

Fourth Sunday of Easter

ABUNDANT LIFE –ADDING BY SUBTRACTING

Acts 2:42-47

Fourth Sunday of Easter Analysis by Mark Marius

The appointed text for this week's Crossing is realized in Step 6, so we must go back a few verses and read between the lines as we also consider John 10:10 from the Gospel reading.

[36Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."37Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" 38Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." 40And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.]

42They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

46Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

DIAGNOSIS: Save Yourself

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) : *Corrupt Generation*

Personal gain is the name of the game in life. Whatever you can do to climb the ladder of success, wealth, stature, power you consider. Whatever it costs to hold on to what you have achieved you pay. Left out of the equation are others and God. They either don't factor in or are employed to support your own personal agenda. But abundance doesn't always add life.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) : *We take Christ's Life ("the Word was God," John 1:1)*

The message that Jesus was preaching didn't add up to the message the world was sending. Jesus was about loving God and one another. Jesus was about convicting us to care for our neighbor even if it meant personal sacrifice. No gain with more pain. Easier to kill the messenger than heed the message (v. 36). So we stand guilty of ignoring Jesus' word and killing it.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) : *Nowhere Left to Turn*

This Jesus that we crucified was Lord and Messiah. In order to save our way of living we have no choice but to destroy God's Word. But try as we might we can't. So what choice does God have but to cut out our heart to destroy us and our way of living, leaving us to cry, "Brothers, what should we do?" (v. 37)

PROGNOSIS: God Saves Us

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) : *Jesus Turns Life Upside Down*

“Be saved” is a better translation of “Save yourselves” (v. 40), which is what Jesus does for us. Jesus’ death takes our pain. Jesus’s resurrection is our gain. There is nothing more to be achieved, nothing greater that can be achieved. Subtracting Jesus from the world ends up adding new life to ours, because ultimately not only his death but his consequent resurrection determine our future.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) : *Abundant Life*

Instead of seeking abundance that takes away our life, Jesus sees to it that we are given life in abundance. Through repentance, and the sacraments we are given more life than we can ever live. Grace pours over us through baptism. We consume his grace in Holy Communion. And the forgiveness that God gives us and we give one another adds to the life of the world.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) : *Goodwill of All the People*

We no longer seek personal gain but look to strengthen the community by sharing everything we have been given. We let go of personal wealth, success, stature, power and embrace those we have been called to care for. And the more we give those things up, the more God adds life (and lives, v. 47) to us. Instead of seeking personal praise we collectively give our praise to God.