

Easter Sunday

FIRST READING – Acts 10:34-43

Gentiles Hear the Good News

34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

10:34-43 To adequately set the context for this passage for the average hearer would almost require a full commentary on the Book of Acts. Here, however, it will have to suffice to challenge two common misguided but interrelated assumptions about this book. First of all, it is assumed that Acts is not about Jesus. He is gone. He ascends, so to speak, as the curtain is raised on Acts 1, scene 1, only to appear again as the ghostly vision in Acts 9. Second, it is assumed Acts is about the Holy Spirit and the Church. A view of the book much more in keeping with Luke’s purpose might sound something like this: In the Book of Acts, Luke tells the story of the risen Lord Jesus’ ongoing work to save his world, making his presence known through the presence of his Spirit and making his voice heard through the mouths of a restored and reconstituted people of God, those who hear and see and proclaim what he, Jesus, is continuing to do and to teach. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

It is of some comfort to us that Peter and the other members of this new people of God in Acts had to learn the same lessons that we readers today must learn. Peter had been with Jesus throughout Jesus’ ministry, had been his disciple, had even been sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God (Lk 9:1–6), but when it came to the climax of Jesus’ ministry, Peter’s denial was ironically true: Peter really did not know Jesus (Lk 22:54–62). Even after a now-risen Jesus taught Peter and the others how to read the Scriptures, proved to them that he had risen and that he had to die, and taught them over the course of forty days about the kingdom of God, Peter still needed time to work out the full implications of all that he now knew and believed about Jesus. Much of that happens in this story with Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

Our Gospel shows Peter right at one of the most important moments of realization and insight. Peter’s words, “truly I understand,” connect with this story of Peter slowly coming to grasp what it means for the world that “Christ is risen; he is risen indeed.” In fact, Peter’s opening confession turns this whole section into a story that is just as much about Peter’s conversion as it is about Cornelius’s. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

The importance of this event for Luke is indicated by the fact that he presents the reader with three accounts of it: here in chapter 10, again in chapter 11, and finally a brief summary in chapter 15. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

10:34-38 The polarization of the races was deeply rooted in the mind-set of the first-century Roman and Jew. One can only imagine how revolutionary the young church's approach to interracial relationships must have been. Roman soldiers treated Jews terribly (Mk 15:16–20). The popular sentiment among the Jews toward the Romans wasn't much better (Mk 12:13–17). And Peter, among others, spent the 40 days between Christ's crucifixion and Pentecost hiding, immobilized by fear of the Romans. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

After Pentecost, we have a different Peter, a God-intoxicated Peter, a Spirit-driven Peter. Before the death and resurrection of Jesus, Peter could not have said what he said in v 34. But Peter, like his Jesus before him, has been anointed by the Holy Spirit with power. The Holy Spirit is denoted with one purpose in the book of Acts and that is to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ from Jerusalem, to Judea, to Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). To accomplish this, the Spirit would use the once-impulsive Peter. God sent Peter to Cornelius in Joppa. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Peter says to the large crowd gathered inside the house of Cornelius, "You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean" (Acts 10:28). In response, Cornelius tells Peter why he was asked to come. "Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us" (10:33). This is the immediate contextual background to our passage. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

10:34-35 God's message of salvation goes out to all people because all the earth is His. God will write His Word on the hearts of all who believe (Jer 31:33). Cf Rm 14:11; Rv 14:6. (TLSB)

10:34 *I understand - Katalambanomai*. Both active and passive forms of the verb have the connotation of "to be seized upon" or "to grasp." St. Paul uses it in both senses in Phil 3:12, "But I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." John uses it in his Gospel to demonstrate how darkness cannot overcome [understand] light (Jn 1:5). As the verb contains the preposition *kata*, its emphasis is that "the seizing" comes from above (as Peter had experienced at Pentecost and in the vision of the animals in the sheet). This Greek word also connotes that the seizing takes place "suddenly" as God did to the crafty in Job 5:13. Arndt and Gingrich state that it also has the emphasis of someone coming into an inheritance - the exact time is not planned, of course. If we paraphrase the poignant v 34, we come up with this. Peter opened his mouth and said, "I have been seized from above by the once culturally concealed truth of God that he shows no favoritism between racially different peoples." (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

"Truly I understand." Luke does not use the word *katalambanō* ("I understand") in his Gospel, but he does use it three times in Acts. Although a word's etymology does not always have a direct relationship to its meaning, there does seem to be something of the original meaning of the components still in the meaning of this compound. In other contexts, the verb means simply to seize or grasp someone; here, of course, it is used figuratively for the "grasping" done by the mind. If there is anything that the three uses in Acts have in common (4:13; 10:34; and 25:25), it seems to be the idea of bringing very disparate pieces of information together to form a conclusion that "comprehends" all the data. Often, the individual pieces of information appear to be at opposite ends of the spectrum, rendering comprehension impossible, such as the boldness of the apostles in 4:13 together with their illiterateness and lack of education. For an extreme example, see Eph 3:18. Here in Acts 10, Peter seems to have been able finally to bring together

into his own comprehension the fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God who claimed Israel as a people for his own possession, the God who sent his own Son into the world as a son of Abraham and a son of David, does not have a favorite among the nations of the earth. Few modern readers can appreciate the magnitude of this realization. The idea that God is not a respecter of persons, that he “shows no partiality” (v 34), is not, of course, a new idea. Already in Deut 10:12–22, a passage with many thematic connections to ours, God is revealed as one who shows no partiality and takes no bribes. Now, however, Peter is beginning to see clearly what that means for the way that he, Peter, should relate to other people. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

truly - alētheias: This word is rich in meaning. Its first meaning is “truthfulness, dependability, uprightness, perfect fidelity” with a secondary meaning of “reality as opposed to mere appearances.” In the Old Testament it is used to denote a reality which is regarded as *emet*, “firm,” therefore, “solid,” “valid,” or binding.” It signifies what is “true.” When used of persons, it sometimes expresses that which predominantly characterizes their speech, action, or thought. Deut 22:20 says the charges against a violated virgin must be true. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Etymologically *alētheia* has the meaning of nonconcealment. It is disclosed or discloses itself. It might be concealed, falsified, truncated, or suppressed. It is the full or real state of affairs. *Alētheia* denotes an aspect of the *logos* and causes that which is to be seen. For Plato it is concealed from the senses, which may be comprehended by thinking. It is the opposite of a “reflection” or an “appearance.” The disciples of the Pharisees sense truth about Jesus in their question to him about taxes (Mk 12:14). St. Paul uses it in relation to the motives of the preachers of the Gospel in Phil 1:18, and he uses it in terms of God’s judgment against sinners in Rom 2:2. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

God shows no partiality. God does not favor an individual because of his station in life, his nationality or his material possessions (see note on Jas 2:1). He does, however, respect his character and judge his work. This is evident because God “accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right” (v. 35). Cornelius already worshiped the true God, but this was not enough: He lacked faith in Christ (v. 36). (CSB)

“Peter opened his mouth” (NRSV). An important utterance is about to take place. Peter has played a major role in Acts up to this point. But Peter is about to fade into the background as Acts points steadily toward the ministry of St. Paul. In fact, a threefold movement in Acts makes this apparent. The geographical movement is from Jerusalem to Rome; the religious movement is from Jews to Gentiles; the apostolic movement is away from the Twelve, especially Peter, to St. Paul. But Peter is still part of the narrative, and he has just learned through his vision at Joppa that God shows no partiality (10:9–33). This whole incident may seem a bit trite to today’s hearers, given the present day climate of multiculturalism, political correctness, and ecumenicity. But Peter’s vision was revolutionary for the hearers in his day. Luke fills his gospel as well as this his second volume with a theology of universal grace. God extends himself through Christ and the church to all nations. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Prosōpolēemptēs, “favoritism,” literally means “to accept a face.” The reference is to a courtroom or a judge who isn’t swayed by the appearance of the person being tried. The most frequent way to translate the word is “partiality.” In Deut 1:17, Moses instructs the leaders of his people. “Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of any man, for judgment belongs to God.” God shows no partiality to Greek or Jew (Rom 2:11), to master and slave (Eph 6:9), and is no respecter of persons in Acts 10:34. But the Christian to whom James writes his letter shows favoritism to the rich over the poor (James 2:9). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

10:35 *every nation* - *ethnei* has the meaning of “people” as opposed to “kings.” The risen Christ spoke to Ananias about Saul in Acts 9:15: “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings.” It also connotes “nations” (as peoples) who oppose each other, as in Mt 24:7, “nations will rise against nations.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

In the Old Testament the word *goiy* is related to it, meaning “foreigner” or “non-Jew.” The disciples who were sent out would be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. Here the word refers to the non-Jew—the nations who hear God and work deeds of righteousness. Cornelius already believes in God but has not been overcome by the love of Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

It is very easy to make this verse say more than it says or less than it says. Peter does not simply say that everyone is acceptable to God no matter what nation he/she comes from, and he certainly does not say everyone is acceptable to God no matter what religion he/she comes from. The “anyone” is qualified by “who fears him and does what is right.” On the other hand, the phrase “in every nation” must be given its full weight. Peter’s vision and the events that followed it have brought him to the understanding that even people outside his cultural, national, racial group, even outside his recognized religious community, can genuinely fear God and live righteously and be accepted by God as his own. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

what is right - Here *ton logon*, “message,” connects with *alētheia* in v 34. The concealed truth has been revealed in the word about Jesus Christ. The *logos* and the *alētheia* are connected to the *euangellion*, which literally means “good announcement.” The “good announcement” is that hostility doesn’t exist between nations, but peace because of Jesus Christ, who is Lord over all nations. We can only imagine how much personal hostility Peter had to overcome to make this announcement to the Gentiles standing before him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

10:36-37 These verses provide a summary of the entire apostolic ministry and mission. Even though the Gospel reading is Mt 3:13–17, the Acts passage aligns better with Mark’s gospel, which begins not with the birth narrative, as do Luke and Matthew, but with Jesus’ Baptism, which for Luke is the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

Peter was at the home of Cornelius. The question arises as to what language Peter spoke. He may very well have spoken Greek through an interpreter. Most scholars agree, however, that more than likely he spoke Aramaic. The text is filled with “Aramaisms.” Luke is heavily dependent on the sources he tells us he is using (Lk 1:1–4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

10:36 *peace*. Between God and man (reconciliation). (CSB)

The hallmark of the kingdom of God is the announcement of peace, healing, and forgiveness. (TLSB)

Lord of all. Lord of both Jew and Gentile (see vv. 34–35). (CSB)

A brief confession or creed, appropriate among Gentiles who had worshiped idols and who perhaps wondered whether the true God would be their God. (TLSB)

We must not let the textual and translational challenges of this verse distract us from the irony of Peter’s statement. If God did play favorites, that is, if his favorite had been Israel, if no other nation on earth enjoyed such a right and privileged relationship with God, then why would God need to send the sons of Israel “good news of peace”? (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

Recent commentators seem inclined to agree with Tannehill that the statement “He is Lord of all” is not a parenthetical doxology but, on the contrary, the main point of the verse (Robert C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke–Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990], 139–40). This good news of peace came in the form of a birth announcement, the news that a Savior who is both Messiah and Lord had been born. The angel had said that this announcement would bring joy to all people (Lk 2:10–14), but Peter is just now realizing that, if Jesus came to be the Lord of all, he must also be the Savior of all. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

10:37-43 This section compounds the difficulty of describing Cornelius’s “spiritual condition” with satisfying precision. He has already been described as a devout, God-fearing, alms-giving man who prayed continually to God (v 2). An angel of the Lord confirms that his prayers have been heard by God and that his actions have borne witness to his faith (v 4). His own people describe him as *dikaios* (righteous according to human standards, or in a right relationship with God?) and add that the entire Judean nation will back them up on this (v 22). In v 37, Peter begins to recite a history of the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. He begins by saying, “You yourselves know . . .” The difficulty is in determining where the knowledge of Cornelius and his household ends. There is no clear “But now know this” or “But now I will tell you something you don’t know.” Some readers see a break coming at v 39, but if it is a break at all, it is not as clear or strong as it could have been. Remember that in what follows there is no call to repentance or to faith issued to Cornelius. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

10:37 *you yourselves know*. Though they had heard about Jesus’ ministry, Peter gave them an eyewitness account of Jesus’ ministry, death, and resurrection. Cf 1Jn 1:1–4. (TLSB)

the baptism John proclaimed. Similar to the outline of Mark’s Gospel, Peter’s sermon begins with John’s baptism and continues to the resurrection of Jesus. This is significant since the early church fathers viewed Mark as the “interpreter” of Peter (see Introduction to Mark: Author). See previous summaries of Peter’s preaching (2:14–41; 3:12–26; 4:8–12; 5:29–32); see also note on 2:14–40. (CSB)

humeis oidate What Cornelius and his household know is that the Good News about Jesus Christ began with the preaching of John at the Jordan River. They know the story—how John’s preaching led to baptism and to the baptism of Jesus. *Ekēruxen* means “proclaimed” or “announced.” It is the fish-swallowed man, Jonah, preaching repentance (Mt 12:41) and about Jesus Christ in Rom 16:25. It is a story spread widely (Mk 1:45) and includes repentance (Mark 1:4). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

10:38 *how God anointed Jesus*. See Isa 61:1–3; Lk 4:18–21. (CSB)

ekrisen “anointed” is an aorist active verb, meaning the act has been done or has been completed. Jesus speaks of himself, quoting Isaiah, in Lk 4:18 as anointed by the Spirit of the Lord to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, and to release the oppressed. In Baptism the apostles (and all Christians) are anointed by the Spirit of God. “He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor 1:21b–22). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Luke connects Jesus’ Baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit here in the same way that he does in his gospel account (Lk 3:21). Unlike Mark, however, Luke places a prayer in between Jesus’ Baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit. Some scholars have argued that this serves to delineate clearly between the

Baptism of John and the anointing, of Jesus by the Holy Spirit (Gerhard Krodel, *Acts, Proclamation Commentaries* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981] 42). Here is the allusion to Christ's absolute power and victory over the forces of darkness. Jesus manifests his epiphany and "God was with him." The Holy Spirit's anointing is strongly linked to Is 42:1–2 and the anointing of the Servant. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 9, Part 1)

with the Holy Spirit and with power - Pneumati agiōi, "with the Holy Spirit" for the Spirit features prominently in the writings of St. Luke. A better title for this book could be, "The Acts of the Holy Spirit." Having been baptized and having been anointed by the Holy Spirit with power from above, St. Paul, in Col 1:11, prays that the Christians there would be "strengthened with all power" so that they may have endurance and patience. Peter has been given power from above to declare that God accepts all nations and races in Christ Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 10, Part 1)

Christ, the Anointed One, fulfilled the prophecies regarding the Messiah (Gn 3:15; 49:10; Is 7:14; Mi 5:2; Mt 1:20; Jn 1:1). (TLSB)

10:39-40 "They put him to death . . . but God raised him." Many readers of Luke, both scholarly and popular, fail to find a theology of the cross in either of his two contributions to the New Testament. It is true that in the sermons in Acts we hear much more regularly and much more explicitly "you/they killed him" than we hear "he died for you/them." This may serve more as a criticism of contemporary theologies of the cross than it does as a criticism of Luke's, however, for there is a point to these messages in Acts that is too often neglected in our preaching. Before they could hear that Jesus died *for their sins*, Peter's hearers, including even Cornelius and his household, needed to take seriously what it meant for the whole world that Israel had not only rejected but also murdered the Messiah of God. Notice the change in pronouns as the message moves beyond the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem: "you crucified and killed" (2:23); "this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36); "you killed the Author of life" (3:15); "they put him to death" (here, in 10:39); "those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers . . . asked Pilate to have him executed" (13:27–28); and so on. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 21, Part 2)

10:39 *hanging him on a tree*. Jesus' condemnation on the cross came despite God's anointing, the power of the Holy Spirit, and His gracious healing of many. *tree*. Adam and Eve's willful reach for Eden's tree was cured by Christ's willing grasp of the cross. Cf Dt 21:23; Gal 3:13; 1Pt 2:24. (TLSB)

10:40-41 God demonstrated Jesus to be His Son esp through the resurrection, as believers realize (Rm 1:4). (TLSB)

10:41 *who ate and drank*. Those who ate with Jesus after he rose from the dead received unmistakable evidence of his bodily resurrection (see Lk 24:42–43; Jn 21:12–15). (CSB)

10:42 Luther: "Who will harm the man when the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, to whom the Day of Judgment belongs, is on his side and stands before him with all His glory, greatness, majesty, and might?" (WLS § 2178). (TLSB)

10:43 *forgiveness of sins through His name*. "Peter says we receive forgiveness of sins through Christ's name, that is, for His sake. It is not for the sake of our merits, not for the sake of our contrition, attrition, love, worship, or works. He adds: *When we believe in Him*. Peter requires faith. For we cannot receive Christ's name except by faith" (Ap IV 83). Luther: "Cornelius (Acts 10:43) had to be brought to the new faith that Christ had already come" (WLS § 2125). (TLSB)

10:34–43 Peter affirms for devout Cornelius that Jesus is truly the Christ; the Spirit affirms for Peter that the Gospel applies to all people without partiality. The Holy Spirit unites one and all in the Body of

Christ. • Father, thank You for the gift of salvation through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Make me a faithful witness of Your love. Amen. (TLSB)

EPISTLE – Colossians – 3:1-4

Put On the New Self

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your3:1–17 Paul begins the practical section of his Letter, based on the doctrinal section—esp Baptism (chs 1–2). (TLSB)

3:1 *if*–oun – Then or therefore and refers back to the whole of the precious part in particular to what the Colossians have themselves experienced in their vital connection with the supreme God-man and his work which is so complete and mighty in every respect. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

then. “Then” (or “therefore”) links the doctrinal section of the letter with the practical section, just as it does in Ro 12:1; Eph 4:1; Php 4:1. (CSB)

you have been raised.† Verses 1–10 set forth what has been described as the indicative and the imperative (standing and state) of the Christian. The indicative statements describe the believer’s position in Christ: He is dead (v. 3); he has been raised with Christ (v. 1); he is with Christ in heaven (“hidden with Christ,” v. 3); he has “taken off the old self” (v. 9); and he has “put on the new self” (v. 10). The imperative statements indicate what the believer is to do as a result: He is to set his heart (or mind) on things above (vv. 1–2); he is to put to death practices that belong to his earthly nature (v. 5); and he is to rid himself of practices that characterized his unregenerate self (v. 8). In summary, he is called upon to become in daily experience what he is through God’s grace in Christ (cf. Ro 6:1–13). (CSB)

Paul uses the same language as in 2:12 to show that Baptism is a means to salvation and to the Christian life. (TLSB)

seek the things that are above – Not spatially but spiritually. Jesus has ascended to His rightful place, from which He governs all things (Jn 8:23). (TLSB)

τὰ ἄνω ζητεῖτε, οὗ ὁ Χριστός ἐστὶν ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ καθήμενος—The present tense of the imperative (ζητεῖτε) denotes what the readers are to do regularly (“be seeking”) as an ongoing characteristic of their existence. The word itself denotes diligent seeking and so finding. “Above” is to be construed not spatially but soteriologically. What is “above” has to do with the gracious presence of God (Jn 8:23; Gal 4:26; Phil 3:14). Thus, “the things that are above” are those things that have to do with eternal salvation in God’s loving presence. Whereas “right hand” tends to accent Christ’s presence in power, “above” tends to stress his presence in grace (Jn 8:23; Gal 4:26; Phil 3:14), also in Word and Sacrament (Jn 3:3–7). “Above” is further said to be “where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God.” This language, with its origin in Psalm 110, was common Christological vocabulary as far back as the ministry of Jesus himself. The right hand is a symbol of power. The right hand of God, therefore, represents universal power (Eph 1:20–21). That Christ is at the right hand of God means that he fills all things (Eph 1:23; 4:10), that is, the entire universe (see the textual note on τὰ πάντα in Col 1:16), so that he is present everywhere as Lord over all, governing all things. Likewise Paul called Christ the head over all (2:10; cf. 2:19). (CC)

There is not much study of heaven because many people believe Scripture does not deal with that issue. According to Bible scholars, your heavenly Father has arranged that no less than one-sixth of His New Testament is filled with references to the joy of heaven and the reappearance of Christ. (Good News – Heaven p. 3) **Colossians 3:1-2** says it well: “*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*”² *Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*”

The Greek word translated “set your hearts on” is *zeteo*, which denotes man’s general philosophical search or quest. The same word is used in the Gospels to describe how “the Son of Man came to see... what was lost” (Luke 19:10. It’s also used for how a shepherd looks for his lost sheep (Matthew 18:12), a woman searches for a lost coin (Luke 15:8), and a merchant searches for a fine pearl (Matthew 13:45). It is the diligent, active, single-minded investigation. So we can understand Paul’s admonition in Colossians 3:1 as follows: “Diligently, actively, single-mindedly pursue the things above” – in a word, Heaven. (Heaven – Alcorn pp. 20-21)

The verb *zeteo* is in the present tense, suggesting an ongoing process. “Keep seeking heaven.” Don’t just have a conversation, read a book, or listen to sermon and feel as if you’ve fulfilled the command. Since you’ll spend the next lifetime living in Heaven, why not spend this this lifetime seeking Heaven, so you can eagerly anticipate and prepare for it? C.S Lewis observed, “If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. (Heaven – Alcorn p. 21)

right hand of God – Symbol of power. (TLSB)

The right hand is a symbol of power. The right hand of God, therefore, represents universal power (Eph 1:20–21). That Christ is at the right hand of God means that he fills all things (Eph 1:23; 4:10), that is, the entire universe, so that he is present everywhere as Lord over all, governing all things. Likewise Paul called Christ the head over all (2:10; cf. 2:19). (CC p. 135)

3:2 *set your minds* – *Poneiye* – To be very intent.

Things above – τὰ ἄνω φρονεῖτε – This entails all thoughts, words, and actions that seek to glorify the risen and exalted Savior, all things that are in keeping with his will. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

things that are on earth – Paul does not despise the things of the earth (1Tm 4:4). However, he realizes that this fallen world should not be our focus. (TLSB)

μὴ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς— This includes things that belong to our sinful nature (the old Adam), which once totally characterized our lives before we were regenerated through our Baptism. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

3:3 *you have died* – Col 3:3 also contains several references to the significance of the believer’s Baptism. “You died” (ἀπεθάνετε) is identical in form to the initial verb of 2:20. As there, so also here this verb in the aorist tense recalls the description of Baptism as a participation with Christ in his death as implied in 2:12, a description that is made explicit in the apostle’s letter to the Romans (6:3). (CC p. 137)

NOW HIDDEN – ἡ ζωὴ ὑμῶν κέκρυπται σὺν τῷ Χριστῷ ἐν τῷ θεῷ— This reminds us that the glory we will share with Christ may be hidden now, hidden especially to those outside the faith. Believers, however, know that something is different in their lives because Christ lives in them. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 9, Part 2)

3:4 *appears*. Refers to Christ's second coming. (CSB)

with him in glory – Our eternal life, which we possess now through Baptism, will be fully experienced in heaven. Through Christ, we are participants in God's glory (Jn 1:14; Php 3:21). (TLSB)

GOSPEL – MATTHEW 28:1-10

The Resurrection

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he^[a] lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

28:1 *first day of the week*. Early Sunday morning. (TLSB)

Mary Magdalene. From the village of Magdala. Mary was present at the crucifixion, witnessed Jesus' burial, and helped anoint His body. (TLSB)

The village of Magdala is on the southwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. Mary became a devoted follower of Jesus after He cast seven demons out of her (Mk. 16:9; Luke 8:1-2). She is often regarded as the sinful woman who anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair (Luke 7:37-50). No one knows for sure, however, since the biblical account does not name the woman. Mary was among the women who witnessed the crucifixion and burial of Jesus (Mt. 27:37-50; Mk. 15:40, 47; John 19:25). On the morning of His resurrection she went to His tomb (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; John 20:1). She was the first person to whom the risen Lord appeared (Mk. 16:9; Jn. 20:11-29). (Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

the other Mary. The wife of Clopas and sister of the mother of Jesus (see 27:56; Jn 19:25). (CSB)

Presumably "Mary the mother of James and Joseph" (27:56). (TLSB)

28:2 *There was*. The sense is "Now there had been." It is clear from the parallel accounts (Mk 16:2–6; Lk 24:1–7; Jn 20:1) that the events of vv. 2–4 occurred before the women actually arrived at the tomb. (CSB)

a violent earthquake. Only Matthew mentions this earthquake and the one at Jesus' death (27:51, 54). (CSB)

The earthquake that accompanied the angel's descent recalls the prophecy of Haggai 2:6-9. "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with

glory,' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty." It seems significant that an earthquake marked both Jesus' death and His resurrection. These quakes were obviously more than coincidences of nature: both quakes signaled that great and mighty acts of God were taking place. It is as though the Father was tying the crucifixion and the resurrection of His Son together with a seismic knot. Since the women had also been at the cross, they may have made the connection. (PBC)

rolled back – The angel opens the tomb, but Christ has already risen. (TLSB)

Not to open the grave for Christ was he come, but to show the empty grave to the whole world, to give absolute and undeniable evidence of the fact that the resurrection had taken place in spite of stone and seal and watch. (Kretzmann)

Jesus left the tomb in much the same way He would enter the locked room where His disciples were gathered later on that same evening (John 20:19). His glorified resurrection body was no longer bound by time and space. He simply went where He wanted to go. The walls of the tomb could not contain Him, just like a clear pane of glass cannot stop the rays of the sun from passing through. (PBC)

sat on it – Resting, symbolizing Christ's victory over death. (TLSB)

28:3 *like lightning* – His face was bright, causing his garments also to be brilliant. (TLSB)

28:4 *like dead men* – Fainted or collapsed. (TLSB)

It was a fearful apparition to the superstitious soldiers to gaze upon one of the holy angels of God. It overwhelmed them; they fell over in a faint, and became as dead men. When God wants to carry out His will with regard to the salvation of mankind, no sinful man, no enemy, may resist Him. The resurrection of Jesus was the seal and final proof for the full atonement gained for the whole world, and all the efforts of the Jews and of Satan to hinder it were unavailing. (Kretzmann)

28:5 *do not be afraid* – This was the same greeting Gabriel gave to Zechariah (Luke 1:13) and to Mary (Luke 1:30). When the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream (Matthew 1:20) and when the angel appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:10), the greeting was the same. That is the gospel in a nutshell. That is the message of Easter. King David has taught us to pray it and to take it to heart: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23:4). (PBC)

28:6 *he is not here* – In was gentle way of saying, "I told you so! You should not be surprised. You should have known He would not be here anymore."

see the place – This proves the angel's testimony. (TLSB)

>Why Did Jesus Fold the Napkin?

>

**>This is one I can honestly say I have never seen circulating in the e-mails so; I'll
>start it, if it touches you and you want to forward it.**

>

**>Why did Jesus fold the linen burial cloth after His resurrection? I never noticed
>this....**

- >
- >The Gospel of John (20:7) tells us that the napkin, which was placed over the
>face of Jesus, was not just thrown aside like the grave clothes..
- >
- >The Bible takes an entire verse to tell us that the napkin was neatly folded,
>and was placed at the head of that stony coffin.
- >
- >Early Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb
>and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance.
- >
- >She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved..
>She said, 'They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and I don't know where
>they have put him!'
- >
- >Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb to see. The other disciple out ran
>Peter and got there first. He stopped and looked in and saw the linen cloth lying
>there, but he didn't go in.
- >
- >Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings
>lying there, while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying
>to the side.
- >
- >Was that important? Absolutely!
- >Is it really significant? Yes!
- >
- >In order to understand the significance of the folded napkin, you have to understand
>a little bit about Hebrew tradition of that day.
- >The folded napkin
>had to do with the Master and Servant, and every
>Jewish boy knew
>this tradition.
- >
- >When the servant set the dinner table for the master, he made sure that it was
>exactly the way the master wanted it.
- >
- >The table was furnished perfectly, and then the servant would wait, just out
>of sight, until the master had finished eating, and the servant would not dare touch
>that table, until the master was finished.
- >
- >Now if the master were done eating, he would rise from the table, wipe his fingers,
>his mouth, and clean his beard, and would wad up that napkin and toss it onto the
>table.
- >
- >The servant would then know to clear the table. For in those days, the wadded
>napkin meant, "I'm finished."
- >
- >But if the master got up from the table, and folded his napkin, and laid it beside
>his plate, the servant would not dare touch the table, because.....
- >

**>The folded napkin meant,
>"I'm coming back."**

28:7 *tell his disciples* – The 11 remaining disciples. (TLSB)

I have told you – The angel emphasizes his trustworthiness. (TLSB)

28:8 *afraid yet filled with joy* – They were still frightened, but glad at the news. (TLSB)

While the appearance of the messenger, of the holy angel of God, filled them with fear, his message of the resurrection of their Lord and Master filled them with the greatest delight. Hurriedly they leave the grave, to run and bring the good tidings to the disciples. "That the angel is so much concerned about announcing the resurrection of Christ to the disciples who were now lying there with lack of faith and a bad conscience, is a certain indication that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen for the sake and comfort of those of little faith, yea, for those without faith, in order that they might have the benefit of His work, find help and refuge with Him.... That Christ lives. He lives for our benefit, that we should ever be defended by Him and protected from all distress." (Kretzmann)

28:9 *Jesus met them* – The women saw more than the empty tomb that morning; they saw the risen Christ Himself. (TLSB)

Christ bestows his graces and consolations by degrees, first by his angels, and then by himself. He does not reveal himself to incredulous and disobedient souls; he appears not even to these women till he has tried their faith and obedience by his ministering angels. (ACC)

took hold of his feet – This was a sign of homage. (TLSB)

worshiped him – They bowed before their Lord. (TLSB)

I am suggesting that when Matthew writes that they "worshiped him," he wants his believing hearers/readers also to know that this risen Lord, who shares a single divine name with the Father and the Holy Spirit (28:19), is the same God whom they worship. (CC)

They worship Jesus, the man Jesus, who, as the angel said, "is crucified" (28:5). This is no other than the person who died in the darkness three days before and the second person of the Trinity (28:19). (CC)

28:10 *do not be afraid* – Earlier (cf 5, 8), the women are awed by the events. (TLSB)

This was undoubtedly the first appearance of the risen Christ. As they were hurrying city-ward, and probably before they had left the boundaries of the garden, Jesus came to meet them, giving them the wonderful greeting. All hail! Rejoice! There is only joy and peace and lasting happiness in the kingdom of the resurrected Lord. The women, recognizing Him, fell down at His feet in the fullness of their joy and adoration. At the same time, the exuberance and the excitement caused them to cling to Him, as though in fear of losing Him once more. (Kretzmann)

my brothers – Jesus still refers to His disciples as family. (TLSB)

And therefore Jesus again calms them. No fear should live in their hearts henceforth and forever, but only the desire to bring the joyful news to the apostles, whom He here lovingly calls His brethren. They were now nearer to Him than ever before. In spite of their defection, He knew that their faith was not lost forever, but only hidden by fear. This message was intended as cheering, consoling tidings, to renew faith and hope and trust in their hearts. In the same way, all believers in Christ and His resurrection are now the brothers and sisters of Christ in the fullest and best meaning of the term. For by and through their faith they have become partakers of all the glorious fruits of Christ's resurrection. And thus they have been placed by God the Father on the same level with His own Son Jesus Christ, being coheirs of the eternal joy and blessedness with Him. (Kretzmann)

There may be further significance in the fact that Jesus calls them “My brothers” rather than “My disciples.” He seems to be inviting them to think of themselves as His colleagues, much as ministers today refer to each other as “the brethren.” Their seminary training was just about over. Soon they would be preaching the same gospel Jesus had been preaching for the last three and half years while they watched and learned. (PBC)

Someone has said that the phrase “Do not be afraid” is found at least 365 times in the Bible. At one for each day.

28:1–10 The women see the empty tomb and the angel, who proclaims that Christ has risen. Though Christ’s resurrection terrifies His enemies, such as the guards at the tomb, it brings great joy to His followers. Rejoice today in His resurrection and pray for His reappearing. • Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen. (TLSB)