

Scripture Reading:

Acts 4: “Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand. 5 And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, 6 as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." ”

"The Name By Which We Must Be Saved"

In Chapter three of Acts we saw a great miracle performed which drew a great crowd and once again Peter delivered a powerful sermon. It brought a swift response which we studied last week, seeing the goats, represented by the Sadducees coming swiftly to arrest Peter and John and the many sheep who were converted and joined the church. This week we consider what Peter shares with the gathered council and as we do we must remember the story that Luke is telling in his orderly account:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins.
- These sheep are gathered as the Church, the Body of Christ, the New Jerusalem.
- The Church is empowered by the Spirit who comes to glorify the Son by filling the whole earth with His Kingdom!

As we consider how Peter confronts these religious leaders we must learn what we are to share and how we are to share as we continue the work of the Kingdom today.

Peter's simple message is still the message that we carry today...

Salvation is found in Jesus:

There is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved!

- Our goal this morning is to learn from Peter's boldness and wisdom

Jesus had promised the disciples that the Spirit would come upon them and that He would give them the words to speak when they faced these types of trials. We see clearly that Peter was filled with the Spirit as he began to speak to the gathered council of religious leaders.

- ALL Christians are given the gift of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit as we learned last week.

This filling is not just a onetime event, but should result in an ongoing filling as we live out our Christian lives, which is why the Apostle Paul warns us against quenching the Holy Spirit.

- **We must believe that the Spirit has been given to us in Christ**
- **But we must also remember that He continues to fill us throughout our Christian walk as we walk faithfully.**

This is pictured for us in the warnings that God gave His people as they entered the promised land...

Deuteronomy 6:10 “So it shall be, when Jehovah your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, 11 houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant-- when you have eaten and are full-- 12 then beware, lest you forget Jehovah who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

- **Just as God warned them about forgetting the very God who blessed them greatly, so we must be careful to not take the Spirit’s work in our lives for granted.**

Just as Jesus spent years teaching and training His disciples, the Spirit teaches all of us through the Word today using Pastors & parents

- **Yet when the time comes to trust Him for what to say in a difficult spot, we can think in our pride that we know exactly how to handle the situation!**
- **Hence we would miss an opportunity to be filled with Spirit as Peter is this day in the Temple.**

This is a lesson that Peter and John have learned the hard way...

-- Think about how often they missed the clear teachings that Jesus was giving them about how He was to die and be raised back to life?

-- Think of all their bold proclamations that they would be willing to die for Jesus, just before they were all scattered in the garden and Peter denied His Lord three times in shame.

What a contrast we have here today! In fact, we should remember that Peter and John are now standing before the very same religious leaders who tried and killed Jesus: AND they are standing in the VERY place where Jesus would have stood for His second trial [the first illegal trial being held at the High Priest’s home] What a change the Spirit has wrought in Peter’s life.

Filled with the Spirit, Peter is bold, but he is also wise, and this is an important lesson for us to learn.

- **Biblical boldness is NOT just speaking up or talking about things we know little about.**
- **Biblical boldness is NOT charging into a situation without considering our audience and what should be said.**

Yes, the Spirit promises to be with us and give us the words to say, but as we see here with Peter, they will come from things we have learned and in a way that is effective!

We will see over and over again here in Acts is how the Apostles now use of the Scriptures... Yes, those Old Testament Scriptures!

- **Today we have the advantage of having the completed Bible, but the main lesson here is that we need to know the Bible and how to properly use the Bible!**

We cannot walk into a tough situation like what Peter and John are facing with a Bible that we have never opened trusting that the Spirit will cause it to fall open to just the right place at just the right time! Again we see two cliffs:

- Pride keeping us from trusting the Spirit in our times of need
- And presumption that believes He will help us even when we are not prepared.

With those in mind let us consider how Peter responded to this inquisition in the very place where Jesus stood trial:

- The first lesson we learn is a reminder that he who sets the rules and defines the terms of the debate has the advantage...

The rulers want Peter and John on trial and directly challenge them to defend their actions: “By what power or by what name have you done this?” they ask. Peter shifts the focus to an inquiry about the miracle itself...

“If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.”

We must see what Peter has done here and learn to do likewise when our opportunities to share the Gospel abound today.

- Peter was Spirit filled as we must be
- Peter kept Jesus at the center as we must always do
- Peter kept the focus on the mercy & justice in what they did

Let’s consider some examples of what we might face today...

- Instead of man who was lame and unable to walk, we are often confronted with those who are enslaved to sin careening toward judgment

-- A woman who has become pregnant out of wedlock and killed her unborn child at an abortion clinic

-- Or a man who is involved in the sin of sodomy living with another man

I am sure we can all think of some in our lives, even our families, that face these types of situations

We come to them with the Good News of the Gospel: Telling them that even though God hates their sin and will judge them for it, they can repent and find forgiveness in Jesus.

- They can rise up from their broken lives, and walk with Jesus, leaping and praising God.

How does the world respond when we say such things?

- What right do you have to impose your morality on others!
- They go on to portray us as ignorant and hateful.

They would tell us that ‘Everyone who knows anything about anything, knows that homosexuality is something you are born with and that a woman has the right to control her own body!’

- They want Jesus left out of the discussion and they want to put us on trial just as these religious leaders did with Peter & John.

What we need today are Christians prepared to give a Spirit filled response the way Peter did that day.

We must not be afraid to say that sin is sin, like Peter's pointing out that they crucified Jesus whom God had sent to be their Messiah!

➤ **And, as Peter did that day, we must keep Jesus at the center...**

➤ **Declaring that He is the Savior of the world and that there can be forgiveness for sin in Him!**

AND as Peter did, we must focus on how we are being merciful and just with those in need...

➤ **Not hateful or ignorant as the world wants to portray us today!**

They want to judge us for taking loving steps to help and we must turn the focus back on them.

They want us to bow before the medical and legal 'authorities' of our day who say sin is not sin, just as these religious leaders wanted Peter & John to bow before their authority

➤ **An authority that had declared that Jesus was not the Christ and even went on to execute Him like a common criminal**

Peter & John, under the strong guidance of the Holy Spirit confront this sin, but immediately put Jesus at the center of the discussion.

➤ **Peter will conclude, as we must always conclude, with the truth that there is only one name under heaven by which men must be saved.**

BUT before he reaches this conclusion he makes two very strong statements about who this Jesus really is...

And it is here where our modern sensibilities might be offended, as were these religious leaders...

Peter is not presenting just any Jesus people may choose to believe in, like the Mormons who even put the name of Jesus in the name of their church.

➤ **We need to learn from Peter that we are to present the one and only Jesus if you will**

The historic Jesus who is the 2nd person of the Trinity who came in the flesh!

➤ **As Peter proclaimed at Pentecost, the Jesus whom God has made both Lord and Christ.**

Jesus is the all powerful Son of God and He is the Savior of His people who came to deliver them from their sins... Even the sin of killing the author of life on the cross, if they will repent and be converted!

As God showed us over and over again in the Old Testament, Jesus is not one god among many gods...

➤ **Jesus is the ONLY God**

Worshiping Jesus is not one option among many religious paths...

➤ **Jesus is THE way, THE truth and THE light**

As Peter says to these religious leaders, 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'

We must proclaim and believe that Jesus is the only way...

Often we see Christians say they believe this, but when challenged about whether they are saying that NO other religion is valid, they immediately start backpedaling.

How many times have we seen Christians, including our former President, proclaim that Islam is a religion of peace.

EVEN if we ignore the history of violence that has followed Islam in its earthly history, Islam still denies that Jesus is the one true God and Savior of the world: Thus they are sending people to eternal damnation...

- **What is peaceful about that?**

We must proclaim that Jesus is the way of salvation and we must believe that ALL other ways lead to hell. Think about it this way: Suppose a friend was about to get into a car and drive it on a freeway: But you knew the car had NO brakes...

- **Would you keep quiet about it because you did not want to offend the mechanic or the owner?**

I think not, and yet we often allow people to go on living a lie in this life knowing they are on a path which will take them straight to hell.

The final point that I want to make sure that we see this morning is how Peter under the guidance of the Spirit now uses the Old Testament in a powerful way...

Before the resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost, Peter and the other disciples were taken by the grandeur of the Temple.

They said to Jesus, ‘just look at this magnificent structure!’

Jesus told them that soon not one stone would remain upon another... The old creation was going to pass away.

At that point, they did not have a clue what Jesus was talking about!

Now those years of instruction by Jesus and the empowering of the Holy Spirit are bearing much fruit...

Standing very near the very spot where they would have pointed out the beauty of the Temple and the majesty of its stones to Jesus, Peter draws on one of the most powerful images in the Scriptures to confront the sin of these religious leaders

- **An image we should use and understand today!**

Peter says, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone!

Peter, who just a few weeks earlier was so fearful of these leaders that he even denied his Lord three times, now uses the very same image that Jesus had confronted them with in Matthew chapter 21 where He also quoted from Psalm 118 & then said:

“Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

- **Peter knows what they did to Jesus, but he is no longer afraid!**

And we must not be afraid to present Jesus as the rock: The stone cut without hands in Daniel chapter two that crushes the kingdoms of this world and goes on to fill the whole earth.

- **This is not gentle Jesus meek and mild, but the Jesus who God has made both Lord and Christ!**

This is the Jesus whom all people must call upon for salvation and this is the Jesus that we must proclaim!

I won't have time this morning to fully delve into all the images the Bible presents about stones so this can be some of your homework:

Review the 2nd chapter of Daniel and do a word search on "stone."

For today, I think we should let Peter sum things up for us...

Peter in his first epistle brings together what we studied last week about the sheep and the goats and this powerful truth about Jesus as the chief cornerstone that was rejected...

- **Just as Peter challenged the Saints in the early Church, we must heed this same challenge today!**

I Peter 2:1 "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, 2 as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. 4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," 8 and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."

Let us pray.

Communion Meditation: Isaiah 9:

"2 The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined. ...

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."