

Third Sunday of Easter  
The Reverend John H. Brock

Saturday, April 5, 2008  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church

Acts 2:14z, 36-41, Luke 24; 13-35

Grace to you and peace from God who is who was and who is to come. Amen

Now I don't know why Pam and Wes chose THIS weekend for Kenny's baptism. Maybe because it was just the easiest time for the family to gather together, or maybe you chose it because is just felt "right." What I am going with though is Wes, you and Pam had the foresight to look ahead to see what the lessons were and you thought, 'oh, those lessons would work really cool with the baptism,' because they do. The lessons that we have tonight from Acts and from the Gospel of Luke work really well. They're talking about baptism and new believers. They are really some great reads about the emerging church of the first century, about the new disciples, and about beginning the walk of faith as a new believer in Jesus Christ.

Now in our first lesson, well we already heard part of this story last week. Our reading from Acts tonight comes from Acts 2. This is when the disciples have been locked in the upper room in Jerusalem, the story is they've just come back from the hilltop where they watched their friend and their mentor, their teacher and rabbi, the resurrected Jesus, ascend into heaven. Now these folks, the disciples, have been through some pretty serious trauma in the last few weeks. They enter into Jerusalem all triumph to have Jesus being hailed as a king only within a course of a few short days to have the whole affair turn around and just bite them, because Judas, one of their own, betrays (for whatever reason) Jesus to the religious establishment who in turn get Jesus into the star court on their fast track for execution. The disciples learn about Jesus' beatings and then Peter, ever loving Peter, who always is ready to give 135%, Peter has to turn around and run with his tail between his legs because he's denied Jesus. The disciples watch as Jesus is stripped naked and crucified on a cross. They KNOW that he has been taken down by a man braver than any of them; Joseph of Arimathea is the one that claims his body and brings it to the cemetery. Now, the disciples are mourning for a weekend, they don't know what to do, but then all of a sudden, Mary, a woman of all people, comes running up to tell them that Jesus has been raised from the dead. So then they get to spend fifty days with him, more or less, only to lose him AGAIN as they watch him ascend up through the clouds.

So here they are, that's the back story to the first lesson that we heard tonight as their gathering in Jerusalem, they get smacked with the Spirit, who comes down manifested like little flames of fire coming out of their heads, they suddenly start speaking all different kinds of languages. Half the town people think they are drunk even though it is nine o'clock in the morning, but Peter stands up and begins to give them a speech. The speech that is so powerful that we heard at its' conclusion tonight, did you catch what happened at the conclusion of Peter's speech tonight? Verse 41: "So those who welcomed his message (Peter's message) were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added." Now this was a cool enough thing with just little Kenny.

Can we imagine three thousand people? That's more members than we have here at Trinity! I think that is a great start for Kenny's walk of faith.

In our gospel lesson, a very similar discipleship qualities to it. Here in the gospel lesson, in Luke's gospel reading that we heard just a few moments ago as Doug read it to us, it's Easter Evening, okay. (So chronologically, it's happening BEFORE the lesson we heard from Acts) But it is Easter Evening, these two people, Cleopas and "OG" - "the other guy" (we NEVER learned this poor guy's name.) They're walking along, their going along the road FROM Jerusalem TO Emmaus, about a seven-mile walk or about two and a quarter hours it will take them. As they're walking along, they're joined by a stranger. Now those of us who are READING it are in on the joke because we get to see that the stranger is really Jesus, but Cleopas and OG's eyes are closed to this fact and they start to witness to him about all that's happened and the stranger in turn witnesses to them all the EXPLANATION of why the events that happened had to happen. Finally the stranger says to them, verse 26 "Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" So after Jesus disappears, literally disappears from their midst, they are so excited so they RUN the seven miles back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples what they had just experienced.

So let me ask you this: When was the last time you were SO EXCITED about your faith that you ran to go tell somebody about it? That's what I thought, okay. So when was the last time you were so excited that you just purchased a brand-new car or got one of those new flat panel TVs, or you just got a promotion at work, that you pretty much just dropped everything to go tell somebody? Yea, we do that don't we? We're willing to do that over a new job, or the purchase of a home, or a great grade on a tough history test. Why don't we get that way about our faith?

Now a little while ago I asked Pam and Wes and sponsors Cindy and Henry, I asked the four of them some very pointed questions: "Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? Do you renounce the powers of the world that rebel against God? Do you renounce the ways of sin that draw you from God?" Some of you might think that maybe that sounds a little dated. I do have to admit though that I don't really think there's some guy running around in a red suit with horns and a tail out the back with a pitchfork (who really knows WHAT a pitchfork is used for anyway), whispering in my ear all the time, 'oh you got to be bad, let's sin, let's go over here.' But that's not what I meant when I asked the four of you: Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God? Let me put it this way. What is it in your life that causes you to DEFY God? Is it alcohol, drugs, on-line poker, Monday night football, work, that really good looking co-worker who keeps flirting with you? What is it in your life that causes you to REBEL against God? Is it drugs, or alcohol, really boring sermon, lifeless worship, lack of a devotional life? What is it in your life that draws you AWAY from God? Is it drugs, alcohol, internet porn, HBO or Showtime, long walks on the beach?

I asked you all to make some very specific promises on Kenny's behalf. Very specifically, I asked you to continue the covenant that God made with all of us in our baptisms, specifically to live among God's faithful people. To hear the word of God and

to share in the Lord's Supper. To proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed. To serve all people, following the example of Jesus and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth? We're asked to live that way, fortunately and I am very glad, thank you very much, you gave me a positive answer. Good.

Thing is though that all of us here, all of us that are baptized, we made those same promises, whether we were baptized like Kenny as an infant, or if we were baptized in grade eight, or if we were baptized as an adult: all of us made those same promises. The WHEN we made those promises is not as important as the fact that we MADE those promises in the **first** place. But that you're making them at all is because of what we heard in our lessons tonight – the excitement of the Emmaus Road, the conversion of those three thousand on that first Pentecost.

In about nine weeks, I am going to be in this same room up on that platform addressing a group of about twenty-seven thirteen and fourteen year olds, asking them those same questions. Because on June 8<sup>th</sup> is when we'll be celebrating with our most current Confirmation class. They've spent the past eight months talking about their faith, and the promises that were made on their behalf. They're getting ready to claim those promises as their own. That's what confirmation is all about. A better name for it is what we're calling it now, is the **Affirmation of Baptism** because those young men and women have spent those last months talking about those promises and having to decide for themselves, am I just going to leave those with my parents or am I willing to take responsibility for my own faith?

We're going to be asking Kenny those same questions, not for about thirteen or fourteen years. Maybe it will even be me, who knows, asking him those same questions, asking him to take those promises onto himself. Now hopefully, Kenny, in that time, just like those young men and women in nine weeks are going to reply with the same hope and excitement and promise that Pam and Wes did tonight. Hopefully, at that time, just like Cleopas and his pal on the Emmaus Road, just like the three thousand in Jerusalem, Kenny will feel the responsibility of putting his faith into action. My hope is that it is not just Kenny in fourteen years. My hope is that all of us do that tonight, tomorrow and always.

Amen.