

"Eliminate Ignorance"

Text: Acts 3:13-15, 17-26

"To those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 1:2-3) Amen.

Dear Fellow Teachers:

Yes, *teachers* – all of us. We are never to lose sight of the fact that our God has called every single Christian to be an educator, an instructor, a mentor, a role model. The moment we allow that fact to slip from our consciousness, that's the moment that we cease to fulfill the very role that our God himself has identified as our life's purpose.

Our "instructing" will of course take many different forms. Yet, as with all forms of teaching, our ultimate goal is to eliminate ignorance.

For further enlightenment we turn to our text for this morning, found recorded in the Third Chapter of the Book of Acts – part of Peter's address to the crowd after he had healed a cripple in Jerusalem:

ESV (Acts 3:13-15, 17-26) The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁷ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham,

'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

These are the verbally inspired words of our God – the very words through which eternal life is both given and sustained. Mindful of the great value of these words from our God, so we petition that same God: **"Sanctify us through your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth."** Amen.

Easter is certainly not the sole possession of New Testament Christians. We share this great event also with the saints of old – Old Testament believers who lived and died clinging only to the great Promise of a Savior from sin. That promise found its fulfillment in the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. Like us, they too lived out their time of grace on earth patiently, but not idly. They too were teachers, entrusted with passing the torch to each succeeding generation by teaching them about the Promise.

So also today, as we wait for our Lord's Second Coming, we teach while we wait. How so? What does it mean that we teach? How do we teach? When and where do we teach? What do we teach?

The answer is that we teach with every word that we speak and every action that is seen by others. We teach by the clothes that we wear, the movies that we rent, what we do with the wealth that God gives us, what kind of belongings we accumulate, our level of contentment, what we eat and drink, how much and how often we pray, our general work ethic – every single thing that we do is an instruction to others. In all these ways, and in countless others, we teach.

These things we never want to forget, of course. Yet for the Christian, the mundane day-to-day activities of life do not represent all that we are called upon to teach. We are also called to give specific witness of our faith. The Apostle Peter, who spoke the words of our text, wrote also in his Epistle of the two parts of our witness when he wrote in 1 Peter 3:15-16: **"But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed."**

This is where we sometimes – maybe even *most times* – run into a problem. Like many other pursuits, teaching tends to get bogged down in complexity and prevented by feelings of inadequacy. We tend to imagine that all teachers at every level have to be experts in all areas of Christian doctrine before they can actually share what they know with others. That's something like requiring a PhD in chemistry and molecular biology before a mom can teach her daughter how to make pancakes. The basic truths of Christianity are absolutely straightforward. There is not a single person here today, from Sunday school age on up, who couldn't teach another human being the basic truths of the gospel, and thereby be instrumental in saving a human soul. Think about that for just a minute. Even from early childhood you and I possess both the ability and the opportunity to play a role in the rescue of a human being from eternal death in hell. *You* can teach someone that they are not saved by the good that they do, but through faith in the good that Jesus did for them. So what goes wrong?

I once heard professional teachers discussing the problem they refer to as "teacher burnout." As in many other occupations, these professional educators held that human beings can put up with a tremendous amount of adversity and sustain an incredible workload as long as they feel that their efforts are appreciated. Certainly there is truth in this supposition. Few things can sap human will and endurance like the feeling of futility or uselessness. In just about every walk of life, discouragement sets in rather quickly as soon as you feel that what you do has no value and holds absolutely no chance for success.

I can't speak for you, but I know for a fact that a sense of pointlessness and futility will discourage and pacify me faster than any other obstacle. The moment no one seems to care one bit whether you show up or not, that's the time when you start to feel like not showing up at all. This same sort of thing holds true in connection with our individual teaching or witnessing. As soon as we imagine that no one will ever be saved no matter what we say or do, that's the very moment that Satan has won yet another important battle in our lives.

This is, in fact, a particular danger in the area of religion in general, and the gospel in particular. Here visible results are often few and far between. Therefore, as with any other teacher, it is helpful to learn exactly what our duties include, what is required of us (as well as what is *not* required of us), and what we should expect in the way of visible results. In this, our text serves us well. In terms of our calling as teacher-witnesses, our text teaches us that our job-description pretty much boils down to *eliminating ignorance*. We return to our text to learn exactly what that means.

Again, our text is part of Peter's message to the Jews after he healed a cripple. Note how he boldly and unambiguously confronted them with their sin in crucifying their Savior – the very Promised Messiah. Of all of his verbally inspired words, however, we focus in particular this morning on one startling, fascinating statement: **"You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers."**

One of the basic tenets of jurisprudence (or system of law) in virtually every society is that ignorance is never a valid defense for breaking a law. It's not hard to figure out why. Who couldn't (and wouldn't) claim ignorance if ignorance were a viable defense? I remember I tried that defense once with my Grandpa when I did something I wasn't supposed to. *"But I didn't KNOW I wasn't supposed to do that!"* Apparently ignorance wasn't a part of my Grandpa's jurisprudence either.

The question here, as it relates to our text, is whether or not ignorance is part of God's jurisprudence. In other words, does God overlook sin on account of ignorance? The world would like to think so, but that notion isn't borne out by our text. God forgives sins, but only in connection with Jesus Christ. Note that in Verse 19 Peter still says to those who acted in ignorance: ***"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord."*** The Jews would have no reason to repent if ignorance excused their sinful conduct in the eyes of their Judge.

What we would do well to learn from these words – what we would do well to take home with us from this study – is direction for our lives as teachers, as well as the critical need for our ongoing witness. Ignorance did not and does not excuse sin and unbelief (***"He that believes not shall be damned"***) but it does demonstrate how vital and how valuable is our calling, and how necessary that we continue to struggle to eliminate ignorance. Sinners might not turn from their sin when they hear from our lips the word and will of God, but they *certainly will never* repent and come to saving faith if they never hear the truth. Paul put it this way in Romans 10:13-15: ***For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." ¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to***

preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

Having outlined our teaching responsibility, Paul then goes on to warn what not to expect: ***"But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?"*** He then gives us the bottom line with these words: ***"So then faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ."***

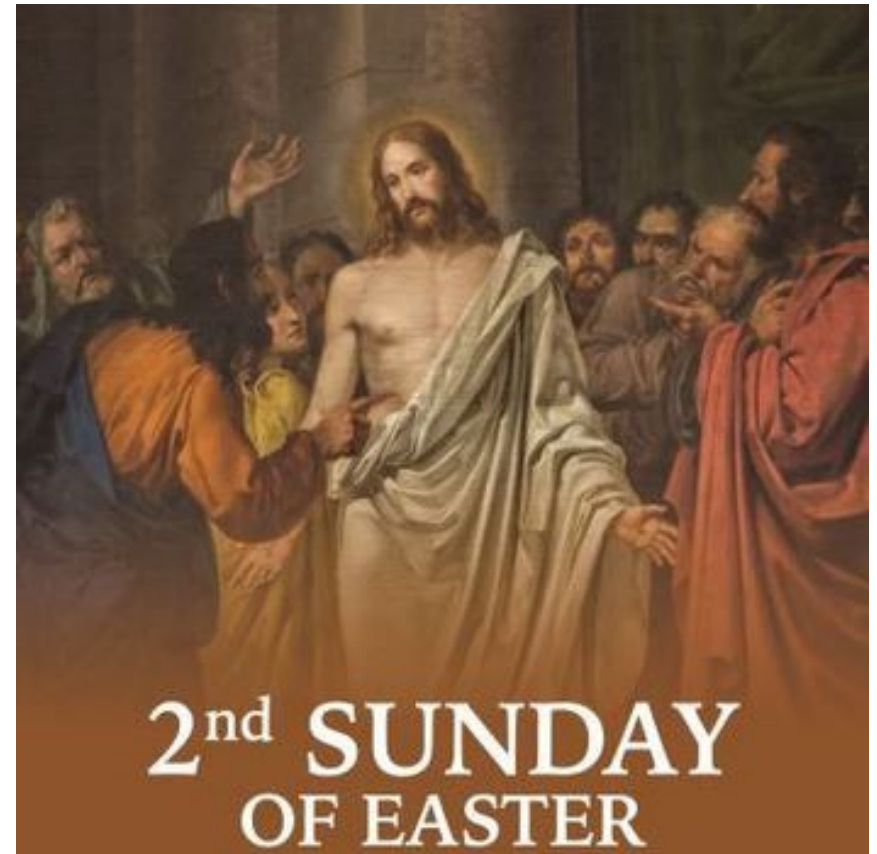
As Peter taught the people of his day with clear and direct law and gospel, so too you and I could not possibly improve on this model. Not everyone will hear and turn. That is neither our responsibility nor, in the end, our burden. Yet do not allow even one friend or loved one in your circle of life to continue in sin simply because he or she is ignorant – having never heard the word and will of the God who created them. Do not allow even one soul to perish eternally in a state of ignorance that you could easily dispel with the clear and simple message of sin and grace in Jesus Christ.

Is such work pointless, worthless, meaningless? Ask yourself this: *Was it worth the time of the one who once eliminated your ignorance by sharing with you the life-giving message of truth in Christ your Lord?* It is no less important that we struggle, day after day, to eliminate the damning ignorance that we encounter every day in souls for whom Jesus also died. God grant us such a love for souls, as well as a clear and abiding appreciation of our calling and purpose. Amen.

^{ESV} **1 John 1:1 - 2:2** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. ⁵ ¶ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. **2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

^{ESV} **John 20:19-29** On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." ²² And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." ²⁴ ¶ Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe." ²⁶ ¶ Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." ²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

^{ESV} **Acts 3:13-15, 17-26** The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁷ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Sunday after Easter – April 11, 2021

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – *(Sung to the Melody of 387 in the Red Hymnal)*
"The Day of Easter Now Is Past"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Scripture Lessons: *(Printed on the back page of this bulletin)*

The First Lesson: (1 John 1:1 – 2:2) The First Epistle of John begins with a rather striking reaffirmation that what the author was writing was not hearsay. What he wrote was that which he actually witnessed, experienced, lived. He saw and interacted with Jesus of Nazareth – saw him live, die, and live again. These are the things the author wants to share with us all these centuries later. His purpose is clear: those who know and believe these truths will be saved. Those who reject will be eternally tormented.

Psalm 100 (Supplement page 35) *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Gospel Lesson: (John 20:19-29) Christ appeared to many different witnesses on many different occasions following his resurrection. We read of several such appearances here. Most notably we are here reminded that seeing cannot be believed for Christians today. We accept our Lord's resurrection by faith. **"Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."**

The Confession of Faith -

The Nicene Creed – page 5. *(Brown Hymnal)*

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 730 *(Brown Hymnal)*
"Now Let the Heavens Be Joyful"

The Sermon – Text: Acts 3:13-15, 17-26 *(Printed on the back page)*
"Eliminate Ignorance"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Prayers

The Pre-Communion Hymn – 210 *(Red Hymnal)*
"The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done"

The Preparation for Holy Communion *(Brown Hymnal page 17)*

The Distribution

The Nunc Dimittis and Thanksgiving *(Brown Hymnal page 20)*

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn – 207 *(Stanzas 1-2) (Red Hymnal)*
"Like the Golden Sun Ascending"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (49) Average (30)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
Monday	-9:00 a.m.	– CLC Board Meetings in Eau Claire
Wednesday	No Confirmation or Midweek Bible Study	
Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday school and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Messiah of Hales Corners has called Teacher Carrie Reim. Eric Libby has accepted the Principal/Counselor call to Immanuel of Mankato. Teacher Matthew Kranz has returned the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. Redeemer of Sister Lakes has put in for a seminary graduate. The various boards of the CLC are scheduled to meet this week in Eau Claire.

Pastor Out of Town – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend CLC Board meetings in Eau Claire this week. Confirmation parents please meet with Pastor Roehl this morning to set the Confirmation schedule for the coming weeks.

CLC Youth Camp – Enrollment is now open for the CLC Youth camp to those students entering grades 9-12. For more information go to <https://youthcampclc.wixsite.com/camp/register> To contact the camp directors with any questions, go here: youthcamp.clc@gmail.com

Looking Ahead – The next Church Council meeting is scheduled for Sunday, April 25th.