



## **Au Contraire – TouchPoint for April 17, 2019**

*Acts 4: 8-11 [NRSV] <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’”*

### **G & P to you from the God in whom we live and move and have our being.**

“This Jesus... whom you crucified ... God raised from the dead.”

We stand in the middle of Holy Week. There is so much happening between now and when we will meet again next Wednesday. There is tomorrow, Maundy Thursday, there is Good Friday, and then there is Easter Sunday. I think so often we tend to separate them out, and we end up not being able to see the forest for the trees. And we miss the connection between them.

See, it used to be that the cross was designed for one theory: a theory of atonement, and Easter was for another theory, a theory of the after-life. And they didn't necessarily have anything to do with each other. They could stand independently of one another.

The cross was the place where Jesus *paid the price for our sins*. On the cross the sacrifice was made. It was done. It was complete. And there was nothing that needed to be added to it.

Easter didn't help pay the price. Easter didn't complete the sacrifice. Easter wasn't needed for the sacrifice to be *satisfaction of payment* in THAT theory. We were forgiven whether Jesus rises from the dead or not, because his sacrifice was total and complete.

And Easter? It was a statement of God's triumph over death, any death—all death—death in its totality. It didn't matter how you died. Easter was victory over death. The fact that Jesus was crucified was not an essential part of the story. Easter could stand on its own without the crucifixion. You see, in the world of religious theories, the crucifixion and resurrection each held their own special place. Each had their own special purpose. And each theory was worked out independently of the other.

But then, these words from today: *“This Jesus ... whom you crucified ... God raised from the dead.”*

Here is Peter putting the two together, rendering them inseparable. *“This Jesus ... whom you crucified ... God raised from the dead.”* And Peter it does it by talking about 3 different people. A trinity of crucifixion and resurrection, as it were.

There is JESUS... whom WE crucified... GOD raised from the dead.

There is JESUS. There is US. There is GOD.

You see, most of our theories of atonement and resurrection just want it to be about two people, Jesus and the Father—Jesus and God. But Peter makes sure we don't get out of it that easily. He won't allow us to turn this into some celestial bookkeeping game.

This JESUS, whom YOU (that means WE) crucified... GOD raised from the dead.

So let's look at these three:

There is Jesus. **THIS JESUS.** "This Jesus" who said that *it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven.* "This Jesus" who said *blessed are the peacemakers'... not warmongers.* "This Jesus" who said that on judgment day, before he even gets around to the sheep and the goats, he will say to the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, *"Come on in because I am you and you are me...Oh, and you tax collectors and prostitutes...get in line first...I already have your tickets.. now where are the other folks about whom I have to decide who are sheep and who are goats."*

It's "This Jesus" —This Jesus whom **WE** crucified." **WE ... US**

A friend of mine, Sheri Brown, writes these amazing words in her reflection of Holy Week. I can't say it any better, so I'm just going to let her words speak.

**Peter denied Jesus three times. So did the crowd.**

**Pilate asked THREE TIMES and THREE TIMES the crowd urgently demanded that he be crucified.**

**There comes a point when we can't put it all on the government.**

**There comes a point when we can't put it all on the church.**

**There comes a day, or a moment in that day -**

**a thought, an utterance, a deed -**

**when the crucifixion is on me**

**when it's on you**

**when it's all of ours to own up to.**

**For me, this is the most tragic part of the story. The crowd will have its way.**

*She continues:*

**I can hear some of you saying, "Well, I wouldn't have been part of that crowd!" Think, then, of the crowd you ARE part of. What is your national affiliation, your political orientation, your denomination? Tell me your nation, your party, your church is actively and joyfully committed to living out God's command to care for the stranger and the alien, a command mentioned more than any other in all of scripture. I thought not. My crowd isn't either. We are culpable by association, guilty for what we have done and have not done. Yes, we are part of THAT crowd.**

***'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?'***

***Then he will answer us, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'***

**- Matthew 25:44-45**

I was in a discussion a couple of weeks ago at the Community of the Wild Goose about all this, and one woman made a great statement. She said, *"I always thought of the cross as the intersection of Jesus' love and our hate. The vertical line of Jesus' love, and the horizontal one of our hate. And Easter morning tells us who wins out."*

You know, I suppose I should just shut up and let the women who I've read and talked to about this speak for themselves. But nah, that wouldn't let me have the final say. I guess I'm not that different from everybody else on Good Friday, who wanted the final say over Jesus, or Peter on Easter Sunday morning who can't just listen to the women.

*"I always thought of the cross as the intersection of Jesus' love and our hate. The vertical line of Jesus' love, and the horizontal one of our hate. And Easter morning tells us who wins out."*

You and I can't stop this love and grace. I can't stop it. You can't stop it. Hammer and nails and death itself can't stop it. Between the intersection of Jesus' love and human hatred, guess which one God raised from the dead, and which one has the ultimate nail hammered into its coffin? *This Jesus* is the one God raises from the dead. his is the one Peter and Paul and all the rest say is the one who will reign over all. Who is Lord of all. "This Jesus" is the one! And his resurrection does not rescue the crucifixion but reinforces it. It is not simply the next chapter or next phase.

No, the resurrection amplifies his life and death. Highlights it. The resurrection doesn't help us get through, around, or beyond the cross. It doesn't get us past Jesus' life and way of death. No, it keeps returning us to it.

"This Jesus whom you crucified, **GOD** has raised from the dead."

### **GOD:**

The light of the resurrection doesn't just shine on the darkness of death. It shines on Jesus' life and way of death and says once again in clear and unmistakable terms, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. This is my beloved Son, listen to Him."

The one who is raised is the one we crucified and about whom we said in clear and unambiguous terms: "You are not God. You do not represent God. Stop this nonsense." And God replies on Easter morning with a very loud and clear, "**AU CONTRAIRE! What are you going to do now to stop me?**"

The resurrection doesn't help us get through, around, or beyond the cross. It doesn't put Jesus' life and way of death in the rear view mirror. No, it keeps making a U-turn back to it. In the resurrection, God is saying that this is where God is found. Wherever Jesus went, whoever he talked to, whatever he did and **THE WAY HE DIED** — this is who God is, and this is God at work in the world.

And so, the resurrection doesn't help us get through, around, or beyond the cross. It doesn't get us past Jesus' life and way of death. No, it keeps returning us to it. Why one might even say, "Easter keeps re-memorizing us to this Jesus and his life and way of death." Re-memorizing us to the one whom WE crucified and who from that cross uttered the words, "Father, forgive them..." These are the words that triumph at the intersection of God's love and our hate. This is the forgiveness that cannot be stopped.

Easter keeps re-memorizing us to the one who, in the night in which he was betrayed, denied, fallen-asleep-on and run-away-from, took bread and wine and said 'This is me for you, so that we will never be separated and always re-membered.'

*And neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord ...whom we crucified.*

This **JESUS**, whom **WE** crucified, **GOD** has raised and HE IS RISEN INDEED!!

Amen.