Miracles sure attracted the crowds. Peter and John healed a lame man in the temple, and wow!—everybody came running. And who wouldn't? I would too, and so would you. An amazing thing had happened, really impressive, but in Peter's sermon that followed—our text for today—another amazing thing took place, and actually even more amazing than the miracle. God offered the forgiveness of sins to those who had killed Jesus! Yes, more amazing than a miracle, God offers forgiveness to all.

Let's think about that for a moment. Who was Jesus? He was—or better, ***is***—God Himself, who became true man in order to save us. And in His ministry, what did He do? He helped people—He healed their diseases, He cast out their demons, He raised their dead, and He forgave their sins, especially the sins of tax collectors and sinners who knew so well that they needed it. Did Jesus do anything that deserved death? No. Not at all. Even Pontius Pilate knew He was innocent and planned to set Him free.

So, what happened? The leaders were jealous and resented Jesus' rebukes to their pride and hypocrisy. He was a menace to their positions and power, so He had to go. And the people? Well, on Palm Sunday they hailed Jesus as a hero, but just a few days later they were screaming out, "Crucify Him" (Mk 15:13)! And they were choosing Barabbas, a murderer, instead of Jesus. They wanted Him dead. And that's what they got. In short, as Peter told them, "You killed the Author of life" (v 15).

I can't imagine a ***worse*** sin. Even Adam and Eve's choosing a piece of fruit at the price of death doesn't seem so bad as crucifying the Son of God! So, if anybody deserved hell, it was these very people to whom Peter was talking. But instead of delivering God's curse, what does Peter say? "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out" (v 19)—wiped out, erased, gone for good. That's forgiveness—gone for good!

Forgiveness for their sin or any sin is possible for one reason only—the kind of God that God is. Because when Adam and Eve sinned first and then all the rest of us followed right along to fill up the measure of man's wickedness, God acted to save. His mercy and love were greater than the sin of Peter's hearers—even this sin of killing God's Son. And His mercy and love are greater than ***our*** sin.

Not only did He promise—starting with Adam and Eve—that He would save us sinners, but He also ***kept*** His promise and sent His Son, who did die, yes, but on the third day rose again. Jesus was the great sin-bearer (***our*** sin), and the great death-dier (***our*** death, our punishment, ***our*** hell!). But when He arose from the grave—He had won. Not sin, not death, and not the devil had won, but ***Jesus*** had won. Sin had

been blotted out. And that was what Peter was offering even to those who had killed Jesus—the very worst sin, conquered and wiped clean in Jesus' resurrection.

Some sins seem just too big to forgive. But if you were to ask Henry Gerecke, he would disagree. Who was Henry Gerecke? Well, when he was almost fifty years old, Pastor Henry Gerecke joined the army to serve as a Lutheran chaplain during World War II. He served capably and competently during the war, but his most notable service occurred after the war was over. He was chaplain to the Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg. This was an assignment that he dreaded to take because, after all, he would be ministering to men accused and then convicted of the most atrocious war crimes, involving the deaths of millions. Some of the Allied officers at Nuremberg resented his ministry. They wanted to send the prisoners straight to hell. But Gerecke did it because Christ had died for all, even the Nazis. He conducted services and invited all to come. Some did. Gerecke prayed with them, heard their confessions, communed four of them in order to assure them that Christ's blood had washed away even their sins. He walked to the gallows with some, and with Wilhelm Keitel, head of the German high command, just before his execution, he prayed aloud a prayer that both had learned from their mothers. That's how amazing God's forgiveness is. Christ's resurrection proclaims His victory over *all* sins, including those of Nazi war criminals.

But, yes, to us, as sinful human beings, some sins seem just way too big to forgive. There are definitely many of us here—maybe *all* of us—who have a sin too big to *forget*. Maybe it's something really embarrassing or something really scandalous that nobody knows about except us, and we ***can't*** forget. Or maybe it's a recurring sin that we can't seem to get over. We do it again and again and again. Like worrying, gossiping, lying, lusting, stealing, the list could continue and continue. Sins like these can trouble us, haunt us, refuse to leave us alone… but they ***do*** leave us wondering: Does God really forgive this sin?

Yes, He does. That's the answer of this text. There is no sin too big to forgive even if ***we*** never ***forget*** it. God forgave David, an adulterer and murderer. He forgave Paul, who persecuted Christians. He even forgave Peter, who denied Him three times. And it was this same Peter who held out forgiveness and times of refreshing from God, who would send Jesus back and restore all things to these very people who had "killed the Author of life."

Yes, they killed Him, but He didn't stay dead.

Easter is God's answer to sin. Yours, mine, all of it. And there's a ***lot*** of it. The whole world is full of sin, and history is its record. But there is something greater than sin,

and it's a part of history too. For God—almighty and all gracious—has entered our world in the person of His Son to redeem us—to die and to rise again, and to blot out all our sins. And ***that*** truly is amazing! Amen.