

“Letting Jesus Shine Through”

Pastor Dave Carlson
First Presbyterian Church
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New Testament Lesson: Acts 10:34-43
Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 65:17-25

One of the young people from our confirmation class last week said to me, “I’ve not seen Jesus, but I’d sure like to someday.” We had been talking about Christian service and being the hands and feet of Jesus.

I thought about making that a teaching moment. I thought about saying that we do see Jesus, in one another. But on second thought, I just left it to us to think about that desire to see Jesus. Think about it, wanting to see Jesus – each of us; who wouldn’t?!? – think about it and then trust in the Holy Spirit to reveal him to you, each and everyday in new and exciting ways.

What better way to come alongside Peter and all other disciples – past and present – who are, as Peter reminds us, “... chosen by God as witnesses....” You and I and all people who know and love Jesus are chosen to *be a witness* to the miracle of Christ’s resurrection, and all that means for us and the world. Now, Peter and those closest to him actually saw Jesus resurrected from the dead.

As Peter remembers it, “They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead” for us here, think Holy Communion, the Lord’s Supper.

Peter and these other disciples saw the resurrected Jesus in the flesh and that inspired them to tell everyone they could about him. But we haven’t seen Jesus face to face. So what inspires us? What is it that inspires us to share the Gospel, to be different than we would otherwise be if Jesus were not risen? Think about it. Someone had to go first after the apostles all died.

Imagine you are that first person in the line of non-eye-witness-disciples to actually do or say something that reveals Jesus to others. Can you image what you might do? Can you think of something you or someone else has done or said recently that you just know resulted in a “God moment,” either for you or the other person?

Are you willing to witness about that experience? Are you willing to share it? ... Here and now ... in a word or two? Anybody? ... Something you did or saw that was a God moment, a moment where Jesus shined through? How about my exchange with the confirmation student? Man, did I see Jesus shining through!

Now think about what inspired you to share that right now. (or... what inspired me to share that with you.) Yes, we are inspired because we see Jesus shining through, but also because we know that God sees it, too.

God sees us, and loves us, and has plans for us, plans for us to be witnesses in this world, witnesses to the fact that **Jesus Christ is risen today!** Can I get an Hallelujah! It's pretty amazing. Jesus Christ is risen, and because of that, we can actually be a reflection of the risen Christ in our world today. And not only us, but anyone who knows God and "does what is right is acceptable to him," as Peter put it.

How do we go about reflecting the light of Christ in an otherwise darkened world? The same way Jesus did. Peter tells us that (quote), "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; (and that Jesus) went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him."

Well I'm here to tell you that God is with you in the very same way. God sent the Holy Spirit upon us and God expects us to use that Spirit to reveal Christ to others.

Jesus was anointed "with the Holy Spirit and with power" – those two things. The Holy Spirit brings us wisdom and guidance and the power of God puts it to use, in our words and in our actions.

That's our calling and our responsibility – to use the Spirit of divine wisdom and guidance in all that we do – our responsibility. Or, in other words, turning to the Holy Spirit is what gives us the "ability" to "respond", respond in a Christlike manner – response ability.

Dennis C. McCarthy in his book "The Loyalty Link" tells of one family who "found themselves witnesses to Christ's presence through a small, spontaneous, but genuine gift. The family was standing on the sidewalk in front of their home, watching firemen swarming in and out.

A grease fire had severely damaged the kitchen, and smoke was now infiltrating everything else they owned. They watched in dismay as the fire was put out – holes in walls, scorched beams, destroyed dishes – a real mess.

Suddenly a pizza delivery car pulled up next to them at the curb, and a young man hopped out, bearing a large pizza. The father of the family looked annoyed and said, 'I'm afraid you've got the wrong address – obviously none of us ordered a pizza.' 'Besides,' he said, 'my wallet was in my jacket ... in the kitchen.'" Not a very Christlike response, but he was upset. And then the miracle happened. "The pizza guy smiled, and shaking his head, said, 'Oh I know you didn't order this, but I saw you all standing here, and I had to do something. There's no charge. Just try to take it easy and have something to eat.' Astonished, the family watched as the delivery man quickly returned to his car and sped off."¹

¹ Dennis C. McCarthy, *The Loyalty Link: How Loyal Employees Create Loyal Customers* [New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997].), via www.homileticsonline.com.

That deliver driver never actually saw the resurrected Jesus – never saw God in the flesh. But you can bet God saw what that delivery man did that day, and God was pleased to see Jesus shine through. It matters to God that people see Jesus in you – and me – and that in turn, others come to know and follow the living Christ.

And it just so happens that church is one of the best places to be inspired and equipped to ***share Jesus with others***. It's important that Jesus gets shared, that the words of Jesus and examples of Christlike behavior spread from one corner of the globe to another, from one side of Kansas City to another – both the Missouri *and* Kansas side. No, I'm kidding. Jesus happily crosses into the Kansas side. Jesus crosses all boundaries – political, national, economic, or what have you, and so should we, in the name and manner of Christ.

As you go from this worship service today, think of a way you can share Jesus with others. Take a moment right now to think about that – what self-giving, unexpected way might you make it known to someone in your life that Jesus is alive, he is alive indeed. Can you think of something?

Does anyone want to share that something, here and now? Come on, one thing you could do to let Jesus shine through. OK then. I've got one. I walk our new dog Lacey everyday. And everyday I pass by a tree in my neighbor's lawn that has all these yellow ribbons tied to it. You know why – they've got a son serving overseas. And whenever I see the family out in their yard, I shout out, "Still praying." I'm still praying for their son. And believe it or not, in something as simple – and not very remarkable – as that, Jesus is made known in this world.

Any of this; It's something we all can do – it's something you can do, this week – make the risen Lord known and visible – and to God be the glory. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of the resurrected Christ, for the brightness of your glory that no tomb can darken.

On this beautiful day of celebration, we pause to thank you for the promise that this day holds. We are filled with hope and joy and life.

Thank you for loving us so much that you sent your only son to overcome the grave. In Christ, death is not the final word.

And yet, we see the brokenness of our sin and the effects of it on the world around us. It is only through you that we live in anticipation of a world where brokenness and darkness no longer exist.

Walk with us, Lord, through the brokenness of our world. Be with those who are experiencing it most personally this day, those who struggle with health, finances, relationships, and hope.

And let us share in that hope, be a channel for that hope and healing, even as we share in the prayer that you taught, saying together:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our debts as we
forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil,
For Thine is the Kingdom and the Power and the Glory forever. Amen.**