

Acts 9:1-19  
3rd Sunday of Easter  
April 18, 2010

**Act 9:1-19 (New International Version)**

**1**Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest **2**and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. **3**As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4**He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5**"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. **6**"Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." **7**The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. **8**Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. **9**For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything. **10**In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. **11**The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. **12**In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." **13**"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem. **14**And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." **15**But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. **16**I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." **17**Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18**Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, **19**and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Have you ever met someone who's really important? I know that some of our members have personally met presidents. I know that some members have met some professional athletes. Perhaps it would be wise for husbands to say they've met their wives. It would be interesting to find out some of the important people you have met.

Regardless of what other important people we have met in our lives, all of us have met the most important person in all of history and in the entire universe! **We all have met the Risen Redeemer!** That's the truth we want to consider and take to heart today as we hear about the Apostle Paul's conversion to faith. What happened to us when we met the Risen Redeemer? Pretty much the same thing that happened to Paul. **I. He confronted us with our sin, II. He has called us to salvation, III. He has commissioned us to serve.**

**We Have Met the Risen Redeemer!**  
**I. He confronted us with our sin,**  
**II. He has called us to salvation,**  
**III. He has commissioned us to serve.**

One of the most difficult and embarrassing experiences in life is when someone confronts us when we've done something wrong! Maybe mom or dad caught us stealing some money. Maybe we got caught cheating on a test. Maybe we got caught speeding. That seems to happen a lot in Lake Mills. No matter who you are, there will come a time in life when some one will confront you with your wrongdoing. It's even more embarrassing when it's someone important.

That's exactly what happened to the apostle Paul. On the road to Dasmascus he was met by the Risen Redeemer who confronted him with his sin. **"3**As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4**He fell to the ground and

heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5**"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,"

During the early days of the Christian church while the good news about Jesus was spreading the Jewish leaders were trying to put an end to it. They were not only putting Christians into jail, they actually were putting them to death. They had already stoned Stephen to death, and do recall the man who held their coats while they murdered Stephen? It was Saul of Tarsus. Well, Saul wanted to do more than just hold the coats of people who were stoning Christians to death. He wanted to lay his own hands on them and put them into prison. That's why he was on the way to Dasmascus, and while on his way he was met by Risen Redeemer who asked him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Once blinded by his sin of trying to destroy Jesus and his church Paul was now blinded by the glory of Jesus who confronted him on the road to Dasmascus.

More than likely few or none of us have or ever will travel on a road leading to the city of Dasmascus, but we are on a more important road. We are all traveling on he road to heaven. And the first part of that journey for each of us started the same way it did for Paul. We were all confronted by the Risen Redeemer with our sin. No, none of us may be guilty of murdering Christians or trying to put an end to the Christian church, but we are all guilty of disobeying the Lord's will for our lives. When we hold grudges against others, have hateful feelings about those who may have hurt us, or hurt others with our bad words to them or about them, are we not also guilty of murder? We surely are. Jesus confronts each of us with our sin in the 5th Commandment, "You shall not murder." No, we may not ever be guilty of willfully or intentionally trying to stop the spread of the gospel. But when we bring shame on the Lord Jesus and his Word by the sinful things we do before men, when we speak badly about our congregation or about the servants of God's Word or fellow Christians, or when we are stingy with our offerings, aren't we hindering the spread of the gospel? Yes, sometimes we might be blinded to our own personal guilt regarding these matters but the glory of the Lord reveals our sinfulness too and like Paul we ought to fall in on needs in fear and with trembling, and plead "Lord have mercy."

**II.** No, being confronted with guilt is never an easy thing. But it is a good thing. For without being convicted with our sin, why would we ever see the need for a Savior? Well, God's law convicts us all. Having been convicted of our sin, we all are in need a Savior. And we have one. He is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have all met him. How so?

Although it may not has been as dramatic as it was for Paul, nevertheless, the Risen Redeemer came to each of us through his Word us to call us to saving faith and to salvation. Let's listen, **"10**In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.**11**The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying...This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. **16**I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." **17**Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord-Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here-has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." **18**Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized."

Bible scholars often discuss the question about the exact moment when Paul was called to saving faith in Jesus. Some say it happened on the road when Jesus identified himself saying, "I am Jesus." That could well be. For Jesus is the only name under heaven, given among men whereby we can be saved. And the fact that Ananias greeted him as a "brother," seems to indicate that. But others say that Paul wasn't brought to faith until he was baptized, because it was in conjunction with the laying on of hands by Ananias and baptism that Luke mentions the Holy Spirit being poured out on Paul. That surely makes sense too. But when all is said and done, the moment of Paul's conversion is not important. How he was brought to faith is. It happened through the gospel message that comes in either word or Sacrament. When we meet the Risen Redeemer in Word and Sacrament the Holy Spirit is poured into our hearts by which we believe that Jesus is our Savior and the way to eternal life.

Through Word and Sacrament we have met Jesus too. He has called us to salvation just like Paul. Do you understand what that means? Let's put it this way: Presidents can only get us into the White House; royalty can only get us into earthly palaces; professional athletes

can only get us into a stadium; but Jesus...he is the only one who can get us into heaven. Through faith in him we will. Aren't you glad you have met him?

**III.** Not only did the Risen Redeemer confront Paul with his sin and call him to saving faith, the Risen Redeemer commissioned Paul to serve. "15the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. 16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name."

God not only brought Paul to saving faith, he commissioned him to be his messenger of the gospel to the Gentiles. And that's what happened. That's what a much of the book of Acts is all about--Paul's three missionary journeys in which he pretty much traveled the known world at that time establishing one congregation after another. Is it any wonder that Paul has often been called the "greatest missionary of the Christian church".

But it wasn't all glorious, at least not outwardly. Jesus also made it known that Paul would also suffer for the sake of the gospel. And he did. In 2 Corinthians he tells how he was flogged five times, beaten with the rod three times, stoned once, suffered shipwreck three times, was in constant danger from bandits, suffered hunger and thirst, was imprisoned, and we know that eventually he was beheaded for his faith. And why would Paul be willing to suffer such crosses? He was called to do that by the Risen Redeemer who bore the cross for Paul so that Paul could wear the crown of everlasting life.

None of us has been commissioned to be apostle of the Lord. The age of the apostolic ministry came to an end with the death of the apostle John in about 103 A.D. But each of us has been called to faith by Jesus and we too have been commissioned to serve! We can serve the gospel by sharing it personally with others, or by praying for its spread, and supporting the spread of the gospel with our offerings. It's our high privilege to introduce others to Jesus.

Even though we may not all serve as missionaries like Paul, we are still commissioned to serve in other ways. Are you a Christian father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife? Are you an employer, employee, pastor, or teacher? No matter in what station of life the Lord has placed you you are there to serve. You serve by carrying out your duty to the best of your ability, out of love for Jesus, and accord to what God wants, and sometimes that also involves carrying the cross for Jesus. What do I mean by that? Suffering for the gospel can and often includes ridicule, rejection by others, and yes even death. But the most common struggle we endure for the sake of Christ's cross does not always come from others on the outside. Some times it comes from inside ourselves. Our sinful heart has sinful desires with sinful goals. By nature we don't like God to tell us how we are to live. Therein lies carrying the cross for Christ. But for the sake of Christ who gave up so much for us that we might have heaven, we will want to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow him. That means doing what he says and what he wants. And ultimately, as we have learned in our theology of the cross Bible class, that self-denial is to serve a twofold purpose. We live in this life to serve to God's glory and to serve others, not ourselves. That's the gospel work to which Christ has commissioned all of us!

So who is the most important person you have ever met? The answer for all of us is Jesus Christ. Through the Law the Risen Redeemer has come to each of us to confront us with our sin. Through the gospel he has called us to saving faith and salvation. Under his cross he commissions each of us serve through the station in life in which he has placed us. And isn't it great to know that the Risen Redeemer whom we have met through the Word, we will meet in person one day in heaven above! What a meeting that will be. Amen.