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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
June 12, 2016
4th Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Genesis 17:1-9; Matthew 5:1-6

Hymns: 239; 383; 245; 51

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Acts 4:1-12

Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, ²being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they laid hands on them, and put *them* in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

⁵And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, ⁶as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. ⁷And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. ¹¹This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.' ¹²Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

(NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, our living Lord, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: It's time to consider "the rest of the story."

Last Sunday we considered the beginning of the story. We heard about the man that had been lame since birth who customarily sat at the temple gate begging alms from those who entered. We learned how Peter and John, as they entered the temple, brought this lame man something far more precious than a few small coins that might buy him a day's ration of bread. Calling upon the name of Jesus, Peter took hold of the lame man's hand, lifted him to his feet, which were immediately straightened and strengthened so that for the very first time in his life he was able to walk. He accompanied Peter and John into the temple, leaping in joy, praising and blessing God. We learned from that of the healing power of Jesus' name. Jesus is indeed a living power among us also.

That was the beginning of the story. It continued with Peter and John having a wondrous opportunity to preach Jesus to the crowds that were assembled at the temple that day. The miracle of the healing of the lame man captured everyone's attention, and Peter and John were not about to take any credit for themselves in this matter. They directed the people to Jesus who had died on the cross and rose again the third day. The people paid attention, and the Spirit worked in people's hearts. Yes, this preaching of Jesus as our crucified and resurrected Lord caused quite a stir that day, and the truth was clearly presented that all might know --

THEME: Jesus: the Name that Saves!

This commotion in the temple was noted by the chief priests; they summoned the temple guard and together they went to investigate what this was all about. What they discovered was that Jesus is --

I. The Name that Cannot Be Suppressed.

More than anything the chief priests wanted to shut this down. The chief priests were Sadducees, a religious order but also very political since the High Priest was the leading Jewish political figure. The Sadducees were very pragmatic in their beliefs and in their teachings. They did not believe in heaven or hell. They did not believe in angels or other spirit beings. They did not believe in a “hereafter.” They certainly did not believe in the resurrection from the dead.

To have these men who had been disciples of Jesus declaring that Jesus who they knew had died on the cross, (they had made sure of that) that this Jesus was **resurrected**, that was intolerable to them! To declare that it was this Jesus who had given them the power to heal this lame man -- this had to stop! Peter and John were taken into custody and held overnight since it was already evening, (meaning it was after 3:00 p.m.) and a meeting of the Jewish council could hardly be called before nightfall.

Peter and John were arrested and held for preaching salvation in the name of Jesus! That is pretty decisive action to suppress the name of Jesus. However the name of Jesus **cannot be suppressed!** The Holy Spirit makes that clear by reporting:

Acts 4:4 “However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.”

This is substantial growth over the three thousand that had come to faith on Pentecost. Some of those had been pilgrims for the Pentecost festival and would have traveled home again. The number of believers in Jesus in Jerusalem, in that one congregation reached five thousand men. Typically they didn’t include women and children in their counts, so the total number of believers would have been substantially larger. The number was large enough for anyone to take note and understand that this message about Jesus, the preaching that was being done in Jesus’ name, was taking hold of many hearts and calling multitudes to repentance.

However, the attempt to suppress this preaching in the name of Jesus had only begun. The next morning there was an assembly of all the Jewish rulers, and elders and scribes, and the whole family of the High Priest. Annas, was the former High Priest, Caiaphas the

current High Priest, John was to be the next High Priest following Caiaphas; all these and more powerful figures among the Jews were assembled in the council room in the temple, and lowly Peter and John, a couple of uneducated Galilean fisherman were called to stand before this assembly. This was the very same assembly that had condemned Jesus, and Peter and John were called upon to explain themselves to them, and just how it was that they had done this miracle.

Acts 4:7 “And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, ‘By what power or by what name have you done this?’”

This was not an innocent question. The entire council knew exactly what had happened the day before. This was all about intimidation. They wanted these two simple low country fishermen to try to make a defense for their actions and words. The question implied that some mystical or magical or even demonic power had been used to heal this man in an attempt to perpetrate a fraud, to mislead people into believing that Jesus had risen and was the Christ.

In every continent in the world the powers of this world are being used in different ways in an attempt to suppress the name of Jesus. In Asia imprisonment and execution is happening. Government sponsored persecution is happening in northern India, also in Nepal where there is a new communist government in charge. It is reported also in Myanmar where many have lost their lives in the past year for declaring the name of Jesus, and the eternal life that is found **in His name**. In China, where there are claims of some religious tolerance, entire congregations are arrested and held for a time for illegal assembly, and some pastors are imprisoned for years. In the Middle East and north Africa we have all heard the reports of the execution of Christians, but many thousands more have been driven from their homes, have had their daughters stolen for Muslim wives, or have been forced to pay protection money to continue to live in their homes as Christians.

To even tell you that Muslims are systematically persecuting Christians is against the law in some western democracies where political correctness is used to suppress the truth of God and restrict the preaching of Jesus’ name. And we cringe at being mocked or ridiculed. In so many American churches the message

has been compromised, adapted to the philosophy of this world. This is described as tolerance, but tolerance only for immorality and blasphemy, and not for the truth of the gospel. Those who adhere to God's truth, calling for repentance are characterized as narrow minded bigots. Maybe the result is that we do think twice before we share our faith with a neighbor, or even a friend or relative. The name of Jesus is not to be suppressed.

The name of Jesus cannot be suppressed. If we do not speak of the things that we have heard and seen, as Peter and John told the Jewish council, then the Lord will have another do it in our place, to our shame. The name of Jesus must not be suppressed for it is --

II. The ONLY Name that Saves.

Peter and John were not intimidated.

Acts 4:8-12 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: ⁹ If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, ¹⁰ let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. ¹¹ This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ ¹² Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.’”

Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit! The Spirit emboldened Peter to speak before this prestigious council. He laid it on the line, if the council was going to attempt to make something evil of the good thing that had been done for the lame man, well Peter and John would let them and all Israel know exactly whose power had performed this wonder. **It was Jesus!** The leaders of the Jews may have despised and rejected Jesus, they may even have misled the people of Israel so that looking for a worldly Messiah they also turned away from the Lord Jesus. Indeed they did crucify Jesus, **but God raised Jesus from the dead!**

The death and resurrection of Jesus is a powerful truth that forms the foundation of the Church, the foundation of our faith, the

foundation of our very salvation. By Jesus' resurrection the Scriptures were fulfilled, and God made the stone which the builders rejected the chief cornerstone. Jesus is the Rock of our salvation. We know that Jesus was delivered up because of our offenses (Romans 4:25). Yes, it was for crimes that I have done that Jesus groaned upon the tree of the cross, and suffered torments of soul as well as body. He bore the curse of God for me as He languished in those dark hours. He shed His precious blood as the ransom price of my soul so that I am free of any and all debt of sin. And then this Jesus who was delivered up for my offenses was raised again for my justification (Romans 4:25). God has declared us to be righteous and just before Him. This declaration is good for all men, for Jesus was not only the propitiation for my sins, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and He has committed to us this ministry of reconciliation, so then we are called by God to plead with others that they should be reconciled to God by the death of His Son (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). **It is all about the name of Jesus.**

People like to think about notable people that die always going to heaven. Doesn't matter what religion they were. Prince died. So many started in about how he was now in a better place, doesn't matter that he was a devout Jehovah Witness and didn't believe in the name of Jesus. Mohamed Ali died, and people assembled from different religions and everyone had fine things to say about the former boxing champion. None of that gets him or anyone into heaven. Neither does dying in tragic circumstances, or as a victim of a terrible crime or act of terror.

That's true for the people you know and care about too. We should love all souls so that we join with the Lord in His desire that all should be saved, but only Jesus makes it happen. The fact that you love someone, or know that this someone is a nice person, none of that is going to save their souls. Neither is wishful thinking. **"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved"** (v.12).

Jesus' name is the name that saves. Jesus' name is the only name that saves. He who believes in Jesus **MUST** be saved! What a marvel of grace is found in these words. Jesus, only Jesus can bring

us salvation for His righteousness alone avails before God. Since His righteousness name does avail before God all those who put their trust in Jesus, in His death and His resurrection, will rise to everlasting life. Know it. Speak it. Live it. People's eternal lives depend upon it.

AMEN.

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)