

Sermon on Acts 3: 12 – 20 – Jesus Is the Real Thing!

“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”

Upon reading this text, I thought of an email that was sent to me some time ago. It used familiar advertising slogans to describe God.

God is like General Electric...He lights your path.

God is like Hallmark Cards...He cared enough to send the very best.

God is like the American Express Card...Don't leave home without Him!

God is like Coca-Cola...He's the real thing.

In a world of cheap imitations, we can be thankful that **Jesus is the Real Thing!** *I. He's the pause that refreshes. II. He's the cause of our salvation.*

Our text for today takes place after Pentecost. Jesus had already risen from the dead. Jesus had already ascended into heaven. Jesus had already commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations. On the day of Pentecost, those disciples were gathered in Jerusalem when all of a sudden they heard the sound of a violent wind and saw what appeared to be tongues of fire resting on their heads. They began to speak in different languages and were able to reach people from around the world who had gathered in Jerusalem. On that day the Holy Spirit brought 3,000 people to faith in Jesus. Excitement about Jesus was everywhere, much to the dismay of the religious leaders of the day. One day Peter and John went up to the temple for prayer. They saw a man crippled from birth begging at the temple gates. Putting his hand out, he expected a hand-out from them. But what Peter and John gave him was much more precious than gold or silver. Luke tells us, *“taking him by the right hand, Peter helped him up and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God.”* It was a miracle and it attracted quite a crowd! Luke tells us, *“all the people were astonished and came running to them.”*

When Peter and John saw all the commotion, they were quick to give credit where credit was due. Don't let it surprise you! It wasn't anything we did! *“By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.”* In spite of what your religious leaders might tell you, his disciples didn't come and steal his body. He has risen just like he said. The one you handed over. The one you disowned. The one you killed is the one God raised from the dead. You acted in ignorance. But little did you know that this was part of God's plan to save all people!

It's funny how well people know familiar advertising slogans. There's a reason why companies invest so much time and money in advertising. Tell people why they need the product. Tell them how they can't live without it. Prove that it works. Present it in a memorable way and you'll have a customer for life. Not only will you have a satisfied customer, those same customers will become your best advertising agents to get the word out to others.

Tell people why they need the product. Why do people need Jesus? One has to admit that he's a pretty tough sell in today's world where people think they can get along just fine without him. Good people living good lives will surely be good enough to get into heaven. But God's Word tells us that good isn't good enough. God demands perfection and if you can't give it to him, you fall short of the glory of God and deserve the wages of sin which is death, here on earth and for all eternity in hell. You may not have murdered anyone, but if you've ever hated anyone, you're guilty of murder in the eyes of God. You may have never cheated on your spouse, but if you've ever looked at someone lustfully, you're guilty of adultery in the eyes of God. You may have never stolen anything from anyone, but if you've ever failed to put in an honest days work for an honest days wages, you're guilty of stealing from your employer. God's Word tells us that just one sin makes us guilty of breaking all of God's law. Why even the sinful flesh you were born with condemns you right from the start.

“Wanna get away?” God's Word says you won't because as Paul writes, *“whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”* You weren't part of the crowd clamoring for Jesus to be crucified, but you played a part in killing the author of life. Your sins made it necessary. God's love made it happen! Peter tells us, *“this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.”* So what's a person to do? The same thing people were encouraged to do on the day of Pentecost. The same thing people were encouraged to do throughout the Old Testament. The same thing people are encouraged to do

today. *“Repent and turn to God.”* Repentance involves a change of heart. Repentance involves feeling sorry for our sins. Repentance involves turning away from our sins. Repentance involves confessing our sins to God. Repentance involves looking to Jesus who was *“appointed for you.”*

Chosen for you. Lived for you. Died for you. Rose again for you, so that your sins would be forgiven, so that eternal life in heaven would be yours. Out of love for you, the author of life offered up his life on the cross. Out of love for you, the author of life came back to life as he rose from the grave. Out of love for you, the author of life promises to raise you and take you to be with him in heaven. That’s the kind of power Jesus has and uses for the good of his people. That’s the kind of power Jesus has and uses as he rules in the hearts of his people through His Word. We preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead just like Peter and John. Did their message have an impact? Read a little further in the book of Acts and you’ll see that it did. Luke tells us the number of believers grew from 3,000 to 5,000. By the grace of God through faith in Jesus worked by the Holy Spirit, 2,000 more people were added to God’s family that day.

But the fields were still ripe and the harvest was still waiting which is why I’d like to share another familiar advertising slogan with you. *“God is like Dial Soap...Aren't you glad you know Him? Don't you wish everyone did?”* People without Jesus don’t smell good in the nostrils of God. God tells us, *“your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you.”* Sin separates people from God. Like the burning sulfur rising from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, sin stinks, but it’s not to high heaven, rather it’s to the lowest depths of hell. Through Jesus, God has washed our sins away and clothed us in the garments of Christ’s righteousness. Because of Jesus, we look and smell fantastic to God! Paul writes, *“Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life.”*

Think about the time and effort people put into looking and smelling good. Baths and showers and lotions and potions and perfumes and colognes, breath sprays and mints. We dress to impress! We want people to notice and maybe even say something. We’re sometimes disappointed if they don’t. If only we had that same desire when it came to people seeing and smelling Jesus in us! Jesus tells us, *“you are the light of the world...let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”*

Yes, Jesus is like Dial Soap...Aren't you glad you know Him? Don't you wish everyone did? Don't just wish it, be about the work our Savior has given us so that everyone does. That’s why we exist as a congregation. To grow in God’s Word and go with God’s Word to the world around us. Using our time, our talents, our treasures so that all may know and believe in Jesus as their Savior. There are lots of opportunities to be involved with the mission and ministry of Good Shepherd. The Ladies of Servae Christi seek to serve God and his people within the walls of Good Shepherd. The Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society seeks to serve God and his people beyond the walls of Good Shepherd by reaching out to the world around us. Ladies, these are both wonderful organizations to support and be involved with! Men, our Ministry Coordinating Council is always looking for men to serve. If you’re not sure who to ask, talk to Pastor Rutschow or myself and we’ll be happy to point the way. Our preschool, school, and Sunday School seeks to feed Jesus’ lambs and can always use more sheep to help lead and feed. Youth groups and pioneer programs are other ways we help keep our young people connected to Jesus. Because that’s who it’s all about. The folks gathered that day weren’t encouraged to look to Peter and John, they were encouraged to look to Jesus. Jesus is the real thing. He’s the pause that refreshes. He’s the cause of our salvation.

Tell people why they need the product. Sin is the reason why people need Jesus. Tell them how they can’t live without it. God’s Word tells us that people can’t live without Jesus if they hope to be in heaven one day. Prove that it works. Christ’s death and resurrection is proof that Jesus works and has given us the gift of salvation. Present it in a memorable way. Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”* Not only will you have a satisfied customer, those same customers will become your best advertising agents to get the word out to others. Through faith created and strengthened by the Holy Spirit working through Word and Sacrament, God has made us satisfied customers who go to *“preach the good news to all creation.”* Satisfied customers who tell others to *“come and see.”* Satisfied customers who go to serve. Because of Jesus, we’re more than just satisfied customers, we’re God’s children, here on earth and for all eternity in heaven. I suppose you could say, God is like Allstate...with Him, you’re in good hands!

Amen.