

Third Sunday of Easter – April 15, 2018

Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

### **Acts 4:8-12**

**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9) If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10) then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11) He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.' 12) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."**

In the name of our living Savior dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

I have always been fascinated by magicians and their tricks. You'll see a magician show you a coloring book with blank pages and then when the group says the magic word, voila! Pictures appear! But they aren't colored. So the magician waves the magic wand, says the magic word and bingo the pictures are colored. Oops she drops the book and when she picks it up the pictures have disappeared and the pages of the book are blank once again. The kids are amazed and more than one adult is left scratching their head and wondering, "How did you do that?"

"How did you do that?" That was the question that the Rulers and the elders of the people wanted Peter and John to answer. The day before a man who had been a cripple from the day he was born was miraculously healed by Peter and John in the temple courts in Jerusalem. The miracle caused quite a stir among the crowds of people and Peter used the occasion to tell the people that Jesus was the living Messiah. It didn't take long before the **priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail.**

**The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" (Acts 4:1-7 NIV84)**

This wasn't a magic trick. It was a miracle which they were empowered to do by Jesus – the same Jesus whom they had crucified. Peter and James wanted these leaders (and everyone else) to know that this Jesus was alive and is the only true Savior.

It is by the grace of God that you and I love to sing the Easter hymn:

**Theme:** I Know That my Redeemer Lives

1. He lives triumphant from the grave
2. He lives eternally to save

These are truths that our lesson from Acts re-enforces for us today. Let's take a little closer look at this text.

**Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9) If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10) then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed.**

Before Jesus had ascended into heaven Jesus had told his disciples that they would be troubled by those who opposed the Gospel. (Matthew 10:17-20) **"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18) On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19) But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, 20) for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.**

Now those words were being fulfilled. Peter and John had been arrested and the power of the Spirit enabled Peter to boldly give testimony about Jesus. Jesus is the one who really made it possible for the cripple to walk. That would have answered the question but that answer would not have given full glory to Jesus as the one who lives triumphant from the grave and the one who lives eternally to save.

With Christ-like concern and compassion Peter pointed out that these men had been guilty of putting Jesus to death – that is what they thought should happen because they accused Jesus of blasphemy – claiming to be God. But they were wrong and God proved it to them by raising Jesus from the dead and by allowing this healing to take place in his name. The implications were obvious. Don't stand in opposition to God any longer. Stop rejecting him. Isn't it obvious to you now after all of this that the one you crucified truly is Jesus Christ – the promised Savior sent from God?

It's interesting isn't that although Peter is being investigated for his actions that he really doesn't spend much time defending himself and pleading his innocence? Instead he defends Jesus. He gives bold testimony to him as the one who came in fulfillment of the Scriptures. He assures them that Jesus whom they had crucified lived triumphantly from the grave.

Peter directs their attention to verses from Psalm 118. Those Psalm verses speak of God's promised Savior. They give some identifying characteristics of the Christ. In fact some of those listening to Peter may have heard Jesus use those words as he reached out to call them

to repentance before he arranged for his crucifixion. He used them frequently when he told how the Jews had rejected the Lord's prophets and how they would also reject the Christ sent by God.

**11) He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.'** The priests, scribes, and elders of the people should have been building God's house, his church, among his people but they rejected the very stone which the God himself had selected. What they were building was not God's building. In fact they had excluded themselves from God's family by their rejection of the capstone – the stone on which the others would lean for support.

The apostle Paul reminds us: (Ephesians 2:19-20) **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20) built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**

But sadly the leaders of the Jews only saw in Christ a stumbling block. (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23) Even after his resurrection they refused to confess that he lives eternally to save. That did not stop Peter from boldly proclaiming the wonderful news of their salvation to them. **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**

With these words Peter wants to emphasize the foolishness of rejecting Christ. Salvation, deliverance rescue – that's what a drowning person prays for. How foolish it would be for that person to reject the life preserver which is tossed to them because it wasn't the right color. It's just as foolish to reject Jesus for any reason. He's the one who provides the rescue from the sea of sins – in which all of humanity is drowning. He provides the rescue and the ultimate safety and security which we all need.

Human beings needed to be delivered from sin, from death, from the power of the Devil – God in Christ supplied that deliverance. He provided the very foundation for our eternal hopes. He provided his Son for us to lean on. There is no need to look farther Peter is reminding these Jewish leaders – **Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.**

Those words are both a warning not to reject Jesus and a gracious invitation to trust in Jesus. We need salvation and Jesus is the only source. Anyone who would seek salvation in anyone else will be sadly disappointed – their hopes will be dashed to pieces, their ultimate fate will be worse than the misery of this life. The world is full of false christs and other gospels, but none that will save.

You and I need that reminder – that there is no other name by which we must be saved – because at times our sinful nature is inclined to listen to those other gospels. They sound so intellectual, they agree with our natural reason. Our ears itch to hear what they have to say.

The antidote is that familiar and loved Easter hymn – I know that my Redeemer lives – he lives triumphant from the grave, he lives eternally to save.

There is no other Savior who has come back to life and who is able to save us. That's a message which we need to hang on to and remember not just for our own sakes but for the sake of others for whom the Savior offered his life. In our day and age Satan has become quite successful in promoting his lies that all religions are equal, that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere and that since there is really only one true God everyone should be able to define him and worship him as they see fit.

Sometime ago I heard about an interesting situation. A Christian congregation rented its building space to a Jewish group who would worship on Saturday. The individual looked at it as a situation where they got a little extra cash and the opportunity to learn more about Judaism. When someone suggested that it would be a good chance to expose the Jews to the Gospel of Jesus – the reply was that he didn't feel that would be appropriate. Someone else pointed out that Paul had no qualms about teaching Jews about Jesus – even going right to their places of worship to do so. He could have just as easily pointed to the example of Peter in our text since he was doing the same thing. The reply that came back was something along these lines: "I'm not Paul and that was then, this is now."

The example points out a sad misunderstanding about God and the way of salvation he has provided which results in a lack of concern for the lost. How easy it is for us to get caught up with that kind of thinking. Let's be bold to proclaim I know that my Redeemer lives. He lives triumphant from the grave – let's praise him for his victory and hail him as the conquering hero who has set us and all men free from sin. He lives eternally to save. Let's hang on to these precious truths so that we can be sure of our salvation and so that we can share the salvation which Jesus won with everyone.

Amen.