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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - MARCH/APRIL 08

(Acts 2:32) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

We are now in the sacred season of Lent and anticipate the joyous celebration of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. This is the heart and soul of the Gospel. God has made us witnesses of a crucified and risen Jesus.

Perhaps our present preaching lacks power because we do not simply preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead. It is tempting to get sucked into a proclamation of a better life in this world through Jesus. This is the message of the church growth movement. It is easy to get off message as we major in minors as does the anemic organized church of today. We fail to clearly proclaim a message of life and death. The most satisfying part of the ministry is ministering to people who are near death. For the Word of the Lord alone has the answer to death in a living Lord Jesus. The hope of the resurrection of the body is the only real hope we have in the hour of death.

Review how the Word of the Lord grew in the book of Acts as the Apostles functioned as witnesses of a crucified and risen Jesus. The book of Acts is a textbook for us in how to preach the Gospel in our day.

(Acts 2:25-28) "For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. {26} Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. {27} For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. {28} You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'"

(Acts 2:29-31) "Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. {30} "Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, {31} "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption."

(Acts 3:13-15) "The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. {14} "But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, {15} "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses."

(Acts 4:1-2) Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, {2} being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

(Acts 4:8-12) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: {9} "If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, {10} "let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. {11} "This is the 'stone which was rejected

by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' {12} "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

(Acts 4:33) And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

(Acts 5:29-32) But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. {30} "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. {31} "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. {32} "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."

(Acts 10:39-42) "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree. {40} "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, {41} "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. {42} "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead."

(Acts 17:2-3) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, {3} explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

(Acts 17:30-32) "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, {31} "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead." {32} And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

(Acts 23:6) But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"

(Acts 24:14-15) "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. {15} "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

(Acts 24:20-21) "Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council, {21} "unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'"

(Acts 26:8) "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"

(Acts 26:22-23) "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come; {23} "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

Echo the greeting of the early church this Easter and throughout the year.

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

John Schierenbeck