

16th Sunday after Pentecost September 25, 2022

ONLY BY THE NAME OF JESUS...

Acts 4:8-20

Scripture Readings

Deuteronomy 4:23-31 Matthew 21:33-46

Hymns

360, 465, Worship Supplement 2000 #767, WS #769

Hymns from The Lutheran Hymnal (1941) unless otherwise noted

+ *In the Name of Jesus Christ* +

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: “If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, “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. “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it. But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, saying, “What shall we do to these men? For, indeed, that a notable miracle has been done through them is evident to all who dwell in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. “But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name.”

And they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”

In the name of Christ Jesus, the Name that is above every name, the Name at which every knee shall bow, dear fellow redeemed,

“Ivan Zarlino. Vicki Loomis. Jack Everett.” Names mean something. When we hear a name, we don’t just think of the letters used to spell that name, but we think of the whole person and everything we know about them. What about names like “Adolf Hitler,” “Charles Manson,” “Ted Bundy,” or “Jeffrey Dahmer?” These are individuals whose names make us shudder because of the horrific thing which they did. Things so horrific, that we’d rather that their names be blotted from our memories so that we did not have to think about it.

What about the name, “Jesus?” What comes to mind when you hear His name? In our text, we find two groups of people. One group, the Jewish council in Jerusalem, despise the name of Jesus so much that they don’t even want to take His name on their lips. In verse 16 they refer to the name of Jesus as “*this name.*” You see, only months earlier this same group of religious leaders thought they were done hearing the name of Jesus when they had Him crucified. Dead and buried, they thought they were done hearing “*this name.*”

The other group of men in our text view the name of Jesus very differently. To them, “Jesus” is the name above all names. His name is the one name which must never fade into distant memory, but must continue to be proclaimed throughout all the world. This morning let us remind ourselves of how only in connection with Jesus are the lame made whole, the sinner saved, and the witness is equipped to share His name with others. May God the Holy Spirit help us to take the name of Jesus with us!

1) ...ARE THE LAME MADE WHOLE

For over forty years, begging was the only life the man in our text had known. Because there was no such thing as “Social Security Disability Payments,” or “Para-Transit,” he was dependant on the charity of others. You see, this man had been born lame—unable to walk. And now in his 40’s, physically incapable of working, he was dependant on the kindness of others. Every day he needed to be carried to the entrance of the Temple, where he would beg for money from the church-goers.

On the day before our text, two men approached the Temple and made eye contact with him. Since they actually looked at him, he was optimistic of his chances for alms. But the charitable act of these men went beyond a few coins for his coffer. Peter said to him, “*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*” (Acts 3:6) Holy Scripture records that IMMEDIATELY his feet and ankle bones received strength. This man in his 40’s, who had never been able to walk before, began leaping and praising God.

This is the act of kindness that Peter and John are being questioned about in our text. The Jewish Council could not deny that an amazing miracle had taken place. The many Temple worshipers that day had seen this lame beggar and now he is jumping around the Temple grounds and praising God with a loud voice. How did this happen?

Peter does not put his own name forward as a great miracle worker or faith healer. No, he is very clear about how this happened. “*Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stand here before you whole.*” Without Jesus, that man would have still been carried around the city and begging for alms at the entrance to the Temple. But by the name of Jesus, that lame man was made whole.

Jesus makes the lame, whole. He has done it for us. We were born spiritual lame, unable to walk in God’s ways. We were spiritual beggars, on the outside of God’s church, waiting for someone to have mercy on us. Jesus Christ has made you whole. Matthew reminds us of how Isaiah prophesied of Jesus, “*He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses.*” (Mt 8:17) Jesus took our

sin-sickness on Himself and healed us, made us whole. ***“By HIS wounds, we are healed,”*** Isaiah writes (Is 53:5— NIV).

Jesus gives you rest from the troubles and guilt of the past as He assures you that your sins are all forgiven. He gives you purpose in life as He calls you “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth.” As the light of the world, He calls on you to let the light of your faith shine, that others may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. He gives you hope for the future as He assures you that all who live and believe in Him, even though they may die physically, they shall live eternally with Him in heaven. By the name of Jesus Christ, we have been made whole! Let us leap for joy and praise God with our whole lives!

2) ARE SINNERS SAVED

When Zion Lutheran Church in Ipswich, South Dakota, was built in the 1960's, there was a great deal of stone work done. In the days of construction, the members would drive an hour West to the shores of the Missouri River to pick stones. They were very careful in their stone selection. The stones had to look beautiful enough to be used in their sanctuary. Some stones were rejected because they just weren't right. The ones they thought would work in their church were brought back to Ipswich and used for the front of their altar, pulpit, and lectern.

Months prior to our text, this same Jewish Council had rejected a stone. Under the cover of darkness they had arrested Jesus of Nazareth, put Him on a trial, condemned Him as a blasphemer, and handed Him over to be crucified. Peter is very pointed in our text, ***“Whom YOU crucified.”*** They had rejected this stone because they did not want the name of Jesus to be a part of their church.

Peter continues in verse 11, ***“This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’”*** As prophesied in Psalm 118, they tried to toss this stone out of Jerusalem to be rid of Him, by crucifying and burying Him. But their plan did not work. ***“Whom God raised from the dead,”*** Peter testifies. “Jesus” is not the name of a dead prophet like Moses or Mohammed. No, Jesus lives. The stone they rejected is the chief cornerstone of the Church. From the cornerstone of Christ, the foundation of the apostles and prophets go out. From Christ, the Church is built up. Without this stone there is no church.

“Jesus” was a name this Jewish Council did not want to hear anymore. But Jesus is a name that must be proclaimed. Peter continues, ***“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”*** There is no other name that gives salvation— not Bhudda, not Allah, not Abraham, Steve, or Nathan. Only by the name of Jesus is there salvation for the sinner.

Note well, the certainty of Peter: ***“by which we MUST be saved.”*** Note also the pronoun Peter uses, ***“WE.”*** Peter is placing himself right along side the rulers who crucified Jesus. WE have sinned; WE have fallen short of God's glory; WE need a Savior. Salvation in Jesus is not a question, it is not in doubt. By the name of Jesus there most certainly is salvation. He is the only answer for sinners. Only His death ransomed us to God. Only He has been raised from the dead for our justification. Only by faith in His name, shall we not perish but have everlasting life. Only by His name are sinners saved!

3) ARE WE EQUIPPED TO WITNESS

The religious leaders were amazed. They realized that Peter and John had not gone to rabbi or scribe school. They were uneducated and untrained men. How can this be? How could these uneducated fishermen be so bold in their witness of the risen Savior to these enemies of Christ? How could they know Scripture so well? How could they be so certain of salvation by Jesus? How can we be so bold and certain in witnessing the name of Jesus to others?

Two things I direct your attention to in our text. First, take a look at verse 8. We read that Peter was, ***“Filled with the Holy Spirit.”*** In Luke 12:11-12 we read that this is exactly what Jesus promised His apostles, ***“Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”***

Jesus has promised this same heavenly Helper to you. Comparing how our earthly fathers tried their best to give us what we ask for, Jesus says, ***“How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”*** (Luke 11:13) Pray to the Father, asking Him to give you the Holy Spirit to give you boldness in telling the name of Jesus to others!

The next thing I direct your attention to is found in verse 13. As the council marveled at the boldness of these uneducated men, we read, ***“And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”*** They were bold and certain in their witness because they had spent nearly three years with Jesus. He Himself taught them about the Kingdom of God. He is the one that told them, ***“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*** (John 14:6) They had dined with the risen Lord. They had spent those 40 days after Easter with Him, hearing more about things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

“They realized they had been with Jesus.” Spending time with Jesus equips us for sharing His name with others. Now, we don’t have the privilege of walking and talking with Jesus, but we do have something just as powerful—we have His almighty Word. We have the Old Testament, of which Jesus says, ***“these are they which testify of Me.”*** (John 5:39) When you read through the Old Testament, you get to be with Jesus. When you read through the four Gospels, you spend time with Jesus as you hear of the teachings and mighty acts which He did. When you read through the rest of the New Testament, you learn of how the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ affects your salvation and your daily life.

Names mean something. The names of our parents or our children are very dear to us. But can there be any sweeter name to our ears, than the name of Jesus? He is the one who makes us whole. By His name we must be saved. Gathered in His name, around His Word, He Himself equips us to tell His name to others.

*May every heart confess Thy name and ever Thee adore
And, seeking Thee, itself inflame to seek Thee more and more!
Thee may our tongues forever bless, Thee may we love alone,
And ever in our lives express the image of Thine own! AMEN (TLH #361:4-5)*

—Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer

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