



Dear fellow believers, basking in the love and protection of our risen Savior!

Have you noticed that since Easter Sunday, we have lost our Old Testament Readings in our worship services? Spurlös Versenkt! Sunk (lost) without a trace. Instead, for our first Bible readings throughout this Easter Season, we keep peeking into the book of Acts. Why? Because there we see how the events of Holy Week and Easter reshaped the lives of Jesus' first disciples! Easter changed everything. They could not be quiet about what they had seen and heard. ***Jesus Christ, crucified and risen.*** And so they kept preaching an Easter sermon every day—with their lives. Do we? It's food for thought. For **This Is The Theme Of Our Christian Life.**

### **I. We Killed the Author of Life!**

What a downer to put at the beginning of this message, but I do it to copy what we learn from Acts chapter 3. The account begins with Peter and John miraculously healing a man crippled from birth. The miracle took place just outside the Temple Gate called "*Beautiful.*" How long had the man begged at that gate? How many of the temple worshipers knew him and had given him a coin or two over the years? But now that same man who was crippled for so many years was walking and jumping and praising God in the temple courts. (Acts 3:8) That ruckus drew a crowd. So when the beggar insisted on hanging on to Peter and John "*all the people came running toward them in utter amazement in the area called Solomon's Colonnade.*" (Act 3:11 EHV)

How many people were there? Dozens? Hundreds? Thousands? Earlier, three thousand had been baptized after Peter and the other apostles preached their powerful Pentecost sermons. But we don't know how many were present this day.

Yet this we do know. When the crowds rushed to Peter and John, when they stared at the two in amazement—with this healed beggar clinging to them, Peter could have seized the moment and preached an Easter season sermon with a very different theme. He could have begun, "*Well, if you want to know how we healed the man, it works this way. First we have to clear our minds and pray. And it must be a completely sincere prayer. Our faith has to be focused and strong. We can't become distracted, even for an instant. And when we reach out to touch the individual, it has to be with the right hand. The fingers outstretched. The palm down. And you have to lay your hand on the person's head—in just a certain way. And then say the magic words, and the individual will be healed. It's a complicated process, but if you like, I can teach you. We're going to hold a healing seminar during the 10<sup>th</sup> hour, just after the second hour of daily prayer. (That's 4 to 5 PM for us today.) The cost will be a half-shekel coin, like the one you use to pay your temple tax. But we'll also offer a family discount. And my latest book, Principles of Apostolic Healing, will also be available for purchase and autograph.*"

That was not Peter's Easter sermon. Instead his sermon theme was Jesus—all Jesus! First, Jesus Christ crucified. Even though preaching that was daring! No, it was downright dangerous! If you know a little bit about mob mentality, and if you remember what the mobs did to Jesus just a few months earlier, then you realize the courage it took for Peter to face the crowd and proclaim, "*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and disowned in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you. You killed the Author of Life, whom God raised from the dead. We are witnesses of this.*" (Acts 3:13-15 EHV)

Remember this: the vast majority of the crowds gathered at the temple would, of course, be Jewish: children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So they knew of the promises made to the patriarchs: promises of the Chosen One through whom all peoples on earth would be blessed. (Genesis 12:3; 26:4, 28:14) Promises made by Isaiah and others about that special Servant of the Lord who would die for the sins of his people and be glorified again as proof they were now declared innocent! Justified! Forgiven of sin. (Isaiah 52:13; 53:11)

Sadly, the people gathered at the temple were still looking for that promised Messiah. Still praying for his arrival. Until Peter dared to confront them with the uncomfortable facts. That Messiah had already come – Jesus! Remember him? A pagan governor, Pontius Pilate, wanted to let Jesus go. But you--God's people—said no! A



choice was made between “*the Holy and Righteous One,*” and the murderer, Barabbas. And “**YOU**” made that choice, Peter shouted! **YOU disowned “*the Holy and Righteous One!*”**

“*You killed the Author of Life.*” I don’t think you can preach God’s law any more forcefully. Any more personally. This is a rifle shot, right between the eyes. Christ’s death on the cross is not merely the fault of Pontius Pilate or the Sanhedrin. We can’t lay all the blame at the feet of Chief Priests or jealous, spite-filled scribes. Nor can we use the excuse, “*That’s what you get with godless pagans. Roman soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross.*”

No. That won’t wash. “*You killed the Author of Life.*” “*I killed the Author of Life.*” None of us needs to look any further than in the mirror to see the cause for Christ’s death on Good Friday.

What were our sins that nailed him there? Was it doubt? Was it fear? Was it worry? Was it indifference about our faith? Apathy about Christ? How did we *disown* him? Was it a personal demon like a hot temper? Was it because we’re so quick to bend the truth to save our neck? Was it an addiction we struggle so hard to hide from everyone around us? Coke? Meth? Marijuana? Online Porn? Our Smartphone? Was it anger at the tempest of trouble that the Lord is allowing to flood our life? Was it the callousness too many of us have adopted to the vile, foul language that our society now accepts and even glorifies? Words that would have gotten my mouth washed out with soap or had me grounded for life—now pop up all over the place, even in headlines of online news articles! And we shrug our shoulders and use them, just like everybody else, just to fit in!

In a society that is obsessed with all matters sexual, is our sin that we now also believe casual sex is no big deal? After all, it’s handy to have “*friends with benefits!*”

My friends, what sermon are we preaching with our life? To our family? To our friends? To our neighbors? To our classmates? To our coworkers? Is the message of our life anything like that of those first disciples whose lives were forever shaped by what they had seen and heard: **Jesus Christ, crucified and risen!** Do we still have a use for our knees? That we get down on them and admit, **We Killed The Author of Life!**

## **II. Therefore Repent and Return!**

What sin of yours, what sin of mine, nailed Jesus to his cross? Our Savior knows, doesn’t he! He knows exactly why he hung on that cross for you and me! He felt our sins press down on his shoulders. So heavy that he cried out in agony, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” Had the Father chosen to answer in that moment, the clouds would have parted, and these words would have echoed over Golgotha’s Hill. “*I am forsaking you, because of Glenn. And Jake. And Pete. And Tim. And John. And Cliff.*” Brothers on the Church Council, by now you are probably noticing an uncomfortable pattern. But you and I and all who are Christian leaders need to be the first on our knees, first to confess our sins, and first to heed Peter’s Gospel invitation that he so boldly made in the temple courts that day. “*Therefore repent and return to have your sins wiped out.*” (Act 3:19)

And we need to be the first to get off our knees. Because the One we crucified on Good Friday is not the *author of death*. He is not the unending source of gloom and doom and fire and brimstone, God’s holy judgment and wrath. Rather, our Savior is the *Author of life!* He is crucified and **risen!** That risen Savior brings us *refreshing times!* Like a spring rain, Jesus refreshes us when we are weary. He washes away the muck and grime of everyday life that sometimes crusts over us with all our trials and troubles. Jesus gives us clear consciences filled with peace and contentment, for our sins have been *wiped out!* And not like the words I try to erase on the white board in the fellowship hall. With little smudges left over here. And faint outlines still discernible over there. No, our sins have been plunged into the depth of the sea! They have been removed from before our Lord as far as the east is from the west. They have been canceled in Christ. They can’t come back to haunt us anymore.

Jesus is the Author of life! He wrote a new story for us, a new future, when the Lord God raised him from the dead! “*We are witnesses of this,*” Peter declared. Easter is a fact! An impossible, unbelievable, yet incontrovertible fact! Easter is like a warm June breeze that will blow over the Northwoods—at least by July. Easter warms our hearts and our souls with the enduring and undying confidence that everything Jesus has promised is true.



**April 14-15**  
**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**Acts 3:11-20**

**Easter Sunday 3**  
**REV. GLENN L. SCHWANKE**

Everything Jesus has promised! When you are down and depressed and convinced that you're a failure, and your life is never going to amount to anything, then Jesus reassures you, "*I came that (you) may have life and have it abundantly.*" (John 10:10)

When your tears are flowing, and your heart is broken, because there's nowhere to turn, and no one who seems to care, then bow your head, fold your hands, and let your tears and prayers flow to the One who promised, "*Amen, Amen, I tell you: Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you.*" (John 16:23)

When you're flat on your back in a hospital bed, and friends and family have been called—and the pastor, too, because the time is short—when you're so tired you just don't know if you can take another breath—then it's time to hear your Author of Life make this pledge to you! "*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and the Father are one.*" (John 10:27-30)

**This Is The Theme of the Christian Life! Jesus, crucified and risen!** Jesus, the center and core of our life. Jesus, whose name is so precious that it was "*the name of Jesus that. . .strengthened*" that crippled man almost 2 millennia ago and gave him "*perfect health.*" (Act 3:16) Jesus, Jesus, only Jesus! This is the Easter sermon I pay you and I keep preaching with our lives. For "*there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.*" (Acts 4:12) Amen.

Rev. Glenn Schwanke