

Thursday, March 27

Acts 2:14a, 22-32

We are witnesses

The translators of the NIV must have been listening to my mother when they translated Acts 2:32:

*God has raised this Jesus to life,
and we are all witnesses of the fact.*

The *fact* – I never noticed that word before in this verse. “Just the facts, ma’am,” the old TV show investigator said. My dictionary puts it very bluntly: *an occurrence, quality, or relation the reality of which is manifest in experience or may be inferred with certainty.*

Some facts about China – that’s what my mother wanted to know. *How big is it?*

3,705,404 sq. mi. (slightly smaller than the US)

Five time zones – the US crosses four.

Just over 1.3 billion people – US is 303 million

GDP per capita \$5,300 – US is \$46,000

Human Development Rank Index: #81 – US is #12

I could keep accumulating facts that would show how big China is – facts that provide a relation of information, the reality of which is manifest in experience or may be inferred with certainty.

There are at least 2 problems with my answer. 1) Unless statistics are your game, you’ll get lost among all these ‘facts.’ 2) All such accumulated facts still give only the slightest hint of what it’s like to live in China, to be Chinese, to have a Chinese family, to speak Chinese.

The King James is much closer to the ‘facts’ of the Greek text for Acts 2:32:

This Jesus God hath raised up,
whereof we all are witnesses.

In Greek, it is ‘ou’ – a relative pronoun in the genitive masculine singular (another string of ‘facts’). The NRSV translates it “of that all of us are witnesses.”

Is the statement “God has raised this Jesus to life,” a fact? Given the ‘new’ definition that the Enlightenment started in the 18th century, which requires direct observation (“manifest in experience”) or proof (“inferred with certainty”), my answer is no. Attaching the word, fact, to a statement about the resurrection ties all of us into knots trying to satisfy assumptions about ‘proof’ or ‘logic’ that eliminate the possibility of resurrection. Hmm – not a helpful choice of words, is my conclusion.

I’d rather start with ‘witness’ in meaning #5 that my dictionary labels ‘obsolete’ – *to show or evidence by one’s behavior*. That’s what Peter offered his fellow Israelites in Acts 2 – stories from their past and his that demonstrated how Jesus is alive in what he says and does. God, help me show Jesus is alive.

A Way to Pray – Facts

- What are the facts about me?
- What are the ‘facts about me’ as God sees me?
- How has Jesus been alive in me today?
- Who has seen these ‘facts’ (Jesus alive in me)?
- Ask God for help so others can see Jesus alive in me.