

St. Acts 4:32-35

Dear Friends in Christ,

The text for this morning from Acts 4 is the appointed First Reading for this Sunday. The words are eye-opening: "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." (Act. 4:34-35) Eye opening.

This morning we are once again standing in the Light of the Resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. It's . . .

## **ANOTHER MOMENT THAT CHANGES THE WAY WE SEE EVERYTHING**

### **I. Some Realities.**

Some years ago, Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, who was a Romanian Lutheran pastor, wrote a book entitled "The Answer to the Atheist's Handbook." I quoted from it several weeks ago. The back cover reads, in part, "Rev. Wurmbrand languished for fourteen years in Communist prisons (that for his bold faith) ... In this remarkable book, while he was in solitary confinement, Wurmbrand demolishes the arguments for atheism as presented by the Soviet Academy of Science in its Atheist's Handbook." I have three pieces of that book I want you to hear. First this:

Let us suppose that Socialist ideals are accomplished. We will have a perfect society, without the distinction between rich and poor, without wars and revolutions, with wealth, culture, and happiness for everybody. But men will still have to die. Poor men die easily. There is not much to lose. For happy men death is a catastrophe. Kirov, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Leningrad district, assassinated by Stalin, had a position of power. He enjoyed life. His last words were, "I wish to live and to live and to live." If Stalin had not killed him, he would have died a natural death a few years later and his last tragic words would have been the same. (Richard Wurmbrand, "The Answer to the Atheist's Handbook," Living Sacrifice Book Company, Bartlesville, OK., [first printing in 1975, last printing 2002] p. 150.)

What Wurmbrand wrote needs no commentary from me. But I will tell you this: Oh I've listened to and watched church people who couldn't get enough of this world. It makes death very, very difficult. Here's the second piece from the book, which I quoted a few Sundays ago:

We all have to die. The decision does not depend on us. If nothing follows, the most beautiful life is nothing more than a banquet offered to a condemned man before his execution. He gets dainties and then he is hanged. He lives in an ideal society, but eventually he will rot, forgotten forever by everyone. (Ibid., pl. 150)

The most fantastic lie after the one that says there is no God is the lie of positive thinking that refuses to see the horror of sinful man and the wreck man has made of decency; the destruction of life, home and family; the insane gluttony for violence and corruption! And with all that, the passing of laws to protect the wreck, the destruction and the insanity. The third piece:

Go, comfort somebody who is dying in a cancer ward, or his family, with these words: "We are building a happy Socialist society," or "Science achieves great things. We have been to the moon and soon we will be on Venus." There is not much consolation in this. But tell the dying and the bereaved about the heavenly Father and the Christian's hope of living eternally with Him, and you will see the difference. (Ibid, p. 150)

You see? Everyone wants a little heaven on earth. Apart from Christ there is nothing but struggle, dying and death on earth. I know, it's not the positive message dying people apart from Christ want to hear. Many who claim Christ don't want to hear it. It makes no difference! None!! Scripture upon Scripture and life itself testify to it: apart from Christ there is nothing but a brief moment and a last breath.

## II. Because of the Resurrection.

But look at what happened to these first Christians in our text; former earth lovers:

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own... And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. (vv. 32a, 33)

This is absolutely amazing: "...those who believed were of one heart and soul." And why? Because the apostles were giving "their testimony to the resurrection of Jesus." This is it! This was why they were unified, a family, of one heart and soul. The Holy Spirit worked faith in them to understand one very, very simple fact: This world - this life - is not and cannot be our goal. I have two pieces of Scripture from the Apostle Paul we want in front of us. First this:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures... (I Cor. 15:3-4).

I pray we heard those opening words, believe them and pursue them: "I delivered to you as of first importance." The number one issue for our life in this world and the world to come: Jesus - everything about Him. The second piece is this:

But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith in vain. (I Cor. 15:13-14)

That puts everything in perspective. Wurmbrand said it: "If nothing follows (after death), the most beautiful life is nothing more than a banquet offered to a condemned man before his execution." But, in fact, Paul writes: "...Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep." (I Cor. 15:20) And get this: preceding our text for this morning, Peter and John had boldly declared to those who wanted to silence the Good News: "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:13)

Brothers and sisters, we're going to heaven when we finish our course in this world! The world has never and will never resolve its violence and corruption. Christ will! We live in the resurrection light! No matter what this world says and does, we have the joy and peace of knowing God's love, forgiveness and heaven in our Lord Jesus. And that changes everything about how we see this world, how we sacrifice for it, invest in it, pursue it.

The reality of all this is put forth in this God blessed reality . . .

## III. Caring for One Another.

Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common... There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the

proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. (vv. 32, 34-35)

The Lutheran commentator, P. E. Kretzmann, gives great insights to these verses:

This was not the expression of fantastic and illusory socialistic theories or of an absolute communism, but a spontaneous manifestation of Christian love. The spirit was kept alive and strengthened by the fact that the apostles with great power gave witness of the resurrection of Jesus Christ...It was the result of their acceptance of the resurrected Lord by faith that brought great grace upon them all...When the world begins to rage and to threaten, the true Christians cling all the more firmly to the Word, and this Word shows its power, binding their hearts together ever more firmly. (P. E. Kretzmann, Popular Commentary of the Bible, Vol. I, New Testament, CPH, p. 553)

I say to you, dear friends, in the final analysis, no-one will love and care for a child of God as other children of God in the resurrected Christ. It's very simple for the spiritual mind and heart, these words of Scripture: "By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?" (I Jn. 3:16-17).

And just in case you look at a child of God in all their struggles and messes and don't like what you see...well...remember this, as Scriptures say, "while we were still sinners (enemies of God) Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8) If that's straight with us, then *that changes the way we see everything*.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

*April 8, 2018*

*Acts 4:32-35:*

## ***Another Moment That Changes the Way We See Everything”***

- I. Some Realities.*
- II. Because of the Resurrection*
- III. Caring for One Another.*

*Pilgrim Lutheran Church  
2155 North Oakland Avenue  
Decatur, Illinois 62526*

