

November 3rd, 2019

The Boldness of The New Testament Church Acts 4:13-31

“I will kneel in the dust at the foot of the cross Where mercy paid for me
Where the wrath I deserve, it is gone, it is past Your blood has hidden me”
Those words right there give you the secret behind the boldness of the New Testament Church! Many of the people of the early Church had been there and had seen the price Jesus paid for their salvation! That’s why they were willing to stand boldly for the cause of Christ even in the face of terrible danger and persecution. There are people in our world today who still face unthinkable persecution just for believing in Jesus! In places like North Korea, to even say the word God is considered high treason. Missionaries in China along the border with North Korea, have been assassinated by North Korean hit men just because they had helped North Koreans in the name of Jesus! But here’s the amazing thing, the truth is the truth and the truth of Jesus’ love and sacrifice for the world continues to spread regardless of attempts to stop it! You see, once someone has knelt in the dust at the foot of the cross and they’ve been transformed by the blood of Jesus, the desire to share that experience brings a boldness to live for and stand up for the One who forever changed the course and direction of their life!! As we pray this morning, let’s remember our brothers and sisters around the world who face extreme persecution because of their faith, and let’s pray that we will have the boldness to share, in love, the good news that has changed our hearts and lives. Let’s pray!

So far, in this sermon series we’ve talked about things that were mission critical to the survival of the New Testament Church:

The Mission of The New Testament Church
The Decision Making process of The New Testament Church
The Spirit of The New Testament Church
The Message of The New Testament Church
The Cornerstone of The New Testament Church

Today we will examine the boldness of The New Testament Church!

Let me give you a little background for today’s sermon. Peter and John were going to the temple to pray when they meet a crippled beggar. The beggar was healed by God! Peter and John used this opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ, but they were arrested for sharing their faith! They were jailed, as we saw last week and then the next day brought before the religious leaders for questioning. Let’s pick up the story there. It is a quite fascinating piece of history. Acts 4:13 and following...

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:14 But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.

Acts 4:15 So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

Acts 4:16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it.

Acts 4:17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

Acts 4:18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Acts 4:19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God.

Acts 4:20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Acts 4:21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened.

Acts 4:22 For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

Acts 4:23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

Acts 4:24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

Acts 4:25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

Acts 4:26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.'

Acts 4:27 Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.

Acts 4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

Acts 4:29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness.

Acts 4:30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Wow and wow! What an amazing story of revival. This group of Christ followers, the very group who had witnessed their leader crucified and buried, are now experiencing a revival of excitement with Jesus and His message! It may have seemed for a few days after the crucifixion that the teachings of Jesus were just a pipe dream. Some of the disciples surely wondered if they had simply been deceived and if they had wasted several years of their lives following this man from Galilee. But now they are experiencing a renewal, a revival! If you come tonight you're going to hear how the concept of revival is going to the underpinning of our Northshore Vision for 2020! According to the Oxford Dictionary a revival is...

Revival - "an improvement in the condition or strength of something."

I like the 1828 Webster's Dictionary definition...

Revival 1. To bring again to life; to reanimate. 2. To raise from languor, depression or discouragement; to rouse; as, to revive the spirits or courage.

The followers of Jesus in our text were bolder now than they had been when Jesus was physically with them. It's like they had come to life again! Their depression and discouragement immediately following the death and burial of Jesus had been replaced with a new courage, excitement and boldness! Why? What happened? What changed? We will find the answers in our text and before we look at what made them so bold we must discuss two things that did not make them bold!

**Why were they people of the New Testament Church so bold?
Not because of their own greatness!**

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished...

The established religious leadership were surprised and bewildered that such a ragtag group of people could wield this much influence and power. They didn't understand it and were quite frankly scared by it. This new found boldness in the followers of Jesus was not something they fabricated or invented on their own. This was not some slick campaign or movement by a group seeking to make a name for themselves. This was not well connected socialites or activist using their positions, wealth, or ivy league educations to push an agenda. Nothing wrong with a good education or even having financial resources, but in this case they just didn't have those perks. In fact, it's ironic that Paul the apostle, who at one time had been one of the well connected, well educated, extremely powerful elites who apposed Jesus and His followers, but had come to accept Jesus and was radically changed by His message, Paul had to remind some of Jesus' followers of their humble backgrounds. Listen to what he wrote to the Corinthian Church...

1 Cor 1:26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.

Years later Peter would say ...

1 Pet 4:11 If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

In other words, your boldness and strength should be found in Christ and He should receive the glory! I'm afraid there's too many times in the modern day church when boldness is found in big personalities, slick programs, the limelight, popularity, and like I said last week, making sure we don't run afoul of the status quo and what is politically

correct when it comes to culture! I don't want my boldness to come from anything I can do on my own. The sin of pride will destroy a church and has destroyed many of its leaders in the past! God's Word couldn't be more plain on this subject...

Prov 11:2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

1 Pet 5:5b ...All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

1 Pet 5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

Does your life and attitude give or take away the glory due God! Peter made it clear in his second letter that our very ability to live for Jesus is gifted to us by our very gracious and giving God. Listen...

2 Pet 1:3 His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

2 Pet 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

I told you there were two things that did not make them bold...

Why were the people of the New Testament Church so bold? Not because of something they did!

Remember, when Peter and John were asked how they had performed the miracle of healing the lame man they quickly gave God the Glory...

Acts 4:9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed,

Acts 4:10 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.

And when it comes to the miracle of your soul's salvation, salvation is not something you do, it's something you receive! Andrew read this passage last week during worship. It's one of my favorite...

Eph 2:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--

Eph 2:9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

Who or what are you depending on for salvation? Your goodness, your good works? Are you depending on a balance sheet where the good outweighs the bad? Can you ever really be bold concerning your salvation if it depends on you? Do you think you could

ever get to a place where you absolutely knew your good had outweighed your bad? We all no the answer to that question is no! We are saved to do good works not by our good works. We just read Ephesians 2:8-9, but listen to verse 10...

Eph 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The people of the New Testament Church were bold because they knew their salvation was not something they did! It was something God did for them and the good things they did were in gratitude for God's gift! They understood the concept of grace: the undeserved and unearned favor of God! And let me say this loud and clear...

If a person is saved by grace, they stay saved by grace!

If you are saved by grace but have to work to stay saved you are working for your salvation. Paul said this in Galatians 2:20...

Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Salvation is strictly a God thing and I'm so grateful it doesn't depend on me. If it did, I would have zero boldness in my life, because if salvation depended on me I would be eternally lost. But thank God it doesn't depend on me!! So now we can answer the question in other ways...

**Why were the people of the New Testament Church so bold?
Because they had been with Jesus!**

Acts 4:13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Many of the leaders of the New Testament Church had actually been with Jesus during His ministry. This had a profound effect on their lives. They remembered His life, His words, His boldness, His passion, His love, His example of kindness to sinners, His servant heart and ultimately His sacrifice. Like the song we sang earlier, they had knelt in the dust at the foot of the cross! When we think of the fact many of these New Testament followers of Christ had actually witnessed His life it leads me to this thought... It would be very difficult to hang out with Jesus and not be changed in some way! --And people will notice the change! So I'm about to meddle just a little bit and maybe step on a few toes...

Do you spend enough time with Jesus for people to notice the difference? When people hang out with you do they sense that you've been hanging out with Jesus? Now I'm not talking about being superficially spiritual or trying to impress people with your religious

vocabulary or by some kind of condescending "I'm better than you" attitude. I'm talking about a genuine humility that comes from realizing you're a sinner saved by grace! I'm not talking about self-righteousness, but being clothed in the righteousness of Christ which would cause you to love others above yourself, to be willing to serve others in need, and to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. If you spend time with Jesus, He will begin to shine His light through you and people will be drawn to the Jesus they see in you! Jesus put it this way...

Mat 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

Mat 5:15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Mat 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Why were the people of the New Testament Church so bold? Because of what they had seen and heard!

Acts 4:16 "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. Acts

4:17 But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

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Acts 4:20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Just what had they seen and heard? We just talked about it, but we need to think about this again. They had seen...

The way Jesus lived His life! He touched a leper! No one does that! Jesus did...

Mat 8:2 A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

Mat 8:3 Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately he was cured of his leprosy.

Can you imagine the emotional healing the leper had just from someone being willing to touch him?

The way Jesus taught the truth of God!

Mark 1:22 The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law.

The way Jesus served others!

John 13:14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.

John 13:15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

The way Jesus suffered and died!

1 Pet 2:22 "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth."

1 Pet 2:23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

1 Pet 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

The way Jesus was resurrected from the dead on the third day!

Luke 24:1 On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

Luke 24:2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb,

Luke 24:3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 24:4 While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them.

Luke 24:5 In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?"

Luke 24:6 He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee:

Luke 24:7 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'

Luke 24:8 Then they remembered his words.

The early followers of Jesus were so impacted by what they had seen and heard they were willing to risk their lives in order to share the good news of Christ! What have you seen in the life of Christ that has made an impact in your personal life?

Why were the people of the New Testament Church so bold?

Because they prayed!

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken.

Satan will always come against the Lord's Church and will try to take us off course.

However, a church that prays, can and will be victorious! Prayer changes everything!

Pray with your spouse once a day and then try to have a really mean spirited argument with them! It'll just be weird! Pray with your children or for your children once a day and witness the difference! But, you say, I'm divorced and can't pray with my spouse, or my children are grown and have drifted away from the faith and aren't open to my prayers. What do I do? Pray for them anyway! I'm not talking about forcing prayer on them, but

praying for them! God won't force His love on anyone, but He will touch their lives in special ways because of your faithful prayers.

"But what if I pray for them and they refuse to let God change their life, what then?"

Pray for them anyway! It will still bring about change. "How so?"

Prayer will change you! It will change the way you react to their rejection. It will help you have the spirit of Christ in your dealings with them. And as a result, someday, they may change as well! Prayer will give you a Godly boldness! Not bold in a prideful, boastful, or arrogant way. Prayer will make you bold enough to not give up when others ridicule or reject you. You will be reminded that they also rejected Christ, but He died for them anyway! I had a teenager in Picayune tell me he didn't believe in God and I said, "Well, God still believes in you!" He said, "Wow, that's pretty good, I'm going to have to think about that!" If you want your world shaken in a good way by Jesus, pray like Jesus prayed. His prayers shook lives.

Luke 23:33 When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left.

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Jesus' words shook up one of the criminals so much this happened...

Luke 23:39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

Luke 23:40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence?"

Luke 23:41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Luke 23:42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

And the Roman Centurion in charge of Jesus' execution was shaken...

Mark 15:39 And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, heard his cry and saw how he died, he said, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

And one last thing, and I'll only mention it briefly because it could be a whole sermon series by itself...

Why were the people of the New Testament Church so bold?

Because they were filled with the Holy Spirit!

Acts 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Being filled with the Holy Spirit helps us know what to say and how to say it.

Luke 12:11 "When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say,

Luke 12:12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say."

The Holy Spirit will help us remember the teachings of Christ.

John 14:26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

In other words, given the fact that the Holy Spirit wants to make us bold in Christ and wise in Christ, why do we not allow the Holy Spirit to fill us on a daily basis? And we must remember that being filled with the Holy Spirit is not us getting more of the Spirit, but the Holy Spirit getting more of us! It is allowing the Holy Spirit of God into every single area of your life. Your home life, your work life, your school life, your entertainment life, your internet life, your hobby life, your marriage life, your financial life, your thought life! It's giving the Holy Spirit an "all access backstage pass" to your life!

It is my prayer that Northshore Church will follow the example of the New Testament Church and have a Godly boldness that will impact the Northshore and ultimately the world with the good news of Jesus Christ! It's Mission Critical! Let's pray!