



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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April 27, 2008
6th Sunday of Easter
1 Peter 3:15-22
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Acts 17:22-31
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 66
Second Lesson: 1 Peter 3:15-22
Gospel: John 14:15-21

Set Apart Christ as Lord

Have you ever in your life had things happen to you that are outside of your control? Things that happen to you that maybe someone else has done or circumstances happen that turns everything you had hoped for and dreamed for upside down and all your plans are shattered? Maybe someone has stolen away your boyfriend or girlfriend or spouse by telling lies about you and it shatters your life. How do you feel? Do you know that feeling that I'm talking about? The feeling when your blood is boiling and you're so mad at what someone did to you. You are so frustrated. You are so angry because you have been wronged. Not the kind of feeling that comes because you did something stupid and it's going to make you suffer; that's a little bit different feeling, isn't it, because you know you have some of the responsibility. But where it's something that you had nothing to do with and someone acted outside of you. They lied about you and cost you a promotion; something along those lines. And it just makes your blood boil. What do you want to do? What do you want to do in the depths of your heart when those kinds of things happen in life?

I'm guessing the word that probably would pop into your mind right now is "revenge," right? "I want to get back at them. I want to get my knuckles acquainted with their teeth. I want to do something. I just don't want to sit here and take it. I want to act. I want to let this blood that is boiling inside of me act somehow to relieve some of this pressure that is building up in me."

That kind of situation where you did nothing wrong and yet you're facing heartache that is just tearing you apart, that's exactly what Peter was talking about today in what I read to you. In the verses right before what I read to you, he says, "Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? You wouldn't expect that. But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. Don't fear what they fear. Don't be frightened," he said. So how do you get to the point where, even though you have done everything you are supposed to do, you're suffering? You're facing this heartache, this hardship. You are being attacked like the people Peter was writing to. Some of them were being physically attacked simply because they were serving their God. So what do you do instead of seeking revenge?

Most often we are at a loss for words with that aren't we? Because we want revenge; the sinful nature in us wants its pound of flesh. We want eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth. We want to get back at that person and hurt them in the way they have hurt us. That's certainly what our sinful nature wants to do because our sinful nature is all about ourselves, right? Our sinful nature always wants me to be the center of the universe

and all the planets and the galaxies revolve around me. And how everything that happens, how it affects me, is the most important thing in the world. And when something upsets me, then something has to happen. That is how my sinful nature is always going to approach it. My sinful nature is always going to long to do something to that person to make them feel the pain I am feeling. And even if I keep myself from doing it, I can't really pat myself on the back too hard because God says when you have thought it, you have done it, and you have sinned.

So the answer that our God puts in front of us today is a very simple, straightforward one. He says, "In your heart, set apart Christ as Lord." You might think, "That's not going to help me. How is saying set apart Christ as Lord in my heart going to keep me from doing the things that I know I'm going to want to do?" Think about it a bit. We are so used to talking about Christ as Savior, and the Holy Spirit has Peter get to that shortly in our text when he talks about why we set apart Christ as Lord, because he is your Savior. But set apart Christ as Lord, Lord and Savior, we use that phrase all the time and you and I both rejoice that Christ is our Savior because we know our sins. We know the things that we have done that have separated us from God. We know the things that we can hide from each other but we can't hide from God. You and I, if we are honest, know how desperately we need a Savior.

But we also have in our Savior a Lord, a master, a ruler, a king, master/servant relationship, king/subject relationship, Lord/slave relationship. That's the relationship between us and God. When we set apart Christ as Lord, that means that we live to serve him, not to serve our sinful nature. We live to honor him because of who he is and what he has done. In fact he tells us, "When you set apart Christ as Lord, I want you to do this. I want you to go this far and set apart Christ as Lord. I want you to always be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in your heart, for the confidence that heaven is open to you. Always be ready to give an answer, even to that person that has hurt you, that has made your life miserable; always be ready to give an answer to that person." But notice he says, "When Christ is your Lord, you are going to give that answer in a certain way." He says "Do it with gentleness and respect." Because even when you give that answer, wouldn't your sinful nature want to say, "This is what my God has done for you, but you are such a lousy piece of whatever that God certainly doesn't love you the way he loves me because you are obviously not a Christian. Look at what you have done." And then we think we have talked about who Christ is and what he has done for us. No, he says, "Do this with gentleness and respect."

Point people to Jesus as the answer for the sins that they have committed, even the sins that trouble and have affected your life. That's a high order. That's a high task. That's not something I think that any of us here really want to do. I don't want to go to the person that has made my life miserable and tell them, "You've done wrong, but in Jesus, that sin will be forgiven." I might be perfectly happy to tell them, "You've done wrong and the wages of sin is death. Have a good day." That's not what God has called us to do.

When we set apart Christ as Lord, we focus on him and not on ourselves. And as we focus on him, we see that he died for those that were nailing him to the tree. He died for those who lied about him. He died for those and said, "Father, forgive them, for they

don't know what they are doing." For those who made his life beyond miserable, who made his life hell. He did it perfectly in your place and in my place. So now he calls us to set him apart as Lord. He is only asking us to imitate him, right? To love as we have been loved. To forgive as we have been forgiven. That's a tough task, but the closer we walk to God, the closer we are in a relationship with Jesus through his Word and through his Sacraments, the more we will want to do what God has called us to do. And we will want to do it because we will see exactly what Peter tells us today.

What God has done, he now lives and rules. He was crucified, he died, he was buried, he ascended, and now he rules over all things. That's why he is our Lord. Look at what he says. "Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous." Christ took every one of our sins, every one of our sinful thoughts, our hateful thoughts, our angry thoughts, every action that we have done in anger, every word we have spoken to hurt those who have hurt us, and he carried them all to the cross. He paid the punishment that our sins deserve, not just the sins of those who have hurt us, but he paid for our sins as well, our sins of seeking vengeance. He died for the unrighteous to bring us to God.

He was put to death and took all of our sins there. He was made alive. Here's how certain Peter is that he is Lord. Peter says when he died before he appeared to the woman that morning, he descended into hell. He went to the spirits in prison and proclaimed to them that he had won the victory and they should have listened to Noah, that preacher of righteousness, when he was preaching as he was preparing the ark. But they didn't. And they were all destroyed is what we are told. And Peter says to us that the certainty of their destruction is also a reminder of the certainty of your salvation. Because those eight people got into that ark and those eight people were saved by the water that destroyed everyone else because they were in the ark, and the ark floated on the water and they were delivered. Those waters of the flood symbolize the waters of your baptism, where you were saved through water, where your sin was washed away, where you were connected to Christ's life, death, resurrection and his ruling power now over all the universe.

That's why you and I want to set apart Christ as Lord. That's why we fight against the sinful nature in us when we are upset with others. That's why we seek to grow in faith so that we love as we have been loved. It's not going to be easy. It's not going to come in a flash or a twinkling of an eye like our resurrection will, but over time, God changes us as he strengthens our faith so that we love as we have been loved. We have every confidence he will do this because he has saved us in our baptism, because he has given us the certainty of salvation, because our salvation doesn't depend on us, our attitudes, our actions or our efforts. Our salvation depends upon the One who lived, died, rose again and now rules over all things so that all angels, authorities and powers are in submission to him.

That's why we can deal with the things that frustrate us in this world; because we have a risen Lord who rules over all things. Not only are we to use him as the answer that we give instead of speaking out in our anger, but to point people to Christ, but we also do this because we know that he rules us and he loves us.

So as Christians, we set apart Christ as Lord, and the Lord, through Word and Sacraments, enables us to do this better and better each and every day of our lives.