Acts 2:26-28 25“Indeed, David says concerning him: I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. 26Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will rest in hope, 27because you will not abandon my life to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. 28You have made known to me the paths of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence.

As a younger Pastor it was always a bit of a frustration for me that the pericope, that’s the schedule of readings that we follow in our worship services, determined to leave the Old Testament reading during the Easter season, in favor of highlighting the works of the Book of Acts. My frustration stemmed from the fact that here we are speaking on texts from the book of Acts, usually some history connected with the great day of Pentecost and in but a few weeks or so we are going to be celebrating Pentecost and then what am I going to preach on? I don’t think that way anymore.

I don’t think that way for a number of reasons. Not all the Acts’ texts are from the history of Pentecost but rather are texts chosen because they show the tremendous change that the disciples underwent as they grasped and experienced more and more the truth of Jesus’ resurrection. Some of the later texts we are going to hear are from the history of Paul, that man who hated and persecuted the Church and then because of Jesus became a preacher of Christ. The texts were chosen to highlight the impact and power of the message that Jesus lives.

Then, it finally dawned on me that when it comes to Jesus there is really never a shortage of something to say. Of course, I am assuming that you are preaching Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior from sin and not just preaching a Jesus who has some good morals and wonderful insights into holy living. Because if you are using Jesus to simply teach work righteousness, then somewhere along the line you miss the whole point of Jesus. Honestly, if you want to preach on work righteousness there are literally hundreds of religions that do a better job of proclaiming works than Christianity does.

A great example of what I am talking about is the text before us today. Here is Peter proclaiming the Pentecost message that the Holy Spirit is moving him to preach. Yet note that the text is not about right living and moral insight for your life. The text is about grasping what Jesus has done. And the way Peter goes about showing the wonder of what Jesus has done is rather awesome. Peter actually uses God’s prophetic, Old Testament Word to proclaim Jesus.

Our New Testament reading is really a sermon on Old Testament fulfillment. By the way, did you notice how many times in the entire Passion history of Jesus you heard **“This was done to fulfill what Scripture said?”** A number of the instances are totally mind boggling. I say that because they were things that happened by people who had no part of or interest in God, Scripture or making the dying Jesus look good. Examples would be: Jesus dying on a tree. The lots cast for his clothing. No bones being broken. That Jesus was pierced by nails and spear. Jesus dying with the criminals but buried with the rich. Those are but a few of the things we can point to and say, “This is not coincidence. This is not just luck that it all takes place. This is God’s plan being fulfilled and the Savior being revealed.”

Well, that’s what Peter is doing on this day, he is pointing out to the Jewish people that their very own Scriptures proclaim the wonder, power and meaning of Jesus. The message they heard that day, is still one that we need to hear today. Our theme will be: **GOD HAS RAISED UP JESUS.**

Yep, here is Peter on the day of Pentecost and he is moved by God’s Holy Spirit to stand before the people who had put Jesus to death and proclaim a message of Jesus alive. There is no doubt, the fear that once permeated the life of Peter and all the disciples is now gone. Something has happened to change them and change them forever. Something so unique and awesome that, for most, they will die because they believe and follow Jesus. What was that something?

Peter very adequately brings forth the point. He says, **“Men of Israel, hear these words! Jesus the Nazarene was a man recommended to you by God with miracles, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know. This man, who was handed over by God’s set plan and foreknowledge, you killed by having lawless men nail him to the cross. He is the one God raised up by freeing him from the agony of death, because death was not able to hold him in its grip.”** Wow, talk about laying it out there.

Note that Peter does not speak as if what he is saying is what he hopes these people will come to accept and believe. Peter speaks in a way that says “This is what has happened, and you know it is what happened!” He references things in such a way that he simply takes it for granted that everyone knew the facts. Jesus for over three years performed hundreds of thousands of miracles among you. You first believed in Jesus and flocked to him, but once your religious authorities kept trashing Jesus you eventually turned away. For that matter, you handed Jesus over to death, handing him over to people who had no care and concern for God or God’s moral laws, yes, godless, lawless people, who because of the way you carried on nailed Jesus to the cross. You know all of those things. And you also know that Jesus has been raised. Death was not able to keep its hold on him.

Notice that here again Peter does not speak as if this is what he hopes they will believe but rather speaks in such a way that says, “These are the facts and you know it. Jesus was crucified and this Jesus is raised back to life.” Remember, Pentecost is 50 days after the Resurrection. It is some 10 days after the Ascension of Jesus which means that Jesus for 40 days after the resurrection went about showing and proving to just about everyone that he was alive. Don’t you find it interesting that here is Peter, publicly proclaiming that Jesus has risen from the dead, among the very people instrumental in killing him, and no one starts a riot because of the lies this guy is telling. That would be the Jewish way. For that matter, there is not one single record of anyone disputing or denying that this took place! The reason that this doesn’t happened is because what Peter was saying was true and they knew it. To further help them grasp the truth Peter shows that what happened was clearly what God’s Word had said would happen. Peter uses a section of Scripture to show them just that fact.

The section of Scripture that Peter, under inspiration, quotes is Psalm 16. Psalm 16 is a Messianic Psalm, one of those Psalms that the Jewish people had always considered to be a prophecy about the Messiah to come and what he would do. Did the Jewish scholars of the day grasp what this Psalm was saying? The honest answer is,”Probably not!” But remember this is a group who for centuries could not grasp that their religion was about faith and not works. Peter helps them get the message.

Notice that in verses 29-31 Peter is moved by the Holy Spirit to show the truth. Clearly Peter mentions that David had died, which means the Psalm could not have been, at least one portion of it, about David. Peter goes on and then points out **“he saw what was coming and spoke about the resurrection of Christ.”** There is the kicker. Jesus fulfills what this prophecy says. And please, let’s go back and fully grasp the words before us.

The opening lines say: **“I saw the Lord always before me.”** Here is David confessing the eternal and yes, powerful nature of the true God, who is real and definitely a force in the life of David. **“Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.”** In these words David confesses his trust and confidence in the Lord. David, since his horrid foray with Bathsheba and his sorrowful repentance under the prophet Nathan has grown in his faith. And although David will yet suffer some terrible difficulties because of his sins, he is telling us that he is not worried or distraught. God is right there with him. To speak of God at his right hand means that He believes God is his best and foremost counselor and confidant in life. David, willingly and without fear absolutely trusts in the Lord and his promises. David is telling us he has nothing to fear.

He goes on. **“Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced.”** These words just express the joy of David in being allowed to be a prophet, a spokesman for the Lord. With a heart full of gladness and a tongue ready to share that joy, such is what David does. The end result is not only this Psalm but the numerous Psalms of David that express his faith, confidence and total joy in the Lord. Clearly David has come to understand the grace and love of God to its fullest.

Yet the most important words are these: **“My flesh also will rest in hope, because you will not abandon my life to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”** Here is David, 1400 years before it all happens, stating that God has helped him to see what will be. What will be is the Savior. That Savior is going to die, although in this Psalm we are not told how or why. What David wants us to see and focus on is the fact that this Holy One, the promised Messiah that will come from David’s ancestry line, though dead will not stay dead. This Holy One will not see decay and now look at the next words for the full impact: **“You have made known to me the paths of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence.”**

Here is what that Holy One, the Messiah, will accomplish. Because of this “resurrection” the path of life, true life, eternal life in heaven is understood by David. That last line is David expressing the total joy that he will have because He has this promise of God’s kingdom and eternal paradise by the very power and life of the Holy One. There is no doubt on this. Peter, is speaking by the Holy Spirit.

Now, focus and listen to verses 29-31 which I referenced earlier but did not fully quote. Now is the time to hear their truth: **29“Gentlemen, brothers, I can speak confidently to you about the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30Since he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath that he would seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31he saw what was coming and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, saying that he was neither abandoned to the grave nor did his flesh see decay.**

In other words, David understood exactly what we understand: Because Jesus lives, we will live! That is the whole purpose and point of Jesus. Seriously, if we could have saved ourselves then what was the point of Jesus? To set an example? We had all the prophets and faithful people of the Old Testament to set the example, for that matter, I have no doubt the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus’ day would have told you and told you boldly they were the example! And yet Jesus came. Did Jesus come to clarify the law? Well, yes, but he didn’t need to. From the beginning the law was given to show us our sins and that we desperately needed a Savior. That’s what Jesus made clear about the law. Do the law, keep the law perfectly as your Heavenly Father is perfect and you will be saved. And yet it is clear we cannot keep the law.

Nor do I find comfort in a religion that tells me Jesus came to give a new law. I couldn’t keep the old one, not even close, and you are trying to comfort me by telling me Jesus brought more laws? And if all Jesus was is some sort of example, then why did he have to suffer and die? Why not come, show us how to be real good and tap into some force of the spirit and then with pomp and circumstance ascend into heaven directly from the Temple mound?

Nope, Jesus came to die. Jesus came to atone for us. Jesus came to pay the price of our sins. What we couldn’t do Jesus has done for us and we are simply told that faith in Jesus and his complete act of redemption clothes us with his righteousness. In other words, because of Jesus we are counted holy and pure before the Father. We are heirs of eternal life and salvation. How did David put it? **“Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will rest in hope, because you have not abandoned my life to the grave!”**

Yes, dear redeemed of Jesus, from the very beginning of sin God has planned for and worked to bring about the salvation of our souls. We are not abandoned. We are not without hope. We are filled with joy and wonder simply because Jesus lives. It is what God promised and what Jesus has done. All because God has raised up Jesus. Amen.