Acts 13:32-33 “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm; “You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”

Do you truly grasp the importance of this season of the church year? We are in the season of Easter. No, it is not about spring and new growth, not about warm weather and how this season just makes us feel better because we are getting more sun. I would agree, those things might be true of spring, but those things are not what Easter is about. Easter is about Jesus and what Jesus has done and accomplished for us.

I read an interesting stat the other day. It was a little line that simply reminded me of the fact that in the New Testament, from the Book of Acts on the resurrection of Jesus is mentioned and taught some 200 times. 200 times. I think that statistic tells us what was important to the Holy Spirit who gave us the New Testament. Jesus lives. Jesus has risen from the dead. It is that message that stands out. That message that declares what is to be the heart and core of our Christian church.

In our text for today, we find the Apostle Paul given a chance to preach and teach before his people. This is the first recorded sermon of Paul for us. How interesting his words. How powerful his message. How important his message not only for then, but even for today. Our theme will be: **THE GOOD NEWS. 1st. Promises fulfilled. 2nd. God’s Son revealed. 3rd. Good news.**

Lots has gone on since the death and resurrection of Jesus. The Apostle’s went from being men hiding and afraid to men who boldly and openly preached and taught the name of Jesus as the very point of God’s plan for the world, yes, the Jewish world and the whole world. At first things went fairly smooth and then persecution broke out. That persecution was carried out by Saul, who in the name of God gathered together those who were followers of the Way, gathered them to persecute and kill. In chapter 9 of Acts we heard how Saul was confronted by the living Jesus and Saul’s life was now changed. He became Paul, Apostle of Jesus, preacher of the wonder of God’s love and grace. Here in chapter 13, as I said earlier, we have an opportunity to hear the words of Paul as he preaches his first recorded sermon. Bear in mind this sermon, preached in Pisidian Antioch, takes place some fourteen years after the resurrection of Jesus. Yep, fourteen years have gone by and it is clear by Paul’s sermon what was and is still important to the early Christian church and its believers.

What does Paul have to say? If you were to read the whole sermon you would find that Paul simply uses the history of the Jewish people to remind them that their history was really the history of the promises of Jesus. From there, it is clear that Paul simply wants to talk about what Jesus is about. Our verses actually do a great job of summarizing / highlighting, this message of Paul. What does Paul want us to know?

First he wants us to be sure to grasp the Good news. Now why would you call something good news unless it was that? This good news that Paul wants to be sure to get across to people is given in more direct language toward the end of this sermon. There Paul says, **“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law.”** There it is. Paul wants us to understand that the Good news he is proclaiming is the good news of God’s Son sent to be our Savior from sin. It is the good news of forgiveness and salvation with God.

How do we know that what Paul says is real and true? Paul says it is based in history. Listen to verse 32. **“We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us their children.”** In other words, the good news is what God promised and what God worked for in the entire history of the world.

We can summarize that history. From the fall into sin by Adam and Eve, the act that brought upon the world all the devastation it knows, God gave the promise of a Savior. As time went on, God chose a people through whom his Savior would be born. God wanted those people to be unique and different, and sometimes they were but in truth most of the time they failed miserably at being the people of God. Still through them and through their history God gave more promises, gave more hope, gave more prophecies of what His Son would be and do.

As I was preparing for this sermon, I read a rather interesting calculation. A fellow by the name of Peter Stoner in a book titled *Science Speaks* makes this observation, “The chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 1017.” Now since I didn’t have the book but was only reading the quote I have to make a few assumptions. I assume his math is correct. In other words, it would be a 1 in a thousand chance that Jesus could have fulfilled eight of the prophecies associated with the Messiah. What I don’t understand is why the author spoke of only eight. By some counts it is actually 33 prophecies fulfilled in just the last week of Jesus’ life. If you were to take the entire life of Jesus then you have some 350 prophecies fulfilled (and frankly I think that number low!). In actuality this is much more than just coincidence, it is clear it is planned, planned and fulfilled by God. (By the way, I want you to contemplate this. Science has declared evolution true and the chances of evolution being true is based on far less, much less evidence than what is found in the life and death of Jesus.)

History has shown Jesus’ story true. And why? Because of the resurrection from the dead! You see, that is the one piece of history that had the greatest impact. It is here that we must contemplate the passage that Paul uses from Psalm 2, **“You are my Son; today I have become your Father.”** Psalm 2 is the Lord God speaking to the Savior Jesus. Those words are so wonderful. God the Father knew Jesus was his son that is the first part of the verse. The second part is letting us know that something is going to happen, something that will happen on a specific day where everyone is going to grasp that God is indeed the Father of Jesus. Go back and contemplate that sentence again. Something is going to happen whereby everyone, not just God, but everyone will know that Jesus is the Son of God. What was that? Quite a few prophecies tell us that the event will be the resurrection of God’s Son from the dead!

Scripture bears out this truth. Ro. 1:4 says, **“and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”** In his Pentecost sermon Peter, after pointing clearly to the resurrection of Jesus in fulfillment of Scripture declares, **“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”** We could go on and on with passages that attest to the importance of the resurrection of Jesus. What I can tell you is this. Without the actual physical resurrection, without a very large number of people as eye witnesses of this living Jesus (hence the 40 days before Jesus ascends) in other words, without proof, real, actual proof that Jesus was alive after being dead, we would not be sitting here still speaking of Him some 2,000 years later. Most scholars agree that something happened, something extraordinary happened to bring about the events that culminated in the belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God! That event is the resurrection of Jesus.

Is it any wonder then that in our modern times we are being inundated with story after story of people who died and came back to life? This thing is happening because it is simply another way for Satan to undermine and discredit the resurrection of Jesus. And you know most of the stories are absolutely false because in almost all the cases, the message of these people is one that contradicts and undermines the truth of God’s Word. It is all happening now to get you to abandon Jesus and the uniqueness that He truly and really is. God and Lord, Savior and King!

All of this does one thing, it points to the heart and core of the message of Jesus. That message is really pretty simple. The world has a sin problem. God has solved this problem by sending His Son to be your Savior and to grant you, by grace through faith, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. That is why Paul calls this message of Jesus, the “good news.” It is that message of eternal life and salvation that is the heart and core of our faith.

So what is the difference between the Christian and the non-Christian? Is the Christian holier or without sin? The answer would be “No!” Christians have and wrestle with sin just like every human on the planet. The difference is in our attitude. We recognize sin as a horror! We recognize that it is only because of Jesus that we have forgiveness and eternal life, not because we are so good and righteous. Our lives are filled with our struggle against sin. We fail. We are just like Paul**…”For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing”** (Ro 7:18-19). Paul accurately describes our struggle. It is a struggle. We don’t just say, “Hey, it doesn’t matter. I can do what I feel and God will just have to accept it. You (God) can’t tell me what to do or not do!” We struggle. We rely on Jesus and his forgiveness. And what is awesome is that Jesus and his forgiveness strengthens us by leading us to hate sin and to cling all the more tightly to the forgiveness offered in Jesus. Jesus is the key. He is our everything.

And just so you know, I am sick and tired of being called a hypocrite by those who do not grasp this simple truth of the Christian faith. I never said I was holy! I never said I had no sin! I am deeply troubled by my sins and I hate the very life I am plagued with! But I have the wonder and joy of Jesus. I never stop clinging to Jesus. I need his forgiveness every minute of every day just to get through. That is what makes me a Christian. Jesus and his gracious gift of forgiveness and life. Sorry you don’t get it!

I want to reiterate what the good news is. Paul gives it straight at the end of this sermon and I will repeat it again. He said, **“Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law.”** May you know and believe this wonder of Jesus. Our Lord, our Savior, the hope and joy of life eternal by his power and love. Amen.