

Hand Bibles out before Dawn does the readings - remind people of the liturgy
The grass withers & the flowers fade, *but the Word of our God lasts forever*

Acts 4:1-31

This immediately follows the events of ch3 - Peter and John are used by God to bring healing to a man with a lifelong disability.

This action sparks 3 reactions: it brings

joy to the man (walking, leaping and praising God 3:8)

amazement from the people (10-11)

opportunity for Peter to preach the good news of Jesus to the crowd 12-26

In the midst of these different reactions there is a fourth response brewing. "great annoyance" Acts 4:2 (very disturbed NIV) The church of Jesus Christ experienced its first taste of persecution.

They "came upon them" and arrested them and threw them in jail.

This seems to be a quick and a forceful event; he wasn't summoned to court, he was *grabbed* and *dragged*. **Picture it:** imagine you are part of the crowd, the emotions, the man leaping on ankles that had never worked before - the explanatory sermon, which is piercing you to the very heart.,, Jesus is the promised One, the crucified One, the risen One, and (according to Peter in v26) He was sent for ME. God sent Jesus to bless ME, by turning me from my wickedness and towards Him in the act of repentance and faith.

Now it isn't just the formerly paralysed man that is leaping, your heart is leaping as well. Peter is preaching to a crowd of thousands, but its as if he's speaking just to you - and just when you are about to shout to him "brother, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37) the temple guard rushes in, picks him up and drags him away!

what was that all about?

While the focus of the rest of the chapter is what takes place in the prison and in the court, v4 points out that it was not a defeat. There was a great harvest of souls, and many men and women trusted in Jesus for salvation on that day.

Though the day ended badly for Peter and John, *it did not end badly* for the proclamation of the gospel. even with two prominent leaders of the infant church behind bars, the church didn't stop growing!

The saducees could arrest the apostles, but it could not hinder the word of God.

"I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!" (2 Timothy 2:9)

Jerusalem is ground zero for the rapidly growing "Jesus Movement" - Just as an unborn baby is rapidly developing and growing within the womb in the early weeks and months after its conception - so too the baby church at Jerusalem is rapidly growing and developing, preparing to be unleashed on the world at large in chapters 8,9,10 and following.

But persecution is taking place. Two of its leaders are spending a night in prison (and probably the healed man as well v14) and they are going to stand trial first thing in the morning when the Sanhedrin is able to assemble to cast judgment on them.

v5-6 they gather together in semi circle with Peter John & the formerly crippled man in the centre. We have familiar characters (Annas Ciaphas etc)- those who featured prominently in the trial and condemnation of Jesus. So we have little to no assurance that things are going to go well for His followers at their hands

imagine the fear inducing concentric circles of power surrounding the 3 powerless men. *what would you do?* John didn't run, Peter didn't deny that he knew Jesus ever again.

by what power or by what name do you do this? v7

remember; they asked Jesus the same thing about what authority He cleansed the temple in. they were concerned about power structures and authority.

essentially - "Who do you think you are?"

They are asking questions about authority and power and name, because, in terms of the Temple and Jewish religion, there was no higher earthly authority than the high priest, (who was standing with them)

They ask "by what name did you do this" and Peter answers the question by working through it backwards - he starts by focusing on the "this" that he did; namely; healing the crippled man. He calls it what it is; an act of kindness.

But then he gets to the point - **it was in the name of Jesus**, the name that is above all names. Higher authority than the high priest.

the Apostles defend His name 5-14

Peter didn't seem concerned about what to say; remembering Jesus' words:

"But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. Settle it therefore in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict." (Luke 21:12-15, ESV)

Peter uses the same formula for the 3rd time: You killed Him, but God raised Him from the dead.

Using Psalm 18 he shows them that Jesus is The Stone that was rejected has been promoted / exalted by God.

v12 Jesus is able to save, in fact, He is the only one able to save.

an exclusive claim; but consider what kind of claim that the gospel is: a man (the God - Man) dying for His enemies. This is the most exclusive inclusive truth in the world.

v13

unschooled and ordinary : *agrammatoi & idiotai*

not that they were unable to string a sentence together or develop a thought, but they were not formally trained. They didn't attend the Rabbinical Schools that the rest of the Sanhedrin attended, they never went to seminary or Bible College....

but they could tell that they had been with Jesus (who also lacked a formal theological education)

they were astonished - and rightly so, because it is astonishing that Peter and John were so brave. Even more so considering what we, the readers know, that the priests don't that last month while they were interrogating Jesus, these guys had run off or were making up lies outside, denying that they knew the man. Now, they stand tall in front of them, boldly answering truthfully.

The council oppose His name 15-22

15-17 the council didn't seek the truth, they tried to avoid the truth.

They conferred among themselves: Luke probably found out what the Sanhedrin discussed among themselves because a member of that Sanhedrin later became a Christian: Saul of Tarsus. Acts 26:10 gives us reason to believe Paul (Saul) was a member of the Sanhedrin to cast his vote against the early Christians.

If this is true, we can say that Peter and John had no idea they were preaching to a future apostle and the greatest missionary the church would ever see. It is an example of the truth that we have no idea how greatly God can use us. (or is using us right now!)

19-20 Peter didn't choose his course of action based on the questions "is it popular" or "is it safe" but "is it right?"

also Peter clearly implies that what they say is in opposition to what God says. The official mouthpiece of God was now contradicting God.

The church calls upon His name 23-31

church praying - the greatest concentration of power in jerusalem wasn't at the sanhedrin, but it was in the spontaneous prayer meeting that followed the apostle's release.

They began by reminding themselves who they prayed to.

you made, you spoke, you decided 24, 25, 28

They didn't pray for the persecution to stop - but for power to remain faithful no matter what

Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger men and women.

Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers.

Pray for powers that are equal to your tasks. - Philip Brooks

They don't ask for protection - they asked for power.

They don't ask for fire to come down and destroy their enemies (as John did in Luke 9:51-56)

but for power to heal the sick and preach the gospel.

they know that more persecution is coming, and they ask for strength to bear it.

Filled with the Spirit:

The idea that we are "Spirit filled" only at an experience known as the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit" is wrong, though there may be a wonderful and first yielding to the Spirit's power. We must be continually filled with the Holy Spirit, and make our "immersion" in Him a constant experience.

The place was shaken, and that made them all the more unshakeable. - John Chrysostom

3 takeaways

A church that speaks God's word:

Personally - Looking at the world around us through the lens of scripture. developing a "biblical worldview"

Corporately - being quick to open our bibles with one another, to give a word of encouragement or explanation or gentle rebuke, using God's Word to do so. Scripture is given for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness. 2 Tim 3:17 So lets use it for what it was made for!

What a weak church we would be if I was the only teacher, and if Sunday morning was the only time slot when it was normal or expected that the bible would be opened and it was being explained and applied.

Missionally - There is a world out there that needs what we have. Let's not be shy about it.

v4 it is the people who heard the Word that believed. People who don't hear the word cannot believe.

A church that lifts high the Name of Jesus :

this is not too dissimilar to the first point, because the unified message of the Bible is all about Jesus - but yet there is some unique applications of this.

After the miracle of healing, Peter and John are so quick to point the attention away from themselves and towards Him.

Let's be people that are obsessed with Jesus.

And we do that, not by just chanting His name over and over again, but by really truly thinking about who He is and what He has done for us.

John couldn't get over the fact that He was loved by Jesus.... and he couldn't quit talking about Him.

Peter couldn't get over the fact that He was forgiven by Jesus... and he couldn't quit talking about Him.

what about you?

A name is just a collection of syllables but it has meaning based on relationship. the name of Jesus is so wonderful because of the relationship of love and forgiveness that it signifies.

A church that is filled with Holy Spirit

it should be stated that the Holy Spirit doesn't necessarily fill churches, he fills people.

The promise of Jesus would be that He will send the Holy Spirit, and that it is pointless to try to do ministry without Him.

Subsequent fillings are evidenced here. He is at work in our salvation, we are sealed or even baptised into Him at the moment of our conversion, yet there is more. ROOM FOR MORE. Peter has "received the Holy Spirit" in the upper room in John 21, then again in Acts 2, then again in 3:8, then again in 3:31 - you are never full! Lets obey the commands of Paul (Eph 5) and the example of Peter and the early church and seek a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit - TODAY.