1 Peter 2:24 He himself carried our sins in his body on the tree so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness. By his wounds you were healed.

I am sure that most of you noticed that while we are involved in Confirmation, this is actually the Sunday of Pentecost. In truth, it is most fitting that our Confirmation rite and the Day of Pentecost coincide. The reason is rather simple.

Pentecost is the day in which the New Testament era is openly begun. Now, I have to tell you I wrestled with the phrase that I used there to describe Pentecost. That’s because with the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist you could probably argue that with that action of God the New Testament era was begun. Because it is with that action that all the events of the life of Jesus and his redemptive work are going to follow. Me, I think it best if we put the time of Jesus into a separate category all by itself. Because the history, the life and times of Jesus is really the end of or the fulfilling of the Old Testament which would result in this great day of Pentecost, a day that marks the formal beginning of the New Testament. Because until this time, it is the promise of the Savior to come that was to be proclaimed but now we are going to proclaim the promises of the Savior who has come.

Do you grasp that such is the simple distinction between the Old and New Testaments? The Old was about the Savior who was coming. That Savior would be the Son of God who would wipe away sins and bring to bear even more the wonder of the Kingdom of God. Every aspect of Old Testament ceremonial life was always pointing to the Savior coming. For that matter, every nuance of Old Testament law was in place to prepare for and show the need of the Savior. Then comes Jesus to fulfill all the shadows of prophecy found in the Old Testament. He does not come to be an earthly ruler or king but rather to establish further and clearly, the promises of God to deliver from the ravages and horrors of sin to his Eternal and spiritual kingdom of salvation. It is true, that there will come a time when God will make this kingdom visible and new worldly, but that is the hope, the focus of what Jesus has fulfilled and revealed.

You can see that fact in the events of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes and leads the disciples to boldly proclaim the message of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. They don’t preach rebellion against Rome or even Jewish authority, they preach forgiveness and eternal life in the name of Jesus. That is clearly summed up in the message of Peter at Pentecost, even that end verse of our Epistle reading; **“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** It is especially seen and heard in the very last sentence of the sermon that Peter preached that day: **“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”** The message of the New Testament is the message of forgiveness and eternal life found in, won by and proclaimed through Jesus.

From Pentecost on people were told about Jesus, his forgiveness and the eternal life He won for them. On Pentecost some 3,000 people came to faith in Jesus. Since that time, throughout the centuries, numerous people have been brought to faith in the name of Jesus and through the proclamation of the Gospel. It is the cycle that was started and even continues today as we have carry out the rite of confirmation. Confirmation is a day when we literally celebrate that another soul has been brought to a grasp and understanding of the wonder of Jesus. The Holy Spirit has once again worked to bring a heart and mind to Jesus, to saving faith in Jesus.

So while Confirmation day is not the beginning of a life of faith, just as Pentecost was not the beginning of the New Testament era, still it marks a milestone, a pivot point in this soul before us just as Pentecost marks a pivot point. Yep, there is no doubt that Pentecost and Confirmation are fittingly brought together on this day.

Now what shall we speak of? Of what is important, not only for Pentecost but also for the tender youth before us. As has been my habit, when it comes to Confirmation I have always encouraged the kids to choose for themselves a passage to serve as their confirmation verse. My instructions are fairly simple: Choose a passage that you will consider the motto, the guiding principle of your life. So this morning we are going to preach on the passage our confirmand has chosen and what a great passage it is. That passage is from 1 Peter. It is chapter 2:24. **“He himself carried our sins in his body on the tree so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness. By his wounds you were healed.”**

Notice how this passage starts. It starts by referencing Jesus, for that matter the greatest act that Jesus ever did for all of mankind. I want you to think about that. I just said this passage references the greatest act that Jesus ever did. Jesus did some stupendous things. He walked on water, he fed thousands with miraculously multiplying bread and fish, not once but twice. He raised the dead, he healed sicknesses, diseases and physical ailments of great variety and number. Jesus did things in his earthly ministry that are completely and absolutely mind boggling. But those things, those wonder were mere miracles. The greatest act of Jesus was what He did on the cross!

Because on the cross he paid for our sins. Not just for ours but for the sins of the whole world. Here is what is behind this act. God, though he had created a perfect world, had that world disrupted and corrupted by sin. Yep, Adam and Eve, though given every gift to enable them to resist the lies and temptations of Satan succumbed to Satan’s lies and broke the one rule, failed the one test God had set before them: they ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They disobeyed God, made the determination that God and what he said was of no account for them. Enter sin. By the way, that is still the problem of mankind. We so often make the determination that God and what he said is of no account to us. And so sin rules. Sin destroys. Sin cause no end of problems for each and every one of us in this tainted and decaying world.

God’s justice says that sin must be paid for! The price was death and damnation. Yet God did not want to have his beloved children face this threat of hell. So God promised a Savior who would come and who would the pay the price for what we have done. A Savior who would redeem us.

That’s what Jesus did. Came and on that cross, endured the pangs of hell and damnation for each of us. Paid for our sins. Suffered eternal death until the law and its perfect justice was fulfilled. That’s Jesus. The Son of God who came for us, came because God wants us to be saved and have the gift of eternal life. That’s what Jesus is about.

Me, I think of what this means. I think of the sins I have done and no doubt will do and I am humbled before Jesus. Humbled because I grasp he died, suffered for me and my “deserve to be damned” soul. He did the same for all of us. Paid for all our sins. Makes it possible that we are no longer lost and condemned but rather are found and redeemed. That’s what the cross is about. That’s why Jesus came. Any religion, any kind of faith that downplays, dismisses or denies this very heart of Jesus’ life is a religion that has tossed aside and rejected the truth of Jesus. Jesus came to be our Savior.

His act of redemption has an impact. Our passage points that out. Please note that in the original text this section is known as a result clause. In other words, these words are the result of what Jesus did. The result clause says, **“so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness.”**

Here is the impact of Jesus on us. We no longer consider sin our right and privilege, something we get to do because we want to or because we have determined we know better than God. We are told we are dead to sin. Think of what that means. Sin is to have no power over us. Sin is not to be a force that drives us but no force at all. Of course, our problem is our sinful nature. I treasure Galatians 5:17 to help me grasp this battle I now have on my hands. **“For the sinful flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the sinful flesh. In fact, these two continually oppose one another.”** That’s our battle. To grasp we are dead to sin and thus alive to righteousness.

We can be and do good! We can serve the Lord with our hearts and minds. We can bring praise, glory and honor to our God and Lord, to our Savior Jesus because we strive to simply be his children. There are times when we are a light shining brightly to his glory and there will be times when because of sin our lights are dimmed maybe even shut off. That is our battle, to let our light shine.

If you would, let me use that as an illustration. Consider yourself as a flood light that has been set up. As flood lights we are to always be on. Always, that’s what God wants for us. Sometimes our light doesn’t seem that bright because of the day around us, that’s okay, let your light shine anyway. Sometimes our light is very bright because, well, there is darkness around us and darkness surely needs the light.

Where we get into trouble is we stop listening to and following God. The world and our other great enemies bring before us temptations. They seem harmless enough to us lights. We are told it would be better if we install an on/off dimmer switch for our light. Do that because it is better, the world says. And we rationalize, yeah, when it is really light out we can turn our light down and save energy or perhaps even turn our light off which would surely be for our good. What we fail to recognize is that just installing the switch is disobedience to God. And before long we forget to turn the light back up or even back on. Or once we dim it down and eventually decide we like that dimmer setting. After all, it is easier and more convenient, and people don’t have to be confronted by my faith. But sadly, as we play with our light in this way, we end up with a blown bulb and don’t even know it. We think dark is the way to be. The simple truth is we are to always shine in Jesus!

Don’t you see, we are told that Jesus came, **“so that we would be dead to sins and alive to righteousness!”** There, there is our calling. There is our walking the path of Jesus, our following, our light shining. To Him be the glory!

And I like how this passage ends. It doesn’t end with our job but ends with reminding us once more of what Jesus has done. So wonderfully simple these last words: **“By his wounds we are healed.”** What is it that plagues you? What is your trouble, your struggle, you foolishness in life? What is your wound, your injury, your hurt, your pain, your bruise, your soreness, your…how many more words are there that we could use here? What we are being told is that no matter what your problem, the solution is Jesus. He heals. He makes well. He provides strength. He gives perspective and insight. He is the cure no matter the wound! I pray you know that. I pray you understand this. I pray you let your life be guided in this.

Yes, Owen, a wonderful passage to live your life by and a wonderful passage to remind all of us to live to the glory of Jesus because of Jesus. Amen.