

PENTECOST

June 5, 2022

St. John 14:25-31:

## **“Seeing Is Not Always Believing”**

- I. Lazarus and the Lame Beggar.
- II. The Issue.
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St. John 14:25-31

Dear Friends in Christ,

Dr. Walter A. Maier was the first speaker for the Lutheran Hour from 1930 to 1950. He once told about a Rabbi Slostowski, a professor of the Talmud in the rabbinical seminary at Tel Aviv. The rabbi hated the Lord Jesus. Maier stated:

So great was his resentment that he sharply criticized a young Jewish convert reading a Hebrew New Testament. The young man replied by giving him a copy. That night the rabbi, alone in his room, stayed up until three o'clock in the morning reading about the Nazarene who claimed to be the Messiah. The Holy Spirit guided him into all truth, and later he confessed, "I have already found more than 200 passages of the New Testament that prove beyond a doubt that Jesus is in truth the Messiah." (Walter A Maier, *For Christ and Country*, CPH, 1942, p.99)

The Rabbi saw "a young Jewish convert." He saw him reading a Hebrew New Testament. He saw the young man's sincerity. But it wasn't until the rabbi read the Hebrew New Testament that he was brought to faith in Christ.

## SEEING IS NOT ALWAYS BELIEVING

### I. Lazarus and the Lame Beggar.

I would think most everyone is quite familiar with the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The fact that he was dead was witnessed, not only by his sisters, Mary and Martha, but by many who knew Lazarus before he died and, of course, were present when Jesus raised him from the dead. John's Gospel reports, "Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did, believed in him, but some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done." (Jn. 11:45,46)

More than likely, the "some of them" who reported this to the Pharisees also knew Lazarus before his death. The Pharisees did not reject the miracle. They were jealous and afraid they would loose the political support of "the many" who were running after Jesus because of His miracles. We're told: "So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council and said, 'What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.'" (Jn. 11:47,48)

It's called politics, having and keeping power. It's all they had. Without the love of God in Christ the only choices humans have are the ways and thinking of the world. Manipulating and maneuvering others filters into every aspect of life! In 70 A.D. the Romans tore Jerusalem to pieces, destroyed the temple, and dispersed the Jews throughout the Roman Empire. It's the history of politics.

But the question is: Why did so many who witnessed and believed the miracles reject Christ? It's simple. It's what Scriptures teach: "...you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked..." (Eph. 2:1-2a) It's the obvious: that which is dead cannot make itself alive. That which is spiritually dead cannot - ever - make a decision for Jesus! The Scriptures say it: "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us... (1 Jn. 4:10a)." Indeed, they believed when they saw the miracles - they believed Jesus could miraculously feed and heal and raise the dead. However, they did not believe that the miracles testified to the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh who would overcome sin, death and the devil for them. ***Seeing is not always believing.***

### II. The Issue.

And that's the issue of Pentecost. In our Gospel lesson, Jesus says to those first disciples: "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have



said to you.” (Jn. 14:25-26) This is exactly what happened on The Day of Pentecost, as stated in our reading from the Book of Acts: “When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place...and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...” (Acts 2:1,4)

The Holy Spirit, the Helper, is the one who worked faith in us to know that Jesus is God in the flesh who paid for our sins and won eternal life for us through His resurrection. As Jesus informed the first Disciples:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes (that is, the Holy Spirit, the Helper), he will guide you into all truth, for he will not speak on his own, but whatever he hears (what he hears from the Word Himself, Jesus) he will speak, and he will declare to you all the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn. 16:12-14)

After saying this, Jesus prayed to His Father concerning the Holy Spirit’s work through those first Disciples, “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word (that would include us)...” (Jn. 17:20) We have the Word as given to the first disciples then written and given to us in the Holy Scripture, and in the visible Word of the Sacraments. You’ve heard it before, please hear it again: Where the Word is, so is the Holy Spirit who guides us into all truth. The truth is Jesus, who is *the Way, the Truth and the Life!*

### III. We Have the Fullness of the Spirit.

This is Pentecost Sunday, the day we remember the first day of Pentecost for the New Testament church, the beginning of the harvest of souls for Jesus; the day we remember the words from the prophet Joel that Peter spoke to the beginning New Testament church: “And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...” (Acts 2:17a) What the disciples received on that first Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, would be poured out to others, to us. Peter would then say,

“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know (they saw, but didn’t believe) - this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified, and killed by the hands of lawless men.” (Acts 2:22,23)

And then, after Peter said everything in his Pentecost sermon that witnessed to what Joel and David had spoken concerning Jesus, we’re told: “Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37) Peter then stated this wonderful promise to them - a promise that is so important to us:

‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ (that is, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus commanded) for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (the gift of the Holy Spirit being the Holy Spirit who works and sustains faith through Word and Sacrament). For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.’ (Acts 2:38,39)

Again, we’ve heard these words of Peter many times. Paul admonished those who stood against him, “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.” (Acts 22:16) And in his Epistle to the Romans he states: “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized in Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death?...If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His.” (Rom. 6:3,5) It is as the Small Catechism states:

“Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water included in God’s command and combined with God’s word.” (ESV version, p. 204) And again, present with the water and the Word is the Holy Spirit.

You’ll recall that Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Helper”. The word has also been translated into “Comforter”, or “Counselor”. Luther said: “...the word ‘Comforter,’...refers to the counsel (given to) a man who has been accused, (counsel from) a person who espouses his cause, who defends him, straightens his affairs, and serves him with counsel and aid...encouragement, when he is in need of them. This (says Christ) is to be the office of the Holy Spirit...”

The chief work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Jesus. Jesus is glorified when God’s people are brought to faith and proclaim the faith. And that ultimately directs us to this: “Set your minds on things above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Col. 3:2-4) The fact is, seeing is not always believing. Believing is through the Holy Spirit as He works through the Word to comfort with promises of forgiveness and eternal life. In eternal life we will see and know perfectly!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott