

## Acts Chapter 4

Vvs 5-31

Vvs 5-12

Peter and John are<sup>3</sup> arrested because they testify to Jesus, by whom, they claim there is resurrection of the dead. (vvs 1-3) They are detained overnight, perhaps to give the authorities opportunity to build their case against them. Many are coming to believe.

They are under arrest and the movement they lead is under attack by the political power ---- they are under threat.

This sets the stage for their discussions and defense within the Sanhedrin.

This trial has the informality of a pre-trial hearing. They are the Temple law court. The question the court has seems to be – by what power or name did you do it?

It is not clear if the it is the healing or the teaching in Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit fills Peter to give a persuasive response. Peter interprets what happens as a good deed. The deed is the healing and the healed man is present. The Greek for healed is sozo which is usually translated as saved. To heal is to save to save is to heal.

Peter is not afraid to accuse the accusers. He proclaims that the man was healed in the name of Jesus of Nazareth – whom you crucified. He is stating that the Sanhedrin is not aligned with the people of Jesus way. Peter is truly calling on them to repent and turn to Jesus.

They are called on to repent from their rejection of the cornerstone of the new order.

Peter proclaims to them that there is salvation in no one else but Jesus. This is echoes of the Joel prophecy. The healing of the beggar is an example of the healing (salvation ) available to all people.

Vvs 13-18

So, now what will the ruling elite do? They are amazed. They can't believe that these uneducated men can speak so eloquently. Of course this is Spirit work.

The rulers fail to recognize an inspired prophet in their midst. They do recognize a miracle – which I think is a miracle in itself.

They go behind closed doors to debate. They decide they should hush up the disciples. They should not be allowed to speak in Jesus' name.

Vvs 19-20

The apostles defy the request. John and Peter decide to obey God's command and not the rulers. They have been called to bear witness to Jesus and his resurrection and its redemptive significance for the people.

Signs and wonders get attention so that the message can be heard. The leaders are unable to listen (to understand) the truth of what has really happened.

Vvs 21-31

This is shaped by Luke's assessment of the council's reaction to Peter's bold statement.

The leaders are responding because of the people. The people are for Peter and John and thus the leaders are somewhat constrained. The people are praising God. One of their own is healed.

The leaders refrain from repentance and acknowledgement of what the Spirit is doing.

This sets up a real problem for the leaders with not only the people but with God. So there is room for the 12 to fill the leadership void.

Vvs 24-30 serve as a kind of benediction or a kind of announcement of the prophetic vocation of the apostles.

Vs 31 proclaims God's response – God fills them with the Spirit and they proclaim God's truth with boldness.

Reflections:

Peter is filled with the Spirit – Pentecost continues. He is perceived for less than what he is. Jesus has told them don't worry about what to say when they bring you before authority. The Holy Spirit will teach you in that hour (Lk 12: 11-12)

The church places value on an educated clergy. Always has – always will. However, the Spirit can and does work in mysterious ways, its wonders to perform.

God uses broken vessels, clay pots and molds them to the needs of the people.

4: 12

There is salvation in no one else. The blessings of God's salvation are extended to all through Jesus. This is sometimes taken as an offense in a day of cultural pluralism that commends diversity and variety. God, the only God has a single plan according to which no one except Jesus can mediate salvation to all people. Yet God in Jesus can be manifest in many ways and it is not intended as a solely exclusive statement. God can do what God will and it is not for us to decide for God.

In this chapter words carry enormous power – power to do good or evil. When free speech is limited, there is great danger. Pastors are called to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Not always easy in the church. Tolerance is important and all voices should be heard.

Vs 31 – when they prayed, the place was shaken. They were able to speak the word with great boldness.

Move to vs 32-37

The apostles have become singled out for special attention by the authorities in Jerusalem. The battle lines are drawn.

Luke now takes a pause in the story to tell us about the Jerusalem community.

The sharing of possessions is important. I wonder is this a comment about the church in every age?

The church's internal witness is centered on the sharing of good and the external witness is centered on the sharing of the gospel message.

Both attract favorable attention of the people, the masses.

Barnabas is lifted up. He is from Cyprus, a diaspora Jew. He has now settled with the Jerusalem community. It is assumed he is one of the many converts from the Pentecost story. Barnabas with team with Paul to reach the diaspora and the gentile community. He becomes (later) a mediator between Paul and the Jerusalem community. Later we find Barnabas was named Joseph and the Apostles called him Barnabas which means son of encouragement.

the community as a whole is one that is of one heart and one soul. They lived as loving neighbors.

The sharing of goods, the well being of the community together signals that the apostolic, prophetic, healing power of the Spirit has overwhelmed the community. The signs and wonders give strength to the community and solidify the apostolic authority and competency. Yet their mighty acts are meant to only bear witness to the power of God in Jesus.

The apostles have favor not only with the people, with one another, but also with God.

God's great grace (charis) was upon them all and thus the community is able to do things other communities could not do. There was not a needy person among them.