

Scripture Reading:

Acts 4:23 “And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. **24** So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, **25** who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things? **26** The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.' **27** 'For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together **28** to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done. **29** Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, **30** by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.'" **31** And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

"The Saints Pray for Boldness"

Well, if I had gone to the wrong seminary and learned that it was important to begin a sermon with a joke to put everyone at ease and make connection with the audience, this week would be easy...I would just tell you that I REALLY had to pray about this sermon!

Of course those chuckles illustrate the struggle we all have in this area: When I was very busy before last weekend with the new Johnson home renovation, many asked me on Sunday how I managed to have time to prepare the sermon for Sunday: Now I could have said that I really prayed about that trusting the Holy Spirit or I could have told folks how I planned ahead knowing it was going to be a long week and stayed up a little later and woke a little earlier to work on the sermon.

Now of course both of these are true, but we seem to neglect or chuckle at the first and focus on the second... Both are dangerous because we can easily be presumptuous about praying and not do the work that God calls us to do and it is also easy to be proud wanting everyone, to know just how smart we are in doing the work of the Kingdom!

Sadly I can tell you that I explained the second part to everyone that asked and I don't think I ever mentioned the first.

➤ So we have some lessons to learn from these early Saints!

For the past two weeks we have studied the first trial that the Apostles faced before the religious leaders of Jerusalem.

Peter and John had carried out the command of Jesus to be witnesses for Him in Jerusalem.

➤ The miracle they performed in the name of Jesus and Peter's sermon got them in a lot of trouble!

Peter and John had to stand before the very leaders who condemned Jesus to death and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate in the very court where Jesus stood.

They are threatened and released for fear of the people, and they immediately return to the other Apostles and Saints to recount what had happened.

This morning we will focus on how they all turned to the Lord in prayer...

- **‘We will learn from these Saints when and how to pray!**

We must remember that these are lessons that will help us in life when we face problems...

- **AND we need to remember this should be how we handle problems big and small!**

We will see again, how we are to follow the Apostle Paul’s admonition to “be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” ... First Luke tells us that when they heard the report from Peter and John that they ‘raised their voice to God with one accord and said.’ Some have tried to argue that this means they recited a prayer in unison but it is more likely the same as our great prayers during the service...

- **Or at least what our Great Prayer should be like!**

When we reach the point in the worship service where we present our gifts and lift up our prayers, we do so as those who have been cleansed by Jesus and prepared by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word so that our gifts and prayers are acceptable to our Holy God.

- **IF we are functioning as a body of believers who understands this, then it could be said that at that point in the service, we raise our voice to God with one accord.’**

Yes, one of our men is up front praying, but we should all be agreeing in prayer so we are all praying in one accord.

- **Just as when we sing as a congregation during the service, we are ALL participating, we are not just spectators!**

If you have not been praying along with the leader of the great prayer so we are all of one accord, this would be a good week to start. And parents, our covenant children need to learn this as well from a young age...

- **The grace prayed before you meals and prayers at family devotions are good places to start!**

It is interesting to note that these Saints do not begin by addressing God as Father... There is certainly nothing wrong with going to our Father in heaven in prayer, but we need to learn that this is not the only way Saints in the Old or New Testaments begin their prayers.

Here the Saints begin by saying, Lord You are God!

- **It would be good for us to often begin our prayers with Lord God Almighty**
- **It is good to remember that our Father in heaven is the Lord God Almighty!**

The Saints continue by saying He is the God who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them! OK, now let’s be honest:

- **When was the last time that you began your prayer by addressing God as the Creator, the Creator of all things?**

This was not uncommon in the prayers we see in the Scriptures nor has it been uncommon down through Church history... I think the fact it is seldom prayed today is one of the evil fruits borne by the confusion that evolution has wrought.

- **To think Biblically is to remember that God is the creator and sustainer of all that is and this impacts how we see things.**
- **To think “scientifically” is to remember that all has evolved and that everything in the world simply follows natural laws. This too impacts how we see things.**

In the first case, we see a beautiful sunrise and can honestly say thank you Lord... Not thanking Him that He established natural laws long ago that are still working well, but thanking Him that He once again brought the sun forth in a beautiful and magnificent way!

- The patterns and working of the sun are reliable because God is reliable, not because of any natural law within itself.

If God wants to change the course of the sun, as He did a couple of times in Biblical history, then He is free to do so and we should be in awe of such power!

- This is the very point of beginning a prayer by acknowledging God as the creator!

On the other hand, if we are functional materialists who believe everything just goes along as it must then we slowly lose the trust we should have that God is in control.

Now lets consider the positive impact of such a salutation in our prayers... IF we are going to God in prayer because we have a problem, what better way to remember that God is the one who can solve the problem than to recall that He made heaven and earth and everything in them!

- Who or what could have more power?

This is certainly how the Saints in the Old Testament prayed as well... We should remember from our study of Nehemiah that after the Temple was restored and the walls rebuilt that Ezra read the law and then the Levites lead the people in prayer to confess their sins.

Here is how they began that prayer: "'Stand up and bless Jehovah your God Forever and ever! "Blessed be Your glorious name, Which is exalted above all blessing and praise! 6 You alone are Jehovah; You have made heaven, The heaven of heavens, with all their host, The earth and everything on it, The seas and all that is in them, And You preserve them all. The host of heaven worships You."

- God created all and their covenant God preserves all!
- Nothing is outside of His control and NO problem is too big for Him to solve!

Listen to how King Hezekiah responded to the threats from the Assyrians in Isaiah chapter 37:

" 15 Then Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, saying: 16 "O Jehovah of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. 17 Incline Your ear, O Jehovah, and hear; open Your eyes, O Jehovah, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God."

King Hezekiah asks for help from the creator and his covenant God responds by sending an angel to kill 185,000 Assyrians, sending their king home in a humble defeat.

As Jeremiah struggles to understand what God is doing with Israel as they are about to be cast into exile, he turns to the Lord in prayer in chapter 32 where again we see God addressed as the creator:

"16 "Now when I had delivered the purchase deed to Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed to the Lord, saying: 17 'Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. There is nothing too hard for You. 18 You show lovingkindness to thousands, and repay the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them--the Great, the Mighty God, whose name is Jehovah of hosts. 19 You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings."

We could find many examples in the Psalms of remembering God as the creator, but listen to these comforting words from Psalm 146:

“5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in Jehovah his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. Jehovah gives freedom to the prisoners.”

And lest we think this is just Old Testament stuff, listen to the cry of the angel in Revelation 14:

“6 Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth--to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.”

The everlasting Gospel is to be preached to the nations of the earth:

- Peter and John were following the command of Jesus to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria and finally to the ends of the earth.

The religious leaders had told them to stop and they knew they could not!

- Now they continue on in their prayer, where they appeal to the all powerful God who created heaven and earth and all they contain, to carry out His will:

They do so by quoting a Psalm that we will sing as part of our commissioning this morning...

They remind God that, “by the mouth of Your servant David [you] have said: 'Why did the nations rage, And the people plot vain things?

26 The kings of the earth took their stand, And the rulers were gathered together Against the Lord and against His Christ.”

- Their prayer, recorded by Luke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit goes on to make it perfectly clear that this is not some future event that takes place after the Church is raptured...

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.”

The kingdoms of this earth are arraigned against the Lord and His Messiah Jesus, but they can do nothing that does not carry out the express will of God... Just as Jesus had explained to Pilate!

These Saints have appealed to God as the creator to carry out His will as was revealed in His Scriptures...

- This is truly a powerful prayer and one that we should imitate.

Next we should consider what their petition was:

- It was NOT an attack on the powers that abused them
- It was not even a prayer calling for their destruction

They asked God to take note of the objections raised by their enemies and then to give them more boldness!

- Sometimes we are SO focused on the problem that we fail to work for the solution!

We don't like the abuses we see today in the government, but spend more time complaining about what is wrong than we do working for something better, praying that God would give us the boldness to do so!

We don't like the state of the Church today, but spend more time complaining about and pointing out the problems it has than we do working with the Spirit to prepare the Bride of Jesus for His royal return.

We don't like various relationships we are in, like a marriage or a boss, but we spend much more time complaining about the other person than we do working on our own sanctification.

These disciples do not get distracted by the sins of these religious leaders:

- **They ask for more boldness!**

The religious leaders had seen the boldness of Peter and John, now they pray for more boldness and verse 31 we see them continuing to speak the Word of God with boldness! Boldness is a major theme in the Book of Acts and it is where Luke will end with Paul "proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."

- **If we don't understand where the Spirit is taking the Church and see the many examples of boldness here in the early Church, it will seem like a strange ending for an exciting book.**

The disciples pray for boldness to speak, for more miracles to occur as signs and wonders to establish the Kingdom of Jesus and all of this is to be done through the name of God's Holy Servant Jesus!

- **Calling on God the creator, to carry out His will regarding His Son Jesus is a powerful prayer and we see this in the response where the place where they were praying shook!**
- **Then they were filled with the Spirit, just as Peter had been earlier, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness.**

Such should be our prayer for the Church today! For Church of the King and the Church universal around the world: We must learn to pray as these Saints did here in Acts chapter 4!

We must practice this in our individual prayer lives:

- **IF we do not have time to pray each day, that is something that needs to change!**

This can be taught and practiced in our family prayers:

- **As I mentioned, it is here that our children begin to learn what it means to pray with one accord as someone else leads in prayer**

They can begin to remember that God is the creator as Mom or Dad refer to God as the creator of heaven and earth and all that they contain when they bring their needs before His throne in prayer!

Even a blessing said over a meal can be instructive, teaching children to be thankful for what God provides and even teaching some lessons:

[give example of Dennis's prayer]

Finally, we must learn to pray more powerfully as a Church:

- **Praying with one accord as one leads us in the Great prayer each week.**

Praying seriously the Lord's Prayer that Jesus Himself taught us...

- Hallowing the name of God**
- Believing that God wants His will carried out on earth as it is in heaven.**
- Believing the creator of all things provides our daily bread**
- Believing Jesus the Messiah has forgiven us of our sins & learning in response to extend mercy to others.**
- Believing that Jesus has crushed the head of Satan and can protect His sheep**
- Remembering and believing that God's is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever!**
 - Yes, the Kingdom of Jesus is going to fill the earth & we should be praying toward that end.**

It is here that we learn to bring our lives and actions in line with God's power as the creator and in line with His revealed will...

- Remembering that God's priority is the advancement of His Son's Kingdom!**

May that be our prayer today and everyday until we see what Isaiah foretold...

- That " the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea.!"**

Communion Meditation: Psalm 146:

"1 Praise Jehovah! Praise Jehovah, O my soul! 2 While I live I will praise Jehovah; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, Nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help. 4 His spirit departs, he returns to his earth; In that very day his plans perish. 5 Happy is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose hope is in the Lord his God, 6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps truth forever, 7 Who executes justice for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry. Jehovah sets the prisoners free."