

St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Watertown, WI
Pastor Mark Gartner
Sermon for Easter 3 – April 19th and 22nd, 2012

Acts 4:8-12

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 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. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ 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 Jesus who is the Church's one foundation, dear friends,

A recent poll asked people, “What is your biggest fear?” Stop and think about it for a moment. How would you answer; spiders, snakes, fear of flying? What do you think most other people would answer? I’m sure that many of you would speculate that most other people would answer, “Death or dying.” Wrong. The number one fear most people admitted to is public speaking. Interesting, isn’t it? According to that poll most people are more afraid to speak in front of a crowd than to die. As Christians death is not at the top of our list of biggest fears. Jesus died for our sins. He rose from death. He is our Living Savior. Death has been conquered. We know with confidence that we will go to heaven when we die. What about public speaking? Are you counted among those whose knees shake, lips stammer and eyes blankly stare out at the crowd, whether small or large? Maybe you are someone who would rather call in sick than give a presentation to 300 clients. Even when you are asked to simply offer some ideas at your office meeting, you’d rather be hiding in the janitor’s closet.

Whether you fear it or not, Jesus has called all of you as Christians to be his public speakers. This morning we continue our study from last week about the story with Peter and John in the temple and the crippled man they healed. Today we find Peter and John standing in front of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council). They are questioned as to why they healed this man, and secondly as to what authority they could do these things. Peter and John answer with boldness. Their witness teaches you and I to . . .

Theme: Be Bold As You Witness Your Risen Savior!

- 1. You are filled with the Holy Spirit.**
- 2. You stand on a solid foundation..**

In our story this morning, Peter and John and the man who was healed of his lifelong illness, stood before the Jewish ruling council. Peter and John had spent the night in prison. The Sanhedrin did not want to break the law and hold an illegal trial during the night. (Convenient that they let this rule slip past when it came to Jesus) Now these two disciples are questioned, **“By what power or what name did you do this?”** *This...*they make it sound as if healing a crippled man was a crime. The Sanhedrin demands to know what name had been used to heal this man. Because if it were the name Jesus, he was crucified for being a blasphemer, claiming to be the Son of God, then this act of healing should be punished. Peter and John are now forced to publicly confess the truth. Do you think their knees were shaking, their tongues stammering, their lips quivering? Not at all. Luke in verse 8 tells us, **“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said to them...”**

Would you have had the courage to stand up for the truth at that moment? Would you have said the words Peter proclaimed? I have every confidence you would. Why? Because of a promise Jesus made to his disciples, a promise that Peter and John took to heart and believed by faith. **“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.”** (Luke 12:11,12; Mt

10:19,20; Mk 13:11) I often ask you, the members of this congregation, to help with outreach, to go door-to-door, to make phone calls to prospects or to accompany me on home visits. Some of you jump up and say, "You bet! I can help! When are you going?" Others might say, "No way." Speaking to strangers about Jesus is not your strength. But your Risen Savior still commissions you to publicly profess him. You might be thinking, "I don't know what I will say? But pastor, what if there's a question I don't know how to answer?"

I don't know how many of you like to hike, but whether you enjoy hiking or not I think that you all understand the importance of hydration. I read somewhere that every year the Army spends one million dollars on bottled water just for one company of soldiers in Iraq. A saying among Grand Canyon hikers is, "Keep it in you, not on you," a reference to the importance of actually drinking the water you have with you, not just carrying it. The same can be said about our life as followers of our Risen Savior. Keep it in you, not on you. Get the Holy Spirit in you. When you were baptized the Holy Spirit first filled your heart and soul. Continue to fill yourself up with the Spirit. Keep him on the inside, not on the outside. You can fill up with the Spirit by reading, listening and studying the Word. Get the Word of God into your mind and soul. Don't just let it sit there on your desk or end table collecting dust. Fill your souls with the living water of God's Word

Attend one of our four Bible Studies offered each week. If there's a certain topic you would like to study in depth or a book of the Bible that intrigues you, let the Pastors know. We'll try to fit it in. Make time to read your Meditations devotion book. The time it takes to eat your Cheerios is the same amount of time it takes to read one of those daily devotions. Place a Devotion book where you will see it and read it. Fill yourself up with the Holy Spirit with Sunday morning worship. Just because you're not good at publicly speaking about Jesus doesn't mean you have to give up. Ask him to help you grow and to be bold. The only people can learn about Jesus is if you tell them. The way you become bold at sharing is to fill up with the Spirit who already lives in you. The same Spirit who filled the apostle Peter is the same Spirit that fills you today. Fill up with the Holy Spirit. He will give you the words to say.

When you hike you know the importance of staying hydrated. As you hike it also helps to know that the ground upon which you walk is stable. Your steps have more confidence when you know that the edge of the cliff you're walking on will not suddenly sheer off, or that the area is not littered with land mines. To be bold in your witness is not helps to be filled with the Spirit, but also to know that you stand on a firm foundation.

2. You stand on a solid foundation

If you walk around Watertown or other towns nearby take a closer look at some of the older buildings, (churches or government buildings). In the front of these buildings near the steps or near the bottom corner you might see a stone with a date or saying inscribed on it. It is that building's cornerstone. Today, cornerstones don't have as much architectural prominence as they did in ancient times. Architects typically laid the cornerstone first, and used that stone to determine the lines drawn for the rest of the building. Everything about that building, the structure, design, safety, rested on that cornerstone. If the stone was not set correctly or off by an inch, it could jeopardize the entire building project.

Peter and John gave a bold confession before the Sanhedrin. They stood up for the truth and courageously professed whose name it was that gave them the authority to heal that crippled man. **"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that this man stands before you healed, He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone."** The Pharisees and Sadducees regarded Jesus of Nazareth as worth nothing. This God-Man whom they rejected as a member of God's Church, God made as the very foundation upon which the Church is built. Peter and John stood on that foundation as they confessed, **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."**

If you ever travel Wisconsin go to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon. Stand in front of the

arch. Look at the lower right-hand side of that arch. There you will see a cornerstone. It is exposed on two sides. On one side dates are inscribed. On the other side are inscribed the words, "Sola gratia, sola scriptura, sola fide." -- Translated by grace alone, by scripture alone and by faith alone. What a beautiful picture. The school where our future pastors are instructed to teach and preach God's Word rests on the doctrine that we are saved by grace alone, scripture alone and faith alone. Peter and John stood on those same foundational truths when they proclaimed, **Salvation is found in no one else**. Jesus is the only one who gives you grace, who reveal his scriptures to you, who gave you your faith. The foundation of your faith, your witness, your salvation, your eternity is Jesus' name. What is Jesus' name? His name is everything he has revealed about himself in the scriptures. His name is what he is. Jesus means "He saves." It is what he has done that saves us. He lived. He died. He rose. His perfect life rescued us from our imperfect life of timidity and fear in witnessing. His death paid for the sins we committed when we've denied his name by not witnessing. His resurrection destroyed the death our sins earned for us.

This is the foundation your witness rests upon. Upon Jesus' name all of our teachings rest. Upon him rests our confidence and boldness as we witness him our Risen Savior. Upon him we lean when we become weary in witnessing, when we are scared or afraid or don't know what to say. We can walk forward and speak with boldness, knowing our foundation, the words we speak, are truth, and they are unshakable, unmovable. As much as it pains me to say it, that cornerstone at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary will not last forever. Someone may accidentally drive their car into it. The harsh northern winters may cause it to crack or crumble over time. But the truths that those words profess will stand forever. Your solid foundation, Jesus, will never crack, never be destroyed. When you are called to speak publicly, your knees may shake, but stand tall, stand firm. Be bold in your witness. You stand on the solid foundation of Jesus' name.

So, would you like to go on an evangelism visit with me, or teach Bible Class for me sometime, or read the sermon while I'm out-of-town? Is public speaking not your thing? Do you get clammy hands and perspiration down your back, knocking knees and stammering tongue? That's ok. Sometimes I do too. Even though you may be nervous, when you speak publicly for Jesus, be bold. Fill up with the Holy Spirit. He'll give you the right words to say. Stand firm, you have a solid foundation. Amen.