

Epiphany 3
January 24, 2010
Acts 4:23-31

With these Words of God, Jesus again reveals Himself to people, to us too, as God our Savior. There's something different about how our Lord does that in this case as compared to the Scriptures we have considered already this Epiphany season. In this case, Jesus shows that He is the living God through His servants Peter and John and especially by His Word, which they proclaimed and taught.

That Christ's people proclaim Jesus' Word is very, very important, vital, critical. In fact, the main thing here is these particular verses of God's Word is that the believers prayed for boldness to proclaim God's Word. We need to pray for that, too.

We Need to Pray for Boldness to Proclaim God's Word!

Isn't it interesting that these Christians specifically prayed for boldness to tell God's Word?!

It's interesting because clearly they had been doing that. Take Peter and John as good examples of this.

Pentecost Sunday had just recently happened. Though mocked right away, Peter and the other Apostles that day stood in front of thousands, Thousands!, and preached God's law and gospel in a very pointed fashion. The law was so pointed that it cut right to the hearts of the hearers. This all had to do with Jesus and what Jerusalem had done with Jesus and what God had done. God, the Father, the Son (Jesus Himself) and the Holy Spirit, raised Jesus from the dead!

Jesus had assured His followers that they would be treated as their Savior had been. And that was clearly already beginning to happen.

Just the day before, at 3:00 in the afternoon, Peter and John were entering the temple courts to worship. At the gate, lay a man, 40 years of age who had never walked. He'd been born unable to walk. Family or friends placed him there regularly to beg. It was about the only income possible for a person in such a situation in those days.

Peter and John stopped and looked at him. He looked at them thinking they were going to give him some money. Peter said he didn't have any money but he had something else to give. Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." And he did! He walked and he leaped and he started praising God loudly!

That got much attention fast. People from every direction came over to see this thing. Anybody who came to the temple knew this man. They could not help but notice that this suddenly healed man was clinging to Peter and John. And Peter and John started teaching the people all about Jesus. It was Jesus, they said, who had healed this man.

Peter told them Jesus is the Holy and Righteous One, the Author of life. That means Jesus is God. And these people had determined to see Jesus dead, but God raised Him from the dead. Jesus is God in the flesh.

In fact, Peter and John went on for a long time teaching this large group of people, right there in the temple courts, all about Jesus and His work, especially about His resurrection and His blessings of forgiveness and salvation.

Peter and John got arrested in the evening, around sunset, and put into jail. That's right. Peter and John had been teaching between 3:00 and sunset in our month of June. Who arrested them? The same bunch who had arrested Jesus and who had Jesus condemned, that's who!

Wouldn't you call what Peter and John did there in Jerusalem, in the temple courts, bold, courageous, fearless? You bet!

Is it not interesting that their fellow believers prayed that God would make them bold to tell God's Word, even when they had already been bold to do that very thing!?!

They had spent the night in jail. Then they were ordered in court to say no more about Jesus and were threatened. Peter and John said they'd have to disobey that court order!

We sinners can get scared. We can be intimidated. It is not pleasant to be mocked, demeaned, rejected, slandered or threatened. So, it is a temptation, in order to escape this sort of thing, to sip the lips, to say nothing, to be quiet. Suddenly, the argument that religion is a private, personal thing sounds pretty good. In our society, the Bible is rejected as God's Word. In our society, people who believe the Bible because it is God's Word are considered pitifully ignorant or deluded. Today, in our society, you can believe what you want, but if it is faith in Jesus, the Jesus of the Holy Bible, you may not say that it is the only true faith, the only one given by God, the only one that can get anyone everlasting life.

That is exactly what Peter and John believed. They were eye-witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ! It is also exactly what we believe. In fact, we believe that, because Jesus gave us that faith through His Word, the Holy Bible.

What do you think? Are we as bold, courageous, fearless, open, public, outspoken about Jesus as the only Savior from our sin, from death and hell as Peter and John were? Well, maybe some of you are, but I don't think most of us are. So, if they prayed to stay bold at sharing God's Word, surely we should pray for the same thing!

Their prayer included words from Psalm 2, God's Word reminds us how great God is and that no one opposing God, or specifically Jesus Christ, is going to succeed! King Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Jews, and the Romans all conspired against Jesus, the Anointed One, the Christ. All that came of it was that God's will was done; the sacrifice to atone for all sins was offered and Jesus rose from the dead. Since He was alive, Jesus was still

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speaking in and through the words the Spirit inspired His Apostles to speak and by that Word was still stretching out His almighty hand to do miracles. The biggest miracle was Jesus creating faith in His salvation in more and more hearts.

Our world, our community and we ourselves need Jesus, His forgiveness and His life. We all need God's Word, the Gospel in Word and sacrament, which brings Jesus, His forgiveness and His life to us.

So, our world, our community and we need to hear this Word of God. Christ's people need boldly, fearlessly, clearly, courageously to speak it to everyone they can. Surely we need more courage to do it! So, let's constantly pray to our God to give us that courage. As He did here, so God will answer that request with a "Yes." It is His will. Amen!