Acts 2:22-24 Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.

It was a pure joy to see on my social media pages all the Easter greetings and well wishes that were posted for last Sunday. It was uplifting and comforting, to realize that almost all of my friends are those who believe that Jesus Christ is God and Lord, the Savior of us all.

But it was also distressing, for me as a Pastor. Because there were quite a few of my friends who made posts about Easter but those friends don’t show any honor or faith in the Lord in their lives. Friends who live godlessly and yet are wishing a happy Easter? Friends who posted how that day was all about God’s saving us, but those friends weren’t in church to give God thanks for that. At least one friend posted that they didn’t get what all the Easter stuff was about and when one of their friends posted and said, “It’s about His rising!” the response was, “That’s false!” And I know that the person who posted that used to be a firm and sure believer in Jesus!

Now, you might wonder why I would remain friends with such people? It is rather simple, so that when the opportunity arises with them I can remind them of the truth and marvel of Jesus. So that I can challenge their lack of faith or maybe I can spur their faith on or maybe I can make them rethink their rejection and denial of Jesus. That’s also one of the reasons I persistently post sermons, both the written copy and the video of my sermons, so that if possible, if even one reads or listens they can hear the simple and wonderful truth of Jesus and just maybe the Holy Spirit will use that to call them to faith. Because Jesus is God and Lord and Jesus is our Savior from sin. Jesus deserves all honor and glory, thanks and praise, at all times for this great and gracious gift of life.

It is kind of clear that such is the way the disciples were thinking about things. All you have to do is take a good look at our words for today. Our words for today are actually taken from Peter’s sermon delivered on Pentecost, that day of the great outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit and the formal beginning of the Christian church. You do realize that the Christian church is really the Old Testament Messianic Church transformed. The O.T. believers were to have faith in the one who was to come and the N.T. believers were now to have faith in the one who has come and completely fulfilled God’s promises and hopes for our salvation. So on that day of Pentecost, it is no surprise that Peter focuses on Jesus and how Jesus is the very fulfillment of all that God had said would be. Our theme for today will be: **JESUS, ACCREDITED BY GOD.**

Now if you think about it, I think you would grasp that Peter’s sermon, on Jesus and Him the Risen Savior of the world, is perhaps the last thing most people would have preached on. After all, how do you preach about the guy that the Jewish people had just forty days before put to death? The death charge was that Jesus had blasphemed! Jesus had claimed to be the Son of God. Did so at his trial, you know, when the High Priest put Jesus under oath and said, “Tell us, are you the Christ of God?” Jesus’ answer was the equivalent of our, “That is absolutely right!” That’s when the High Priest tore his garment and condemned Jesus for blasphemy and that’s what got Jesus condemned! They had nothing else. So to be preaching Jesus is the last thing one would expect you would do in Jerusalem if you wanted to attract followers for yourself. Yet that is exactly what Peter does. He proclaims Jesus!

And I love his directness. **“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs….as you yourselves know.”** Talk about not beating around the bush! Peter starts by saying, Hey, you know that Jesus of Nazareth. That Jesus who did miracles, wonders and signs. You know, that guy that God himself had clearly shown was special and unique because of those miracles! Let’s you and I talk Jesus!

I am simply bowled over. You would not speak as Peter does unless what you were saying was true. You would not claim Jesus accredited by God, that means that Jesus was “certified or authorized” by the Lord God. How? By the miracles and wonders that he did. You know, the ones you know about and are absolutely aware of! Those miracles! You do not speak this way to a hostile crowd, to a group that thinks the miracles of Jesus a fraud or even to a group that thinks the miracles of Jesus were disputable! You only speak this way because everyone in the crowd knew that what you were saying was totally true. Everyone knew about the miracles. Everyone knew about the wonder and the vast number of those miracles. You could not tell lies and half-truths and expect to get away with it in this city of Jerusalem.

Please note the people do not riot or revolt. They listen to what is being said. Because they knew that so far, what was said was true! Absolutely true. Combined with the miracle of speaking in foreign languages and the tongues of flame on the heads of the 120 disciples of Jesus, the people were listening!

Peter goes on. Now today, the preacher would go on about being a team player or how this Jesus gave such a great example of how to live and gain godliness, but not Peter. Peter goes on this way, **“This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross.”**

He is not pulling any punches. He lays the death of Jesus firmly at their feet. Jesus was given to you but you with the help of wicked men put Jesus to death. You saw to it that He was nailed to the cross. Let’s just consider the depth of these words. Peter does nothing to downplay or pretend that the Jewish people before him were not a part of that large crowd that shouted “Crucify him, crucify him.” He is telling them this is plainly something they are guilty of. They got the job done through wicked men, most would consider this the Romans, and it does include them, but please note it also includes the Jewish religious leaders who hated, conspired against and carried out the plot to murder Jesus. It is as clear that Peter is telling these people, “You are guilty of this!”

About the only comfort that Peter is allowing for them at this point is found in the words, **“by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge.”** That is a key phrase here. Key for the Old Testament believers and key for the New Testament believers. Because if all of this happened as God planned it and as God wanted it to be, as God foresaw everything taking place then surely if we are going to talk about this then we should be able to reference, to turn to God’s Word and see this is true! Surely if this is God’s set purpose then God revealed that set purpose in his Word through his prophets!

He did. Prophecies about the Christ being a descendant of David. Prophecies about the virgin birth and where, even prophecies about when. Prophecies about the miracles and signs the Christ would do as proof He was God’s Son. Prophecies about his rejection by the people, his rejection by one of this own disciples, his suffering, his dying on a tree, dying without having any bones broken but having his side pierced through. Prophecies of his garments gambled for and his burial in a rich man’s tomb. It is said that there are some 350 prophecies in the Old Testament that almost anyone could identify. If you ask me, I would tell you there might be a 1,000 prophecies all pointing to Jesus, his life, death and his coming back to life.

I believe at this point that Peter doesn’t elaborate on any of those things right now because as the past 40 days have gone by, the people themselves have heard things and read things. They saw what happened when Jesus died, the darkening of the sun, the earthquake and the dead rising. They no doubt heard the clear and unmistakable hubbub that said that Jesus had come back to life and was seen by many! Things like that happen and you just might, as a religious person, do some personal digging into God’s Word to try and figure things out. Peter doesn’t elaborate because I don’t think he has to. People had been learning already. Where Peter elaborates is where the most important and factual point of all of this hinges. On the resurrection of Jesus. Because nothing else matters if Jesus stays in the grave. Yes, Peter is going to turn to God’s Word to remind these people that what they heard was indeed a part of what God had revealed and proclaimed!

Our text continues: **But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”** Peter proclaims the resurrection of Jesus! Peter declares that this resurrection of Jesus is the work and plan of God so much so that based on God’s Word it is clear that the only thing that could happen with Jesus would be the resurrection! That’s why Peter says, **“it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him.”** God’s Word had clearly foretold it and what God proclaims and says is always, absolutely truth!

Note that as our text goes on Peter will appeal to the Scriptures, here in our lesson he appeals to the words of King David who was also a prophet of God. Before that, at the beginning of this sermon Peter appealed to the prophet Joel to show that the events of Pentecost were prophesied. Clearly what was going on here was provable by Scripture! Provable to a people who knew Scripture, who knew the events that had taken place and now needed to contemplate these events.

I like verse 32 of our text. It says, **“God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”** Hard to argue with that. God’s Word had said it would happen. And now here it is fulfilled! Jesus is alive. And I am amazed because Peter says, “we are all witnesses of the fact.” I don’t believe those words are limited to the disciples of Jesus or even to the 120 believers with the tongues of fire. I believe those words are addressed to everyone in that crowd. I believe that because the resurrection appearances of Jesus were widespread and thorough. At one time over 500 people at once saw Jesus and came to grips with the fact that he was alive. In this crowd of people, Peter is basically saying that everyone there knew someone who had seen Jesus and with such great numbers of people declaring the same truth that God said would be, then it is a fact. Jesus is alive. The whole crowd, or at least 3,000 people on that day, became convinced by eyewitness accounts that Jesus was alive and that Jesus is the Lord and Savior God’s Word had promised.

That’s the absolute joy of this text. It is not a whitewash of the facts or a skirting of the facts in any way, but rather an appeal to what people knew to be true. Jesus had died and Jesus was now alive! There is only one conclusion to all of this: Jesus Christ is God and the Savior we all need so desperately in our lives. May you hear and know the wonder of Jesus, the salvation He brings because of what He has done for us. Amen.