

## Scripture Reading:

**Acts 4: “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 [Peter & John] 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." 13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. 14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. 15 But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, 16 saying, "What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name." 18 And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. 20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." 21 So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way of punishing them, because of the people, since they all glorified God for what had been done. 22 For the man was over forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.”**

# **"What Do We Do With these Disciples?"**

**The disciples were commanded by Jesus as He prepared to ascend to the Father’s right hand to be His witnesses in Jerusalem. This was not a task they would carry out in their own strength and wisdom, but as promised the Holy Spirit came in power at Pentecost to establish the Church which would fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus! This is why, as a Trinitarian Church, we begin each service in the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit! This is often forgotten today in many circles with the Trinity being a dry doctrine we must believe instead of the reality of God Himself which has been revealed to us and helps us to live and serve Him as we should!**

**As we continue to study how the disciples carried out the command of Jesus to be His witnesses in Jerusalem...**

- **We can and should learn more about how we are to carry out the Great Commission today!**

**Peter and John have gone to the Temple and performed a great miracle in the name of Jesus.**

**This caused a stir and drew a large crowd: The detail given at the end of our text about the man being forty years old and never having walked explains how dramatic this was and thus Peter takes the opportunity to preach once more.**

- Many more are saved and the Church continues to grow
- However, the religious leaders move quickly to bring it to an end by arresting Peter and John

The next morning Peter and John are brought before the same council that condemned and executed Jesus in the very same place where Jesus was tried...

- Jesus had declared to them that He was indeed the Son of God
- And last week we considered how Peter powerfully proclaimed the same truth to them again...
- Now these religious leaders face the difficult question of WHAT should they do with these disciples!

First we should notice the hardness of the hearts of those to whom the Holy Spirit has NOT given the gift of faith...*[as we do, we must remember that God can soften any hardened heart, just as those dry bones were given life in Ezekiel's vision: One of those present was probably Saul of Tarsus who may have been Luke's witness. We must give up on NO ONE from our human perspective: As Charles Spurgeon said regarding a wayward child that breaks a parent's heart: "Never must we cease to pray until they cease to breathe. No case is hopeless while Jesus lives!"]*

Peter had called on those in the crowds the day before to repent and be converted and these religious leaders certainly had no excuse not to turn and live, save for their fallen state: First they are confronted and even taken aback by the boldness of Peter and John who they knew to be uneducated, common men... The homeschoolers of their day if you will!

- They have presented a powerful witness for Jesus!

Next they realize that Peter & John had been with Jesus, who they condemned and crucified, only to have the soldiers report to them that He was raised from the dead!

- Jesus Himself had told them He was the Son of God in their very court! *[to say nothing of those who came back from the grave and witnessed in Jerusalem according to Matthew's account]*

Finally, they have the man who had never walked whose presence here at the trial powerfully testified about the power of Jesus!

- THEY were witnesses of this miracle that took place!

**Three powerful reasons for them to repent and be converted!**

- But, without the work of the Spirit to change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh, such would not be the case...  
Even when they knew the argument was lost!

Knowing the argument was lost, they put the disciples outside and confer privately about what they should do.

- They ask 'what shall we do with these men?'

What to do indeed: They cannot deny the miracle that has occurred or why it has happened.

They decide that they, being the proud religious leaders of God's people, must prevent this from spreading, so they will demand that the disciples no longer speak the name of Jesus!

- This is a classic example of suppressing the truth in unrighteousness that Paul talks about in Romans chapter one

So they called back Peter and John and ‘commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. The disciples now have a decision to make, and they wisely turn the tables back on these religious leaders as we saw them do at first by saying, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

- We will return to the theme of who shall we obey, God or man in chapter six...

So what I want to focus on this morning is the issue of speaking the name of Jesus. When we consider the question of obeying God or man we often think of things only in the civil realm...

We need to remember that Peter and John were here addressing the religious leaders, the leaders of God’s covenant people in that time. This principle was an important part of how the reformers were able to confront the sins of the Catholic Church and work to restore Biblical worship and practices to the Church.

A man with his Bible in his hand, can stand before very powerful church councils as Luther did, telling them he would only recant if they showed him from the Bible where his teachings were wrong! Reaffirming the power and authority of the Bible was a great step forward in the history of the Church...

But here again we have those two cliffs to beware of:

- On the one side is the error of Rome or the Eastern Orthodox churches where they demand that their traditions must be accepted without question, even when they violate the clear teaching of the Scriptures.
- On the other is the more modern protestant error of every man for himself when it comes to understanding the Bible.

As good reformers we are ready and willing to stay away from that first cliff:

- No pope is going to be infallible in our eyes!

This is good, but we have often unwittingly backed off the other cliff by ignoring the importance of church history and the contribution of the Saints who have gone before us.

We have created and encouraged many individual Christians today who do not have the years of study or experience of the mental anguish that Luther or Calvin endured before calling into question some of the practices in the Roman Church:

They and the other reformers went to GREAT lengths to show that church history and those who had gone before were on their side and that it was Rome who was in error, teaching things contrary to the Bible.

- Today we have men who take up the Bible and claim that the Holy Spirit is giving them fresh insights into the Word

One man recently told me that he had studied the Bible for thousands of hours and had come up with an entire systematic from scratch... Not unlike what Joseph Smith claimed in his own life and it led to the fastest growing cult in the world today with the Mormons.

We must be ready to give an answer for the faith no matter which side is committing the errors:

We must be able to say to Rome, you are wrong, but not just because ‘I’ say so...

- We must show that we are grounded church history and in line with the foundation that was laid by the Apostles.

**We must also be ready to confront the lone ranger who thinks that they and the Spirit have all the answers. We must show him or her that church history is going someplace and that we must look to and even depend on the wisdom of those who have gone before**

**For example, I mentioned the importance of being a Trinitarian Church earlier:**

- **Should we have to hold church councils and determine if that is the right doctrine in each and every generation?**

**This is why we look to the Apostle's Creed and the Nicene Creed as the foundations of orthodoxy... These are settled issues and do not have to be looked at over and over in each generation of the Church.**

- **The Church will not fill the earth if we stay in our infancy...**

**Imagine parents who thought it was important to teach their children how to walk or talk year after year: We understand that each child must learn how to walk and talk, but once they have done so they move on to more maturity.**

- **Though we all learn these basic doctrines as individuals, this does not mean we are discovering them for the first time as the Church or in our generation.**
- **The Spirit is going to glorify the Son by filling the earth with His Kingdom and this requires a maturing church!**

**Our failure to understand the dangers of having lone rangers and properly standing against them has sadly sent many confused Saints off to Rome or Eastern Orthodoxy in search of some security and stability for the faith and they go to very open arms ready to comfort them with their erroneous traditions.**

**In the situation before us in the text the choice is pretty clear: Jesus commanded the disciples to be His witnesses and these religious leaders command them NOT to speak the name of Jesus.**

- **So they simple ask, should we obey God or you?**

**Now we know the right answer to that question: And we know that Peter & John went on to proclaim salvation in the name of Jesus! But now we must consider if we are faced with similar demands today and how we should respond. Again, we must be careful not to limit this to the civil realm:**

- **Sure if they passed 'law' saying we could not proclaim the Gospel, we would rise up, hopefully, and say who should we obey?**

**Let me see how we do with some tougher choices...**

**What if our family asks us to not speak about Jesus during the Thanksgiving holiday? Or as Shelly just experienced, what if family does not think it important to name the name of Jesus as a funeral of a fellow Christian?**

**These are real life examples where the rubber meets the road...**

- **We must resist commands to be silent about Jesus, not just when they come from church councils or governments but from any quarter**

**Many of us have faced this choice in our vocations: The examples from the education field would be almost endless... Do they allow the "counselors," who go in to help grieving students after an accident or school shooting, mention Jesus even if they are Christians!?**

**We all know what happens if someone tries to pray in the name of Jesus at a school function...**

In many cases this is tolerated today as Christians have gone along because they do not want to offend those who do not believe that Jesus is the only name under heaven by which we must be saved.

OK, so we have all pulled our kids out of the government schools and we stand up for Jesus at the family picnics... Are we doing better?

Well, we certainly are in those areas, but are we being the faithful witnesses that Jesus wants us to be?

- First we need to ask the question we will come back to many times here in the Book of Acts:
- Is the Spirit going to fill the earth with the Kingdom of Jesus?

If we give the right answer to that question, we are confessing that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings and thus His Lordship affects every area of life.

- Then we must be sure we are speaking the name of Jesus in ALL areas of life!

Two recent events bring this to light as contemporary examples of how we are told NOT to speak the name of Jesus... You may have missed the first because we failed to put it on the church calendar but they just celebrated the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of Charles Darwin...

Many 'modern' churches made a BIG deal out of this, going out of their way to show there is no conflict between what Darwin taught and what the Bible teaches! In fact some 13,000 religious leaders signed a statement released in conjunction with Darwin's birthday celebration which said in part that: "scientific and holy truths can coexist without conflict"

Now we need to understand what they are saying here:

- There is no conflict as long as you don't argue with their science:

The Sadducees offered Peter and John peace if they simply stopped using the name of Jesus... Do all the miracles you want, teach and preach all you want, just don't use that name.

We stand against this modern compromise here at Church of the King by reading together the Creation account from Genesis every few weeks and we remind ourselves AND our covenant children that it is the account of how JESUS made the heavens and the earth!

- Today's skeptics say in their statement that the creation account is a 'beautiful metaphor'

In other words it is NOT something that Jesus did as the Bible proclaims! On the other hand, they say that Godless evolution provides a 'fascinating deep, rich way to understand how creation is assembled.'" In one special sermon for the celebration of Darwin's birth, a female pastor made the point I am trying to get us to see this morning when she said, "They can have whatever belief system they want, but don't call it science."

**We must be ready to boldly proclaim that TRUE science must be based on the truth that Jesus created all that we have to study in science!**

The other major battle ground today involves how the Bible views sex, which was also created by Jesus, verses how the world says we should handle our passions. The Bible says that the sexual union is intended for the marriage bed and is sinful in all other contexts.

As we can see from the Song of Solomon [*which can be your homework this week*], the love between a man and a woman is a passionate and beautiful thing that is to be celebrated and enjoyed.

- The Apostle Paul says that marriage is how we demonstrate the love of Jesus for His Church

**It is no wonder that God decreed some very serious penalties in the Bible for violating the marriage bed... All sexual practices outside of marriage are sinful and Paul says that for single people it is better to marry than to burn.**

**Marriage itself is protected by God's Laws the same way we protect the integrity of our human nations: Someone convicted of treason against the United States can face the death penalty according to our laws.**

**Most give this little thought and yet I bet most people would clamor for the death penalty if someone was caught and convicted of providing sensitive information to Osama Bin Laden.**

- **Why should it be more shocking that God says the civil magistrate can use the death penalty to protect marriage?**

**Would Tiger Woods have been quite as promiscuous if he knew the penalty for adultery was potentially death? We have slipped so far from the Biblical standard that the adulterer gets to keep most of his or her money!**

**This type of controversy is also swirling around the issue of how to deal with acts of sodomy:**

- **Acts that not only are outside of normal sex in marriage, but deny the importance and reality of marriage itself.**

**Again they are blatant acts of treason against marriage and the family and it should not surprise us to again find the Scriptures saying that the death penalty could be used in some circumstances.**

**Well, some Christians in Uganda Africa have been reading their Bibles in the midst of dealing with radical homosexuals and an AIDS crisis that kills thousands each year.**

- **They introduced a measure that included a death penalty provision and the mainstream media in the entire world is in an uproar!**

**As usual, they don't report things very well: The proposed law only calls for the death penalty when the homosexual acts are committed by someone with AIDS or on a child, but why worry about details when there is the opportunity to attack Christians and by implication Jesus!**

**It is not the media that concerns me in this case, but rather the reaction of Christians: Even some who taught the Christians in Uganda about the dangers of the homosexual agenda!**

- **Their back-pedaling would win a gold medal at the Olympics if it was an event!**

**So let's turn to the children for a little help even though they do not yet understand much about these sexual sins...**

- **Kids, who wrote the Bible? That's right, Jesus wrote the Bible.**
- **Now if Jesus wrote the Bible and the Bible says that the death penalty is appropriate for certain sins...**
- **Is that a good idea or a bad idea?**
- **It is a good idea and it is certainly appropriate to consider it as these Christians in Uganda are trying to do.**

**The homosexuals on the other hand demand that we be tolerant of what they do... We certainly cannot call their practices sinful!**

**So just like the evolutionists, they say we can believe whatever we want here in Church, just don't take it outside of these walls...**

**Or in the words of the council as they declared what they wanted to do with those troubling disciples...**

- **DO NOT speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus!**
- **These are two tough issues to tackle in today's world as anyone who does so can testify... Just Google your pastor's name to find out what a hateful intolerant bigot I really am!**
- **These battles are not for the faint of heart or immature Christians.**
- **These battles are for those who take seriously their study of the Scriptures and are willing to let the Holy Spirit give them the words to speak in the tough times.**
- **These are battles for those who answer the critics, who want us to forget the name of Jesus...**
- **We must be ready to answer with Peter and John...**

**Even when it upsets family members, even when it causes us conflict at work, even when it is controversial in the media...**

**We must be willing to say, 'it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than God, you judge!'**

**Communion Meditation: Deuteronomy 4:**

**"5 Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?"**