

April 13, 2008

## No One Else

Today we continue our journey; a journey through the book of Acts. A journey that follows the growth of the early Christian church. It's a journey that began on Easter Sunday when Christ rose from the dead through His death and resurrection we, who are lost in our sins, are given new hope and life if we put our faith in Him. Through His death and resurrection Christ also validated that He was and is the Messiah and worthy of our praise. Through His death, resurrection and giving of the Holy Spirit His disciples were transformed and began to preach and spread the Gospel message. In our first sermon we saw Peter address the crowd at Pentecost 3,000 people were baptized that day and the early Christian church was born. The characteristics of this church were given in Acts 2:42 where Luke writes, "They (the new church) devoted themselves to the apostles teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Last week we saw that the early church "ate together with glad and sincere hearts praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people and the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." The early church was devoted to Bible study, to worship in church together, to eating together practicing communion, to prayer and to praising God. This was their relationship with each other and with God. Today we follow Peter and John out into the streets into the temple and into their life in what they saw as their mission field.

In Acts 3 Peter and John go to the temple for the afternoon prayers. It was about 3:00 pm. There was a man over 40 years old there a man who was a cripple from birth. He asked Peter and John for money. Peter looked at the man and said, "Look at us." Now this was most unusual cripples were considered to be steeped in sin their condition was a result of their sin. They dared not look at people they were to hang their heads in shame yet Peter gives this man worth. He doesn't reach down or get down to this man's level and look him in his eye he makes the man lift his head to look up and be at Peter's level. The man looked up Luke says, "Expecting to get something." Boy was he in for a surprise. Peter then spoke and said, "Silver of gold I do not have but what I have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk." Then, like Jesus, he got very personal he touched the man. He reached out to the man and helped him up. What a miracle and what a response, a response from first the man. He followed them into the temple walking, jumping and praising God there is great joy in

this man. Why? Well of course because he can walk but it's so much more than that he could now go into the temple before this he couldn't he had to sit at the outside and beg for money. It makes me think back to Easter remember that story about the teacher who took the desks out of the class and used that as an object lesson for the students to understand that none of them had earned the right to sit in their desks? The blood of veterans of war paid for those desks. Likewise our presence here as children of God in God's house was paid for we don't earn it; it was paid for by the blood of Christ. Our membership in His family is a gift we should embrace this opportunity, we should rejoice in this opportunity, we should never forsake this opportunity. The cripple was given the same gift and he was rejoicing because he could go to church. Wow now that's a response to getting up and going to church.

That's not the only response there was also a response from the people. Luke records, "They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." There was a response by Peter he gives his second sermon and it's a beauty. You can find it in Acts chapter 3 beginning at verse 11 and going all the way to the end of the chapter. But following Peter's sermon and the healing of this man there's then a second response of the people; they believed. Luke records, "the number of believers grew to 5,000 men." You might look at that and question is Luke being a male chauvinist pig? No he's just being practical. In Chapter 2 there were 3,000 people baptized after Peter's first sermon. One chapter, one miracle, one sermon later the church is growing fast and now they're just counting the men there's already 5,000 the actual number of the church has well exceeded 10,000 by this time.

Finally there was another response to this healing to this sermon. There was a response from the temple authorities. Luke records, "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 that 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 until the next day." Why? Why would they do this? Luke gives us a clue and he lists who did this he said it was the priests, the captain of the guard and the Sadducees. The Sadducees as you remember did not believe in life after death or in a resurrection. The Sadducees were a religious sect that came from the priestly line and it is the Sadducees who controlled the temple. Now you might notice something there. They are a religious sect that came from the priestly line likewise the captain of the guard was also a member of a

leading priestly family. In fact, he was next in rank to the high priest and we have the priests coming so this is a family affair. It's the relatives getting together, the religious relatives getting together the priestly family getting together and they are talking amongst themselves and they are getting pretty upset because of what Peter and John are saying. They're saying we killed Jesus and so their response; well they control the temple. They arrest Peter and John and put them in prison until the next day. Why put them in prison until the next day? Because their law says that they couldn't put someone on trial at night for a capital offense. Funny isn't it. They follow the law now that there are crowds of people around but just a couple of weeks earlier when they arrested Jesus in private in the Garden of Gethsemane they had no problem putting him on trial at night. The next morning the priests, captain of the guard and the Sadducees call Peter and John into court and they ask, "By what power and name did you do this?" Luke records, "Then Peter filled with the Holy Spirit," this is what Jesus promised in our Gospel this morning in Luke 21. Listen carefully again to what Jesus said to his disciples, "they will lay hands on you and persecute you, they will deliver you to the synagogues and prisons, you'll be brought before kings and governors all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them but make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves for I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict."

So Peter filled and guided by the Holy Spirit responds and says, "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." It's not a politically correct answer but it's the truth and he continues, "salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Now that's really not politically correct. I find it ironic I was studying this scripture this past week and I got an e-mail it had a link to it to YouTube it was Oprah Winfrey. I'll quote Oprah on what she said, "One of the mistakes that human beings make is believing that there is only one way to live and we don't accept that there are diverse ways of being in the world. That there are millions of ways to being a human being and many ways, many paths to what you call God." She was then asked, "What about Jesus?" Her response was, "What about Jesus? There couldn't possibly be just one way." She went on to say, "God is a feeling experience not a

believing experience.” Oprah Winfrey says what about Jesus? There couldn't possibly be just one way. St. Peter filled with the Holy Spirit says salvation is found in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Jesus himself said, “I am the way, the truth and the life no one comes to the Father except through me.” May we like the early Christians see through the clutter of religious garbage that exists today may we simply believe there is no one else there is only Jesus God's answer to a fallen world.