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Acts 2:14, 22-36 & John 3:1-17  
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Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

## Signs

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Going on a road trip gives you the opportunity to see new things. From the places you hope to see, down to the signs on the road trying to get your attention to make a pitstop at their business. Of all the places we have travelled, driving across I-90 in South Dakota really makes a point to get you to pull off the main highway. A few years ago we set out to hit the major sights in South Dakota and spent our fair share of time on I-90. As we drove, the signs for Wall Drug kept showing up every couple miles. 85 miles till Wall Drug: nickel coffee and free ice water. 82 miles till Wall Drug: nickel coffee and free ice water. We knew exactly how far it was till Wall Drug based on those solitary signs staked in the ground in the middle of nowhere. The sign nailed to the post to make it visible for us to see the direction we should be going in. These signs weren't Wall Drug itself, but they pointed to Wall Drug.

Signs fulfill a specific function. A sign is defined as: "a token; indication; any object, action, event, or pattern that conveys a meaning. A sign isn't the actual thing but points to the source from which it comes.

Both our Epistle and Gospel readings reference signs, signs that Jesus did. Acts of God that demonstrated the power that Jesus had and continues to have, over creation. Peter talked on Pentecost about how the men of Israel recognized Jesus because of what he did. Peter says: <sup>22</sup> *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and **signs** that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—*

They knew who Jesus was because of what he was doing. They came to him because of the signs and wonders that he was performing, the miracles he was doing in their midst. They were not the only ones who came to Jesus because of this. St. John says in our Gospel reading that Nicodemus came to Jesus and recognized that he was a teacher from God. John says:

*This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these **signs** that you do unless God is with him.”*

These signs and wonders were Jesus healing the sick and diseased, raising the dead and walking on water and so much more. These were what attracted people to his ministry. These signs and wonders marked the time that the Messiah would arrive. Prophets foretold this would happen. The people were on the lookout for these signs to happen. The problem was they got so distracted by these signs, that they forgot the main reason for the Savior to be coming into this world.

We know that God does many things to restore His creation that has fallen into sin. Both in Jesus time as he did many signs and wonders healing and restoring people, as

well as our present day. We face the temptation of looking solely for these ways that God is interacting with and restoring the world. We go to God in prayer to heal our deepest needs. A few moments ago I prayed before preaching and prayed for my voice to be better. We pray that he would heal our loved ones, preform miracles in the operating room or hospital bed, we pray that God, who created all things, would heal us of every adversity. We place our trust on seeing these signs that will reinforce our faith in Him. We look for reassurance in this, even then it may not happen. Sometimes we look for these signs but focus so much on the signs themselves that we don't recognize who they came from. It's like seeing the Wall Drug sign that said 85 miles till Wall Drug but thinking we have arrived and that that was as good as it was going to get. Instead of putting our faith in the Creator, we put our faith in the created things and what they can do for us. We reflect on the Lord's Prayer as your theme of the year has been, *Thy Will Be Done*, we continue to pray our petitions before God. We recognize that it is God's Will that is done and not our own. God knows best for us, and not the other way around.

Thanks be to God that His Will was done. It was done in the pain and suffering that Christ took upon Himself in his death. It was all according to God's plan and in His timing. As our reading from Acts continues: "*this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.*" God's timing is perfect. This foreknowledge of God, our all-knowing, Omniscient God was shown in our Gospel reading when Jesus tells Nicademus:

*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

As the serpent in the wilderness was lifted up as a sign, it foreshadowed what would ultimately happen on the cross. A verse from *Lift High the Cross* puts this so beautifully:

*Oh, Lord once lifted, on that glorious tree, as though has promised, draw us all to thee.*

The sign of what God has done does not rest in the miracles, the healings, and the great signs and wonders that he did among and for his people. Those were the signs of when the Messiah would ultimately come into the world. Jesus bore the weight of our sins as he was nailed to a post, on a solitary stake that was a sign of his love for us. This sign was so much more than something pointing to its origin, this was the sign of life that God has for you and for me. As Peter told us in the Epistle reading, <sup>24</sup> *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.* The greatest sign that we have is of the empty cross and ultimately the empty tomb, where Christ rose to give you and I the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

We are drawn to where Christ died and rose so that we might live, where the will of God was demonstrated for us. The empty cross and the empty tomb bear witness to our Risen Savior. The sign of the great Love that God has for us. Amen.

“Now may the God of peace... equip you with everything good that you may do His will, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Heb 13:20-21)