed and many came to faith because of it. I pray that as you hear of this wonder of Jesus, his power and his salvation from sin, that you also believe. Believe and be refreshed in Jesus who has been raised! Amen.