

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of April 18, 20 10

Struck by the Son (Acts 9: 1-22)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is

"So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled immediately with something like scales fell from his eyes and he was baptized;'"

This is the text.

Dear friends and fellow redeemed, Today we remember history and give thanks to God for it; the turning enemies of the church to become one of Christ's most loyal and ardent followers. Isn't that marvellous!

But not everybody thinks so. I heard of a rationalist class that what happened to Saul on the road to Damascus stroke. A Christian student made a protest to the backed down and came to admit that in fact he was the subject. The student then courteously replied, "I heard that Paul was not sunstruck but that he was Sonstruck."

Yes, you heard that right. The student was saying the Son—SON that brought this to pass. Saul of Tarsus was not by the solar sun but by the Son of God.

And being struck by the Son of God changed the whole of his life. He was blinded for three days by the brilliance of the Lord Jesus sent him to one of his followers, a man named Ananias. It was there that he heard with Saul God's Word that appeared to you on the road by which you came. He sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Then, immediately something like scales fell from Saul's eyes and he came off and he could see again. He gave Saul new spiritual eyes to see and believe.

It was the definitive turning point in Saul's life and it was most dramatic. Before, Saul had thought that the Christians were propagating a Pharisee and religious colleagues Saul believed that His resurrection was a lie and that Jesus' followers were all deserving of death. And before his conversion experience he had made it his life's ambition to persecute the church.

and from our Lord and Saviour from the ninth chapter of Acts:

"...in his hand on him he said, '...on the road by which you came he was filled with the Holy Spirit.'" ¹⁸And he regained his sight. Then he

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Now what a dramatic turn of events! Saul was a different person now. His path had changed. His new life's ambition was to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, the very Gospel he had vowed previously to destroy. And thank to God's grace working through Paul he led him to plant churches throughout the Mediterranean and eventually to write a third of the New Testament of Holy Scripture.

The centre of what Paul had to learn is what each of us must learn: It is not about me, it is about you. We are not the centre of the universe. The centre is Jesus Christ. There is one central fact, one central deed that every human being will sooner or later have to deal with, which is, the crucified One has risen from the dead. And if that is true, then everything that we do has to be true.

In Paul's life we see a dramatic example of this. Imagine for a moment that Christ had not risen from the dead. How would that change your world view and conduct? In Second Corinthians 13 Paul writes, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith". In other words, how does your life change if Christ has risen from the dead then our entire life ought to be different. The end goal of the life of a Christian is to be centered on Him. For the resurrection is the finish line of this race.

Throughout history kings have sat on thrones as symbols of their authority. There's a throne in each of our lives as well. But we have to be careful that we don't put ourselves on the throne because this throne belongs to God. When He directs us and guides us and keeps us on His path and in His will. And yet He never forces His will upon us. God is not a tyrant. He is gentle and humble at heart. Instead, He draws us with His love in Christ.

God wants to show us that true life is found in Christ. He is everything in our lives. God will sometimes allow adversity to come our way; sometimes He will even thwart our plans if they are not for His glory. St. Paul wrote profit now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

Friends, since Jesus has risen it means we are redeemed and we belong to God. He has called us out of the world as His treasure and given us a new identity that is rooted in the Risen Saviour.

This new identity we have in Jesus is not a small gift; how often we think of being a Christian as something we can do on our own. Some people attend a rotary club, some people go to church, some people go to a Kiwanis club, others go to church, etc. But in reality, the church is distinct from other institutions and clubs of the world because Christ has risen and has proven that He has atoned for sin and He is truly your God. He is very life itself. As it says in First John 5, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

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-centering taking place. But let's ask the question: How would that change your life's goals and your daily conduct? In Second Corinthians 13 Paul writes, "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith". In other words, how does your life change if Christ has risen from the dead then our entire life ought to be different. The end goal of the life of a Christian is to be centered on Him. For the resurrection is the finish line of this race.

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When most people reach positions of power and influence, they tend to have a sense of pride and entitlement. The apostles, however, the closer they got to God, the more humble they became. For example, John the Baptist, who spoke about his joy in hearing Christ's voice, said, "He must become greater; I must become less."

In the case of Saul of Tarsus, he underwent a name change. He became Paul, and there is a good reason for this. The word "small" or "little". When the prideful Saul came to realize the greatness of His grace and he had the mind set that Christ Jesus "must become greater, I must become less."

As he took stock of his values system and worldview, he realized that the one thing that truly mattered above all things was knowing the Lord. As the hymn #730 says, "What is the world to me!

My life, my health, my wealth, My friend, my love, My joy, my crown, my all, My bliss eternally.

Once more, then, I declare: What is the world to me!

Amen. The peace of God that surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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