Acts 5:29-32 Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!” The God of our father raised Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, who God has given to those who obey him.”

Honestly, every time we get to this part of the church year I struggle with why our Church readings change from Old Testament lessons to lessons from the book of Acts. I may have read the best explanation yet on this. I read, “The shift allows some variety in two ways. First, the series moves into the New Testament and the preacher has the fulfillment instead of prophecy. Second, texts from Acts are absent from many other periscopes, since they do not fall into Old Testament, Epistle, or Gospel readings. These texts offer the preacher the opportunity to concentrate on the triumphant spread of the gospel in the apostolic age.” (STotOT, C, pg167)

I guess I didn’t realize that preaching on prophecy was supposed to be a difficult thing. I have been thoroughly enjoying our OT preaching. Yet at the same time it is pretty interesting to preach on the Book of Acts. For clearly it is the New Testament church taking off.

So far, not much trouble has arisen since the people of the Jewish nation had Jesus put to death. What is clear, is that something happened. Something happened that caused these men to go from hiding in locked houses to openly preaching and teaching the message of Jesus. If you were going to ask them, it is clear that they would say, “What happened? What happened is that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead.” Remember these men had contact with him from the time of the resurrection until the time of his ascension, a forty day period. Nothing convinces you a guy who was dead is alive better than hanging around with him for forty days or so.

What I find interesting is that in Acts 5 you really have the beginning of the persecution of the Christian church and its followers. This persecution is clearly in line with what Jesus had told the disciples on Passover night. **“If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first…If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also…they will treat you this way because of my name.”** So basically in chapter 5 you have the warning Jesus gave his disciples beginning to come true. This persecution will start with the Jews but it won’t take long before the Romans are also officially in on the persecution of the followers of Jesus. It just seems that the world does not want to hear about or know about Jesus, the Savior from sin.

Of course, the world doesn’t mind a watered down or fake Jesus. Let a church abandon all that sin stuff and only talk positive things, the world will like it. Let the preachers stop all this “only Jesus stuff” and “the true Christian faith stuff” and the world will be pounding at their door to get in. The world’s motto today seems to be: “Be religious, just don’t be Godly. Be good, but use our standards not God’s. Be anything but a Christian and you can belong to our club.”

Yet in truth all of this doesn’t really surprise us. It doesn’t because Jesus warned us it would happen. It doesn’t because even the apostles were persecuted that they might keep their mouths shut about this Savior thing. Such is what our text reveals. Such is what the history of the true Church reveals. Let’s then contemplate why the world should so despise and malign the greatest story ever told. Our theme will be: **JESUS LIVES. 1st. He is Prince. 2nd. He is Savior.**

As I said, it doesn’t really surprise us that the followers of Jesus are persecuted. The events recorded here probably take place some 3 to 5 months after the resurrection of Jesus. For the last few months the disciples of Jesus have vigorously been preaching the name of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God concerning the Messiah who was to come. This teaching, this spreading the message of Jesus the Jewish leaders didn’t like. They did whatever they could to try and silence this message.

Yet the message wouldn’t be silenced! The message wouldn’t be silenced because these men were confident in the resurrection of Jesus (again he was around for 40 days after rising!) and empowered by the Holy Spirit who had come at Pentecost. It did not matter to the disciples that the Jewish leadership wanted them to be silent. As they very clearly stated, **“We must obey God rather than men!”** Although men were ordering them to be silent about Jesus, God was compelling them to preach and teach the marvel and majesty of this name.

How could they not preach Jesus? As an interesting point of view consider what is recorded in verses 35-39 of this chapter. Gamaliel, a famed teacher of the law, a leader among the leaders had this to say about this situation. **“Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”**

Consider current history. How many Jim Jones followers are there any more? How many David Koresh followers? Or how is the Crystal Cathedral and the followers of Robert Schuller doing? You are aware of the fact that he stepped down and the whole thing fell apart, right? What this man said then is still pretty much true today, take away the leader of a group and the group collapses. The difference here is what is revealed about Jesus in our text. Peter and the disciples said, **“The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead—God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins.”**

Here is what makes the difference! Jesus had been killed but Jesus had also been raised from the dead! For forty days after the resurrection Jesus showed himself to many people and on the fortieth day he ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God. Here is what makes Jesus the Prince. Here is what makes Jesus the Savior.

Jesus is our Prince. When he ascended into heaven he did so that God the Father might put all things under his control. Scripture declares Jesus to be **“the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings.”** In Philippians we are reminded of this royal nature of Jesus. It says, **“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”**

Do you understand the implications of Jesus being the Prince? Please note that a Prince is the son of a King, the inheritor of all that is the King’s. By being called a Prince, Scripture is declaring Jesus the Son of God and the ruler over all things. In Acts 10:42 Peter preaching of Jesus declares, **“[God] commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead.”**

In the book of Revelation we find these words revealing the power of Jesus as the Prince. In chapter 5 while describing the victory of Jesus we hear these two songs, **“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”** And, **“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!”** All of these things help us to understand that Jesus is the Prince, the Son of God who has been declared the ruler over all things, the judge of the living and the dead.

I can understand why these men, these followers of Jesus couldn’t keep their mouths shut. Jesus was their Prince and ruler. Jesus had commanded them to preach, teach and baptize in His name. They couldn’t keep quiet! They couldn’t be still! They were compelled to do this because they knew they were witnesses of the fact that Jesus Lives. He was their Prince.

What is also amazing to me is how this whole episode ends. The Jewish leaders have the disciples flogged and then let them go. Verses 41-42 tell us this, **“The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.”**

They never stopped. They preached the good news of Jesus. That means they told people how Jesus was the Savior. The name Savior means “he who saves or redeems.” That redemption is referred to in the verses we highlighted. They said, **“That he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins.”**

Here is what Jesus has done. Jesus suffered and died to become our Savior, the one who earned eternal life and salvation. Through Jesus we have forgiveness. Our sins are wiped out, tossed aside, erased, gone from our lives. No longer are we condemned and lost, separated from God because of our wickedness. In Jesus we are forgiven. In Jesus we are clothed with His righteousness and purity. What we could not do for ourselves He has accomplished. He has opened wide the gates of heaven that we might enter in, not of our power and ability but because of the forgiveness of sins he has given.

And as if forgiveness itself were not enough, Jesus also gives “repentance.” Do you realize that without repentance we could not change, improve, better ourselves and make progress as the children of God? It is repentance that leads us to see our sins. It is repentance that leads us to be horrified at sin, to desire to stop that sin and to lead holy lives according to God’s Word. Repentance is a word that tells us we will change our minds about something. We will not continue to live in the pattern of this world but rather in the pattern of God’s Word.

Think of this as you look about your world today. Today we have a world that shuns responsibility and that likes to pass the blame and make excuses. The result? The foundations of society keep crumbling around us. Things keep getting worse. Don’t you realize that the world without Jesus and the repentance he gives, cannot improve or even stop the decay? Repentance is a changing of the mind. It means you think different, act different. It means you don’t follow the world’s path but God’s path. God, in Jesus is the one who helps us to change our lives for the glory of His name. In Jesus we are new creatures created to do good works.

All of this because Jesus is our Savior. He redeemed us. He has made us the children of God and the heirs of salvation. He has changed us because of his victory from the grave, yes, the resurrection of Easter.

As the disciples were emboldened to preach and teach Jesus and not be silenced, so may it be with us. May we be emboldened! May the Holy Spirit help us to grasp the marvel of forgiveness, the power of repentance and the glory of the name of Jesus. He deserves honor and praise because He is our Prince and Savior. Amen.