

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

No way!

That was Thomas' response as we heard last Sunday,

and it is the response of the disciples to Jesus' sudden appearance to them in the Upper Room.

It is also the response of the residents of Jerusalem

to the healing in the name of Jesus

of the lame man at the temple gate.

No way!

- The power of the risen Lord defies belief!
 - Defies the rules of how the world works
 - And certainly defies corrupt religion – then, and now.

And yet, that power manifests itself before our eyes

– a man who was severely crippled and could not walk was healed by Peter and John in the name of Jesus

– by the authority of Jesus

– **by the power of Jesus vested in them by the Holy Spirit.**

No way!

But the man got up, and was walking and leaping and praising God...

Yes, way!

Except for some corrupt leaders who felt their own power being threatened.

For them, the response was

“No way....are they getting away with this.”

And they threw Peter and John in jail.

That begins another adventure – for you to read in your Bibles in Acts chapter 4.

But before they went to jail,

Peter had a opportunity to speak to those who had gathered around.

What he said is a sermon on the conversation Jesus had with the disciples in the upper room.

Jesus appeared with the peace of God that passes all human understanding.

He countered their disbelief with the invitation to touch his wounded body and the physical evidence of eating food.

Then he did for all of them what he had done for the two disciples on the road to Emmaus

– **he showed them how the Old Testament is all about him.**

How it speaks of him, showing the necessity of his suffering, death and resurrection.

Then, once he had opened their minds to understand those scriptures as His story,

He made them part of the story, too

You are witnesses of these things, he said.

No way!

Yes, way!

- You were there when I was baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit.
- You were there when I healed the blind and lame by the forgiveness of their sins.
- You were there when we shared the Passover together in my body and blood.
- You were there when I washed your feet and commanded you to love other as I love you
- You were there when I was betrayed,
 - handed over to the suffering of
 - condemnation, ridicule,
 - crucifixion, and death.
- You were there when the tomb was empty.
- **And you are here with me now.**

You are witnesses to the fulfillment of all the Scriptures said about me –
you are witnesses to the truth that I am the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed Savior sent by God.

Now, the continuing fulfillment of all I came to do – my mission – depends on you.

Repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of the Messiah shall be proclaimed by you to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

Jesus is passing the baton to his disciples –

And on Pentecost, the power of the Holy Spirit to be effective was poured out on them.

So, in the name of Jesus, Peter and John made a lame man walk and leap for joy.

And Peter –calling a spade a spade and a sin a sin -- proclaimed the message of repentance and forgiveness.

There was no room for Peter's hearers to excuse themselves for their sin, or to minimize their role in what had happened with Jesus.

With his sermon on repentance,

Peter nailed them to their own cross.

It was not a nice sermon – it was offensive.

Peter stepped on many very powerful toes.

But he did it on Jesus' authority – and that made all the difference.

Modern people don't really like such sermons – and most pastors I know don't like to preach them either.

Who wants to hear the specific ways believers continue to reject the Holy and Righteous Savior?

- “Claim Jesus as my Lord? In public? I don't want to do that!”
- “those foreigners don't belong here”
- “the church doesn't meet *my* needs, so I won't go”
- “I'm a good person – that's all that matters.”
- “what right does Jesus have to tell me how to live my life?”
- “I hate hypocrites!”
- “Jesus might have suffered the little children to come to him, but I don't want them making noise while I'm trying to worship.”

We don't like to confront the inner attitudes that are our sins.

We don't like to be exposed as having a flawed and conceited view of ourselves.

Yet, if we are not confronted

– if we do not recognize our sin and how it is leading us to death,
how can we possibly hear the good news of Jesus' call to repentance for the forgiveness of sins?

We ignore our sin to our peril.

And when we are cut to the heart,

recognizing the lies we believe,

we turn desperately to Jesus for forgiveness,

- for our sins to be wiped out,
- for our sure and certain death to be overturned

➤ **by Him who suffered it for us and who rose from the dead to give new life.**

Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,

But our text ends mid-sentence – for Peter’s sermon continues with these words:

so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, ...

Write that in your bulletin or underline it in your Bible.

God has so much more to give us than simply a clean slate:

Times of refreshing from being in the Lord’s presence—

- Working in the heat of the day – we come into the shade for a drink, for refreshment.
- Pushing hard to meet deadlines, to get everything done,
 - to finish our to-do lists,
 - **we pause in our stress to take a deep breath,**
 - to close our eyes,
 - to be refreshed by the calming of our mind.
- When we the webpage no longer responds, we refresh it – give it an opportunity to start over again.

Spiritually, I think of the refreshment of baptismal water,

- the cleansing of my spirit through Jesus’ forgiveness,
- the refreshment that comes from no longer carrying the heavy burden of guilt, or shame,

- or worry, or fear.

True love casts out all fear – and the presence of the Lord is nothing but pure, true, refreshing love.

...

The Lord's refreshing forgiveness changes our "No way!"
to "Yes way!"

So how are we fulfilling Jesus' mission?

How do we experience and share:

Repentance – forgiveness – refreshment.

- How do we hold one another accountable for our sins so that we turn to Jesus for forgiveness?
- Does forgiveness give you joy?
- How do we seek the presence of the Lord so that he might refresh us with the Holy Spirit?
- And finally, how do we share Jesus' message with all nations, beginning in North York?

May God himself bless *Journey with Jesus* today as a good beginning.

For Christ is risen! Alleluia!

Amen.