

**April 25, 2021, the Fourth Sunday of Easter**  
**Truth to Power**

**Acts 4:5-12**

<sup>5</sup>The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, <sup>6</sup>with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. <sup>7</sup>When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup>Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup>if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup>let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. <sup>11</sup>This Jesus is

the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;  
it has become the cornerstone.'

<sup>12</sup>There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

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Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God**

In the previous episode:

Acts 3: 1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

What kind of world would it be if people who aren't medical doctors went around healing people outside the hospital? There are serious consequences for those impersonating doctors, but if the frauds actually accomplish healing what would the law have to say? Because medicine is not an exact science – you contract to pay for treatment not for cures – there is still room for quackery. For most people, especially those who are suffering the only question is, "does it work?" Sadly, most of the time it doesn't, and if a cure is attained it remains to be seen what actually did the healing?

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One medical rule is that many ailments are remedied without intervention. Left alone our bodies are amazingly well equipped to meet the onslaught of nature.

Even in the case of Covid vaccines, they do not defeat viruses; they motivate our immune systems to recognize and defeat the viruses. The overuse of anti-bacterial drugs kills helpful bacteria and leaves resistant disease causing survivors to multiply. My observation is that many drugs are like using a sledge hammer to put in a thumb tack. That doesn't mean you shouldn't take your medicine. It means we still have a lot of study ahead to learn the subtle lessons our bodies already know.

Roll all this back two thousand years before we didn't even know what we don't know about our bodies and the issue of treatment gets very hazy. Ages of exacerbating medical interventions leave us wondering why it didn't occur to people earlier to test the outcomes of things like leeching and exorcisms. Yet, even modern medicine has no explanation for one recovers while another dies. Faith plays a part in how our bodies function on the microscopic level, but faith is not universal in its effects. It helps a treatment to believe in the treatment and it hinders one that doubts, but faith or lack of it doesn't determine the outcome. Faith is a factor.

If Peter has said to the authorities, "Well, Jesus whom you crucified, taught us how to surgically reconstruct a man's ankles so that they could allow him to walk," my job might be easier. People of our era are much more ready to accept medical science than they are to believe in miracles. In the context of our faith, however, Peter's claim amounts to the same thing. Jesus is effective, and you tried to deny this man a cure because you didn't like where Jesus came from.

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Now Luke's Gospel and Acts created great problems through the ages by laying heavy blame on Jewish people for the death of Jesus. As with many such forms of evil it was embraced because it made the rest of us feel less guilty for the death of Jesus. It overlooks the fact that those who actively judged and condemned him were aided by those who stood silently aside while it happened. They might have felt powerless to stop it, but we all participate in patterns of the evil use of power. The one thing the leaders had was that Jesus was illegitimate, a word that in English has two distinct meanings. His mom might not have been married to his dad, but he came from no noble family, he had no credentials, his claims should not have been made by a peasant from Galilee. Peter, also a nobody, stood before them having recovered somewhat from his bout of cowardice and pointed to the man dancing by the doorway, saying, "here are the credentials." Jesus made a difference in that man's life and Jesus makes a difference in you life.

One of my favorite English kings, beside Ethelred the Unready, is King Canute who also ruled Denmark and Norway. It is said that he wanted to exercise his power by commanding the tide not to come in. He sat enthroned on the beach. First his feet got wet, then his ankles, then up to his knees. At some point even the great power of kings is bested.

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**Closing Prayer:** Jesus, Good Shepherd of the sheep, by whom the lost are sought and guided into the fold: Feed us and we shall be satisfied, heal us and we shall be whole, and lead us that we may be with you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.