

Authority

Matthew 21:23-27

The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost, October 1, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead.

This is the starting point of everything.

Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead three days after the Romans put Him to death by crucifixion.

Since this is the starting point of everything, it is only thing that every really happened.

Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead three days after the Romans put Him to death at the request of the chief priests and elders of the people. This took place shortly after Jesus Himself had been betrayed by one of His own apostles. Judas Iscariot led the crowd dispatched by the chief priests and elders of the people to Jesus so that they could find Him. He identified Him to them in case they had never seen Him or were near sighted. He kissed Jesus. They arrested Him. They found Him guilty of blasphemy. They turned Him over to the Romans. The Romans killed Him by crucifixion. After three days He rose.

Furthermore Jesus Himself accurately predicted that this would happen. He predicted His betrayal. He predicted that the chief priests and the elders of the people would hand Him over to the Gentiles. He predicted that the Gentiles would kill Him. He predicted that He would rise from the dead. And Jesus not only predicted it, He predicted it three times before it actually happened. In addition to His general description of His death and resurrection prior to its occurrence, He also specifically added a prediction of His betrayal. He added that He would be abandoned by the rest of the apostles and it all happened.

Everything culminates in His resurrection. Everything flows from His resurrection.

Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead.

If Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead, then Jesus from Nazareth has authority.

If Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead, He has accomplished something that no other human being has ever done. No one else rose from the dead except those people whom Jesus Himself raised from the dead. If Jesus is the source of their resurrection and He Himself rose from the dead, then that enhances His authority. He has done something that no one else can do and those others who did do it did it only because He had them do it.

If Jesus from Nazareth raises others from the dead and He Himself rose from the dead, then He is in possession of knowledge and power that far surpasses anything of this earth. That being the case He has authority. If His Word about His resurrection turned out to be true, then all of His other words will turn out to be true also. Even if the word that He speaks does not make sense to us or does not sound right to us, it is still true. Even if the word that He speaks disturbs modern sensibilities, His word is still true. Did His prediction of His resurrection make sense to us? When the disciples first heard it they did not know what it meant. They questioned in their hearts what this "rising from the dead" might mean. The resurrection of Jesus from Nazareth from the dead defies human reason and ability and yet He said it and it came to pass. Therefore everything Jesus says is true even if it defies our ability and reason.

If He commands the wind and the waves, they obey Him. If He tells a leper to be purified, the leper is purified. If He tells us a deaf person's ears to be opened, they are opened. If He commands a demon, the demon obeys Him even if the demon does not wish to obey Him. If He tells you that your

sins are forgiven, they are forgiven. If He tells you that this bread is His body, it is His body. If He tells you that the cup is of His blood, it is of His blood. If He tells you that Baptism saves you, it saves you. It saves you by the power of His resurrection from the dead that makes everything that Jesus says work. If He tells a dead man to arise, the dead man rises from the dead. His word has authority. He is not like the scribes.

If Jesus from Nazareth rose from the dead, then it is possible to believe all of His other miracles, for all of His other miracles are as nothing compared to raising the dead. Even after our own human fashion, we make the deaf hear and the blind see and the lame walk, not like He did mind you, but we have done these things. If He can raise the dead and is risen from the dead, He can do anything.

Jesus from Nazareth has authority.

Jesus has the authority to grant His authority to others.

He sent out His apostles with the authority to heal the sick, to cast out demons, and to raise the dead. It was His authority. The apostles could not have done this on their own. But they exercised His authority on His behalf. They did it in accord with His instructions. They did not preach His word the way that they wanted to preach His word. They preached His word the way that He wanted them to preach it. He told them to tell others about the Kingdom of Heaven.

And after He rose from the dead, He gave the apostles His Holy Spirit who guarantees their words by the authority of God the Father. The Holy Spirit led them into all truth and took the things that are of Jesus and gave them to the apostles. The apostles then gave them to us according to the Lord's command and they are now ours.

When you read the Bible you are reading the apostolic preaching. The New Testament is exactly what the apostles preached. It contains their testimony to Jesus from Nazareth who rose from the dead. Since Jesus from Nazareth who rose from the dead specifically commissioned them to bring us this word the Bible is loaded with the authority of Jesus Himself. It is loaded with the authority of the One who rose from the dead.

Then there are those who are not apostles whom Jesus also commands to preach His word. Among these are pastors. There are others according to their specific callings, but pastors are among them. Since the word that I preach is the word of the apostles endowed with the authority of Jesus and since Jesus commanded us pastors to preach it, Jesus therefore commanded me to preach it, the preaching of the word of Jesus is also endowed with the authority of Jesus Himself. Therefore the preaching of Immanuel Lutheran Church is endowed with the authority of the One who rose from the dead.

This makes Divine Service worthwhile.

Many of us will read a legal document even though it is boring. We will read it thoroughly and pay attention to every word if the document has authority over us. It is the document's authority that rivets our attention, not how interesting it is to our aesthetic senses. The Divine Word is the same way. Now as it happens the Divine Word is interesting even aesthetically although some today in our age have dulled their sense to true beauty rather appealing to their flesh to determine what is beautiful and what is not. But even if the Divine Word were as dry as toast, even if the whole Bible were like the book of Leviticus, since it is the word of the One who rose from the dead we pay attention to it. As mortal people who will die and there is not a thing in the world that we can do about it, the Divine Word of the One who rose from the dead has His authority and lo and behold promises us our own resurrections by His grace!

This is the word that Jesus commanded me to proclaim to you. He commanded it in my call as your pastor. The Divine Service therefore contains His words and His message. It contains His baptism

and His body and blood for you to eat and to drink. All of it is guaranteed by His resurrection from the dead.

Now, this means that the resurrection of Jesus from Nazareth is the starting point of Christianity. This is important to realize when you are conversing with other people about godly things. In according with your callings, Jesus will place you into situations where you will confess to others of the hope that you have. When you make such a good confession before others in accord with the apostolic word, the Bible, and in accord with the vocation to which Jesus has called you, then you also speak with the authority of the One who rose from the dead. When you do this many of you have reported to me that the conversation quickly turns to authority. In other words every line of reasoning whether it be of religious matters or political matters or philosophical matters turns toward the starting point. How do you know what you know? How can you say what you say? Why should I listen to you?

Remember dear people of God, sons of God the Father, brothers of our Lord Jesus Christ, and heirs of the riches of heaven, your starting point is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

There are many competing authorities in this world. There are many other accounts of everything that is in the world. These competing accounts of the world try to displace the account that the One who rose from the dead gave to us. The big competing account in our civilization is evolution and everything that evolution embraces. But as time has worn on and modernity has turned to post modernity and the people who embraced the explanations once given by those who call themselves "scientists" realize that their explanations aren't as right as they first appeared to be, other explanations of everything are arising within western civilization. Believe it or not some people are returning to the old Greek gods of our civilization and are in fact worshipping them. Some are turned aside to the New Age. Some are turned aside to other forms of witchcraft. Some are turned aside to the Norse gods. And on and on it goes.

Now, listen to me carefully. When you are testifying to the hope that you have in you and making the good confession of your Lord Jesus Christ, keep in mind that whatever those outside may say, anything they say has a starting point. In other words their account of everything in the world has a basic assumption that it makes and that basic assumption cannot be proved.

As many of you know in spite of the fact that the apostles gave their lives to defend the truth that Jesus from Nazareth had risen from the dead, such a martyrdom does not constitute proof as we usually understand it in western civilization. Even though such testimony would stand up in court if it were about natural things, once it is supernatural the world which embraces other explanations for everything will not accept it. What the world will not tell you is that their explanations of everything also have starting points that defy proof.

Let me give you a simple example. Evolution confesses that life evolved on this planet from simpler forms to more complex forms. In order to allow for organic processes to do that, evolution comes up with the notion that the earth is billions of years old. This allows enough time for evolutionary processes to work. It has been discovered by some mathematicians that even with billions of years that is not sufficient time for such organic processes to produce intelligent life. The choice of the evolutionist is twofold. Either they insist on the earth being even older than originally thought or resort to an alternative explanation. The earth being older than originally thought defies credulity for some people insisting that the forces that they say formed the earth were such that the earth is not that old so they resort to alternative explanations. One such explanation and I am using a wild one by way of illustration is that we were seeded here by other intelligent beings. That is why some scientists are engaged in the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. Not only would such a discovery make possible the idea that we were

planted here by some other intelligent species, they think that it would also demonstrate that evolution is in fact the reason why we are here. Whichever way you go it is not provable as we typically understand provable.

And as I have said sometimes before, if what you believe is as strange as what I believe, then I am sticking with the man who rose from the dead! At least I have witnesses who were willing to die for that testimony to confirm it!

So when you testify to Christ remember that everything that anyone says has a starting point. Do not allow them to criticize your starting point, which is the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, without also pointing out what their starting point is and the problems associated with any starting point that they may have.

The competition is not between science and religion. The competition is between religion and religion. It always has been ever since the serpent spoke in the garden.

If they cannot say whether or not the authority of Jesus from Nazareth was from heaven or from men, then they will not be able to decide the authority of John the Baptist or any other preacher. That is why in the church's proclamation today, both in my vocation and in yours it is so necessary to preach Jesus Christ and Him risen from the dead!

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.