

Today as we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus, our first reading already puts us at Pentecost. Peter, who at times struggled with his faith and courage in the days before Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, is now preaching with power and conviction about who Jesus truly is. I am not mocking St Peter or any of the Apostles. I would do far worse than him and I am sure I am not the only one. We have the benefit of their eyewitness testimony as well as the teaching of hundreds of great saints from the past two thousand years...and we still struggle with our faith. Judge not the apostles lest we also be judged. That said, the radical change in Peter and the others came about partly through their encounters with Jesus after the Resurrection, but it was completed when the Holy Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost.

Peter tells us that Jesus "went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him." Jesus doing good. Throughout history there has been a tendency to see Jesus as just another good teacher, a good man, a good leader, etc. He was all of those things, but he was so much more than that because God was with him. Again, we can't make the mistake of watering this down. God was with Jesus because Jesus IS God, the second person of the Holy Trinity who became man to overturn the works of the devil. Jesus is and always was fully human and fully divine since the moment of his conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis says that "Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage." When Jesus, the God-Man, the rightful king in disguise, went about doing good, he was restoring creation to its right order. In a world corrupted by sin, Jesus' campaign of sabotage is to make things right. In Saint Peter's words Jesus was doing good by healing all of those oppressed by the devil. This doesn't just mean those suffering from demonic possession. The oppression of the devil also includes his corrupting influence on all of God's good creation and the ordinary way he tempts us into disobedience.

How did Jesus do this? As a king in disguise, he had to carry out his work in secret. He allowed himself to be put to death by hanging on a tree. Did Peter use the word "tree" by accident? NO! Many of the people hearing his speech would probably have been familiar with Genesis and how the forbidden fruit of a tree was the instrument through which the devil tricked Adam and Eve into disobedience. Jesus, the obedient Son of his Father, practiced obedience and allowed himself to be put to death on a tree. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve disobediently picked fruit from a tree. In another Garden, Jesus obediently

hung from a cross made of the wood from another tree. And, to completely reverse the cycle, just as Adam was at Eve's side when she ate the fruit from the tree, Jesus' mother Mary stood at the foot of Jesus' tree and watched as her son completed his rescue mission.

The gospels tell us of the miraculous ways in which Jesus healed the victims of demonic possession. He wants to heal us from the more ordinary ways in which the devil continues to trick and oppress us through his lies and deceit.

For many of you, this might be your semi-annual visit to Church at Christmas and Easter. Maybe you've been away a lot longer than that. Maybe this is your first time here. Welcome. We are happy to have you here with us.

What brought you here? Maybe you think it was to make your mom happy or your grandma happy or your friends happy. Maybe it's just something you do on Easter because you did it as a kid and it feels "right" somehow. You might think that...and at some level it's probably true. But that's not why you are here. You are here because Jesus called you here; he wants you here. Some of you will deny that...I know because I was that guy. No matter what you might think, You ARE here because Jesus wants you here. He has called you here because he has something he needs you to do. He called you here because there is something he wants to heal. Most of all, he called you here because he loves you and wants you with him.

If you don't go to Mass regularly, you won't be back next weekend. I know because I was that guy. I dare you to come back and prove me wrong. More importantly, come back because Jesus wants you back. He loves you. Isn't that reason enough?

Whether you realize it or not, Jesus brought you here. He has a plan for you, but he also has work he wants to do for you. He wants to make you into a brand new person by helping you to see what is good and glorious inside of you while driving out all that is keeping him from you. He wants to do for you what he did for Saint Peter. Peter as we see him today is a brand new man compared to where left him on Friday. Jesus wants to do that for each one of us. We all need healing in one way or another. We all need to be healed from some lie the devil has told us, even if we don't realize it. Let Jesus do his work.

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. Today is a brand new day and Jesus is alive and with us! Let us open our hearts and allow Jesus to complete the good works he has already begun in each one of us. Long live Christ the King Alleluia.