**Acts 3:12-20** April 8, 2018

Pastor P. Martin **Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY** Easter 2

 *Acts 3:12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16By 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.*

 *17“Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. 19Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.*

Dear Friends in Christ,

**Control+Z
*(Jesus’ Undoes What We Have Done)***

 Control+Z. It is the magical shortcut key: Control+Z. (Or if you are Mac users, Command+Z.)

 Just three decades ago, before handheld devices and even laptop computers, I went to a college with computer rooms. On each floor of the college dorm there was a room with about half a dozen computers for the sixty or so students to do their written assignments. Once in a while you would hear a shriek of horror from the computer room as hours of work suddenly disappeared, irretrievably. Just one false key stroke, and it was gone. Start over!

 Knowing that people make mistakes, different software developers developed “undo” features. If you accidentally disappear half of your doctoral thesis, just use your mouse to move the cursor over the “undo” button, click, and it reappears. And even easier than reaching over to the mouse to click the undo button, you can just hold down the Control key and push Z. Magically that keystroke undoes whatever mistake you just made.

 Even though I have used the key combination thousands of times, if not tens of thousands of times over the years, there is still joy, sometimes a great joy, in seeing my mistake undone at a keystroke. If only life were that simple, right?

 Here is the one catch for Control+Z to work: you must realize you have made a mistake. If you don’t realize your mistake, and then save the document and close the program, you can never undo what you have done. That is crucial. You must realize your mistake or else the undo feature does you no good.

 Which is where the apostle Peter was. He was talking to a crowd of people who were not believers, and he had to get them to realize that they were wrong. No one likes being told they are wrong. I know I don’t. Don’t tell me that I really botched the job. Don’t tell me that I didn’t put my shoulder into the work. Don’t tell me that good intentions aren’t enough. I was trying, wasn’t I?

 The Apostle Peter knew that the people before him. He knew that if the individuals in the crowd before him didn’t realize their sin problem, they could never utilize God’s great undo button. So he lays into them: ***“The God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.”*** These citizens of Jerusalem could remember how just a few weeks before, during the great Passover celebration, Jesus had come into town. The entire city and the hundreds of thousands of religious pilgrims had witnessed a power play between the ever popular Jesus and the jealous religious authorities. The religious authorities schemed to get Jesus crucified. Yes, some of the crowd before Peter had been there shouting, “Crucify him. Crucify him!” They had condemned a man they knew to be innocent. They had asked for a murderer to be exonerated. The one that God had glorified through a life of miracles, teaching, good works, and finally by raising him from the dead—they were complicit in his murder.

 Peter is eager to hang the guilt of Jesus’ death around their neck, because they had killed Jesus. He was not hanging the guilt of Jesus around the neck of the collective Jewish race, but on the people who had done the deed. Peter was preaching to his audience. They had killed an innocent man, none less than the Son of God!

 Well, at least we don’t have that on our hands!

 If the Apostle Peter came into our church today, he wouldn’t preach about people who killed Jesus long ago. Here he would preach a message about the sins *you* have committed. “Why is it you say nasty things to your spouse, the one God has given to you to love and to cherish till death do you part? You sin!” “Why do you let your children get into bad and ungodly habits saying only a few feeble words of protest? You sin!” “Why do you talk to people in such a sharp and unloving way that it cuts people to the quick, hurting their feelings? You say, ‘At least I speak the truth’, but is there any love in it?” “Why are you sure to find time and money for the things you want, but for others, for God, there is nothing? Why?” “Why do you put up with, watch, even spend money on entertainment that mocks God and his gifts?”

 God has a great gift to give to people, but they/we need to know that we need this gift!

 Do you see how important this message is? Minutes before our reading, the apostles Peter and John had healed a lame man by the name of Jesus. All the crowd was in awe over this miracle. But this spokesman of God does not want the Monday morning *Jerusalem Post* to read, “Lame man healed.” He doesn’t even want it to read, “Name of Jesus heals lame man.” Yes, the name of Jesus had healed him, but that physical healing is just a sign of a greater healing that the name of Jesus can do. So as Peter preaches his sermon, the healing of the lame man melts into the background of what Jesus really came to do.

 ***“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... Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”***

 Should it not be so in God’s house, in the Christian faith? Should not all of our activities serve the greater good of letting people know about their Savior? Yes, feed the poor. Visit the sick. Enjoy an Easter breakfast. Have a barbeque competition. Go to Feeding America. But let the name of Jesus be glorified, not just as a healer, a helper. Let the name of Jesus be first and foremost for a greater good. Let Jesus be God’s Control+Z on the sins of your life.

 Repent and turn to God. When you feel the guilt of your sins, do not hide from it. When you realize your failings, don’t turn up the volume. Don’t open a cold one to forget. Do not make excuses, do not avoid the messenger. Ignoring a doctor’s diagnosis will not treat the disease. Only by acknowledging and accepting the disease can we be cured of the disease. Only when we realize the sin which lurks in us, which sometimes even rules our lives, can we repent of it. When we realize how we have hurt people in ways big and little, then can we feel sorrow for what we have done. That is repentance. Repentance is dealing with the past and the present. When you have that moment that you want to kick yourself for your selfishness, your laziness, your jealousy, your anger—that is the beginning of repentance.

 Then throw yourself on God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. He has paid the debt of our sins before God. If we want to sing, “Jesus shed his blood for me,” we must first sing, “Chief of sinners though I be.” Jesus shed his blood for sinners, not holy people. He died to forgive, not to give a pat on the back. He rose to give eternal life as a gracious gift, not wages.

 Peter tells us that true repentance also means that we, ***“Turn to God.”*** When people become God’s, they get a change in their viewfinder. A repentant Christian always desires to refocus his eyes on God, to turn away from sin.

 That is so easy to say and so difficult to do. We nearly always fall into sin because we *want* to sin. We want what sin offers. Dishonesty gets us out of trouble, at least in the short-term. Selfishness and greed get us more stuff, at least worldly stuff. Pride makes us feel better about ourselves, even if it is at the expense of others. People with a bit of swagger, a bit of attitude, a hint of arrogance, are looked up to by the world. Did Jesus display swagger, attitude or arrogance? We fall into sins of word, deed and thought precisely because they do offer us what we want. We need to tear our eyes off those things and turn them to God.

 God promises blessings to all who ***“repent and turn.”*** God’s promise is not worldly things, but something else.

 There are some things that we desire in life so very much, yet we never even realize we want them. One of those is to hear the phrase, “I forgive you.” We rarely realize how much we need to hear those words. But you remember it, don’t you? I know I do! Years ago in the heat of argument you insulted someone. You asked her forgiveness for what you said, but she refused. That hurt. It hurt for a long time. You knew that you had repented, sincerely. You knew that you had dealt with your sin as God wanted you to, but how you longed to hear it from her mouth, “I forgive you.”

 I hope that more often the opposite has happened to you. You spoke hot angry words and feared that you have destroyed a friendship. Shame-faced, you accidentally met in a department store and said, “I’m sorry. I had no right to…” and your friend freely forgave it, and smiled, and hugged you.

 Peter says, ***“Repent, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”*** Simply repent, admit it, turn to God, and God’s forgiveness will lighten your life like the spring sun after a long winter—a time of refreshing. Sometimes God’s forgiveness is just the opposite: a cool misty rain after long hot summer—a time of refreshing. Every time you go to God, repentant over the wrongs you have done, burdened in conscience and you confess your sins, you can count on refreshment because God, in Jesus, is so very forgiving. Yes Jesus died, but he also rose again. And now he says to his people, *“Peace be with you.”* As a Christian, let times of repentance and refreshment be a regular part of your life.

 These times of refreshing come to us after we have done something you never thought yourself capable of doing, but you did anyway—after you have had a bout of road rage that was frightening even to you. Repent and be refreshed. After you return to an old habit that you thought that you had kicked, but have fallen into again. Repent and be refreshed. After you have been battling an addiction that you struggle against – you really do – but you just can’t get past it and you cry, literally cry to God. Repent and be refreshed. Whenever you feel the futility of battling against your weaknesses and faults, go to God for a time of refreshment

 This refreshment is always there for it is promised, ***“Repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away.”*** God promises that they will be wiped away. Like God’s own undo key. Only it isn’t exactly undone as if it had never existed. It is undone in Christ. Control+Z+JesusChrist. Jesus undoes all that we have done. Amen.