

Sermons at First Church

A Ministry of the Word
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Clarksburg, WV

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

(2 Corinthians 6:2b N.R.S.V.)

Post Haste

Have you ever heard the expression that you should do something “posthaste?” From context, I knew that posthaste meant do it right away, or quickly. But I was recently reading about where the expression came from.

The expression posthaste goes back to the time of King Henry VIII of England. Post riders were given relays of horses to take important messages all over the kingdom. But some of the riders were irresponsible and wasted time in taverns and inns along the way. Because of that a drastic law was put into effect and riders were told to ride for the very lives. If a rider was found guilty of wasting time, he could be executed by hanging.

Often there was drawn upon important letters the figure of a man suspended from a gallows. Beneath this was written an ominous warning: “Haste, post, haste! Haste for thy life.”

Apparently there were some riders who did suffer death because of their inefficiency, but in the late 19th century the practice was discontinued. However, the phrase “posthaste” remains in the language as a reminder to go quickly for this is the king’s important business.

In our lesson from Corinthians, Paul has his own posthaste message from another king, from King Jesus. Paul first reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sake, “For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,” Then Paul goes on to say, “See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!” Or as another translation puts it, “See, now is the time of God’s favor; see, now is the day of salvation.”

Now is the time for salvation, it is time for you to move on this, posthaste!

The season of Lent is a time set aside for contemplating the need for repentance and the cross of Christ. I read with some interest of a survey question that was asked of 100 church members. The question was: “Would it make any difference in your life if Christ had not died on the cross?” Remember now, this question was asked of Christian church members.

45 said they didn't think it would make any difference.

25 said they thought so, but when asked what the difference would be, they weren't sure.

20 said it made all the difference in how they lived and believed.

10 said they didn't know, because they didn't understand what the cross was all about.

[Brent De. Earles, *The Gospels for Graduates* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1987), p. 97.]

So it seems appropriate in this season of the cross, that we lift up again why the cross is so important, and what it is about.

It is important to understand that all of us have sinned and that our sin breaks the relationship with God. We can't get to God on our own. We have needed and still need, help.

Now God could have simply waved his hand and forgiven all our sins, but God chose not to. God chose instead to send his only begotten son to die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Let me lift up two things that tells us.

First, it lets us know how much God loves us. Many people in the world fear that God is out to get them. They are afraid that God hates them and wants nothing more than to destroy them. No wave of the hand would ever convince us that this was not so. Instead God showed us that he loves us enough to go to any length to save us. He did not spare even his own son, but sent him to die for us to show us the depth of his love. As John 3:17 reminds us, For God did not send the son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

The second thing that Christ's death on the cross tells us is that God takes sin very seriously. Many people think that sin is no big deal. They say, "We sin, God forgives. No problem." But God knows that sin is a big problem for us. Sin is a destroyer. It is an eater of minds and souls. We human beings desperately need God. But sin separates us from God and leaves only emptiness behind. God sent his son to die on the cross so that we might never take the cost of sin lightly. Forgiveness is free, but it is not cheap. It was purchased for us at a terrible price.

During this season of Lent and especially on this Ash Wednesday we are encouraged to repent of our sins and to ask for forgiveness and grace through Jesus Christ. With that grace received we are to live lives of renewal and love.

When are we to claim this grace? Now is the time of salvation. Not tomorrow, or the next day, or some distant day in the future. Now is the time of salvation. Today. Posthaste!

Amen.