

Acts 4:1–12

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[0 : 00] This passage is Acts 4, verses 1 through 12, page 1009. Would you please stand with me for the reading of God's word? And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about 5,000. On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander and all who were of the high priestly family. And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, By what power or by what name did you do this? Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed?

Let it be known to all of you 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 is standing before you well.

[1 : 23] This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen. Well, good morning and welcome to Holy Trinity Church.

We are glad that you are here today. One of the advantages of a close reading of the biblical text is that it allows you to travel to times and places that otherwise you would not have been able to attend.

Such it is in the midst of chapter 3 and 4. Luke brings us first class to the Jerusalem temple and to being able to see with our own eyes the healing of the man born lame.

Take a look at chapter 3, verse 1. He hides all his jewels quietly in the details. We saw this last week. Now Peter and John were going up to the temple.

[2 : 52] Here are the two hidden jewels at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. In other words, Peter's healing of the middle-aged man lame from birth came through an encounter just outside the beautiful gate at the ninth hour.

The beautiful gate was an enlarged entrance to the city and in particular to the great outer court where the women would have had entrance at the time of Jesus' life.

This, of course, is Herod's temple, this reconstruction project that took place over some many years leading up to the time of Christ himself.

And this beautiful gate was larger than the others. And according to Josephus, he later actually exclaims that its magnificence exceeded all the others in that it was plated with excessive silver and gold.

So here's the man, lame from birth, on the steps to an enlarged entrance. Are you there? At the ninth hour, around 6 p.m., and Peter and John come in to offer their prayers and he's asking for funds and get it.

[4 : 38] It's not as though Peter merely said, I don't have any money on me today. He looked at the gate plated with silver and gold and says, silver and gold have I none, but what I give to you, I tell you in the name of Jesus, rise and walk.

In other words, Luke is exploding the concept for us as readers that the external worshiping place for God was shifting from the external temple and its sacrificial system to one named Jesus.

In other words, he says, I can't give you what this place offers. I don't have anything that they hold on to of value.

In fact, Jesus, earlier in Luke's gospel, as I've been reminded, told his disciples, when you go out in my name, don't bring silver and gold. Because all the power comes through what I proclaim.

So can you see it? This man, over 40 years, not walking, day by day, at the entrance to where the rich and the beautiful would have come in, is suddenly on his feet, leaping for joy, and entering into the temple.

[6 : 09] Later, it actually says that they were in verse 11. Notice the details. They ran together in the portico called Solomon's, having entered into that eastern gate then.

That same gate that in Ezekiel the Spirit left the people from. That same gate, perhaps, that Jesus on Palm Sunday entered in through under the cries of the people, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The lame man now is praising God, hanging on to Peter. And of course, you can imagine what happens. A great crowd begins to assemble around Solomon's portico, which is also on the eastern wall.

Now we know from extant documents that this portico would have been some 45 feet in length, some 38 feet high, with columns double and tripled into the wall.

So you can just imagine, this would have been an ideal place if you wanted to preach to an outdoor setting. You had the reverberating sound wall in front of you and the ability to gather people and gather they did.

[7 : 21] Now it says in our own text that you get another little hint from Luke. It says there in verse 3, for it was already evening. And so, as you boarded this plane with Luke, you have now moved from the beautiful gate into Solomon's portico to the disturbance of a healing that now is raising 2,000, 3,000 people around.

And the sun is setting in the west. And that sun reaches over the stone walls of the west and the shadows now, the shadows are beginning to race toward the people on the eastern edge and day is beginning to fall.

You and I are there. And this is what transpires. The priest, verse 1 of 4, the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them.

I bet they did. This was not the end of a day around the temple that was like an ordinary day. There are a number of people crowding around and it says here they were greatly annoyed because they wanted to get home for dinner.

No, it doesn't read that. They were greatly annoyed because a good act had happened to a lame man. No, it doesn't read that. They were greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

[8 : 44] In other words, those who were charged with the proclamation of the Jewish scriptures, the Hebrew scriptures, for the welfare of the people were no longer the ones behind the lectern.

The Sadducees, the priests, the teachers, they didn't have the pulpit. Or if they had a pulpit, the people weren't with them. Peter is now preaching to a number of people about Jesus and the resurrection.

And notice, there's an annoyance. Which verse 3 is followed by an arrest. Certainly there was a temple guard.

I mean, the temple of this time was enormous. The outer walls would have stretched some three, four football fields long. There were so many interior plazas and squares and things of import that required people around.

And so this Jewish cultic worship, it would be almost like getting off in London out of Covent Garden Station, making your way down into Covent Garden, and there's the Punch and Judy shows, or there's the street performers.

[10 : 00] And just by their very presence, all of the people had assembled and rather than watching a little marionette show happen, you're hearing someone speak about the resurrection from the dead.

And those who are charged for the security of the context actually are compelled to come over and see what's going on. And in seeing what's going on, and in seeing the evening fall, and the shadows racing into them, with the warmth of the sun on those stone walls, they indicate we've got to settle this thing tomorrow.

So in dismissing the crowds, they take Peter and the apostles and they arrest them, and they put them in custody to the next day. Arrest follows annoyance, but notice what Luke's word says in verse 4, but many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of men came to about 5,000.

If you've been following in the book of Acts, his first open-air preaching moment in the streets of Jerusalem converted about 3,000. This is a young man in his early days of preaching. He had some very good success early on, did Peter. Not so much as his life went on, but early days, he opened up the Bible in an upper-room Bible study with about 120 present, and began to apply the text in the assembly.

[11 : 19] But his first sermon went out to thousands, and 3,000 got converted. It was immediately a megachurch. But now, after his second sermon, it's grown to about 5,000.

Annoyance with this resurrected Jesus thing that we seem to not be able to get behind us. Arrest. Addition.

So now they go to sleep. Where they slept, I don't know, but look at the way verse 4 goes. It moves you, it has you travel from the beautiful gate to the portico of Solomon, now into what would be called the hewn halls of stone.

I want to offer to you that the reading you heard today actually brings you into a judicial context, into a courtroom, not merely another conversation in the public.

Look at verse 5. On the next day, the rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem with Annas, the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high priestly family.

[12 : 35] Wow, they were all in town on that day. Nobody was out in their country villa. Nobody was looking for a little seaside vacation. They were all around, and they all came. Such was the disturbance.

Now, you've probably watched C-SPAN once in a while, and you've seen your elected officials stand before an empty room. Well, the room wasn't empty on this day. All the people were in town, nobody home for holiday. And that's what he wants you to know.

And they were in Jerusalem, no longer at Solomon's portico, but obviously in the hall of hewn stones, which is the place where the Sanhedrin met.

From what I've been told, it would have been almost a hall that was built into the northern wall of the temple, very near their ability then to go in and do priestly work, but also go out into an outer plaza and meet with people.

And according to the time, there would have been seating that was semi-circular in nature. And this is the same place that Jesus would have been at in Luke 22 when they questioned him.

[13 : 43] So what you have here is a religious, authoritative body that includes rulers, elders, scribes.

We know it's in a ruling assembly because the Talmud itself actually indicates that this group had actual judicial power. And notice Peter's initial word, rulers and people, verse 9, if we are being examined today.

This is not just a free-flowing conversation. That word examined indicates again that you are sitting in an inquest. That's the way the text is moved.

It's moved from annoyance, arrest, addition to inquest, formal inquest. If you're in the law school, you might know something about that. If not, you can tell us all later.

That word examined, anacrino, is used by Pilate concerning his judicial dealings with Jesus. In other words, he says, I've examined him in a judicial nature.

[14 : 47] That same word is used by Jewish leaders when they bring formal charges against Paul later in Acts 24. So this is a judicial term.

This same term is used reflexively by Paul in Acts 28 when he accounts his appearance before authorities. So what you have in verses 5 through 12 is an inquest and an answer.

Here we are at the very scene, the hall of hewn stones, where Jesus, shortly before, also had to make answer to those who had authority over Israel's worship.

And so you can imagine them now all seated, semi-circular, and it says, verse 7, and when they had set them in their midst, they mean, of course, Peter and John.

When they had set Peter and John in their midst, they asked them, they inquired of them, their inquest really hung on this question. By what power or by what name did you do this?

[16 : 06] And so you move simply from the inquest to the answer. Here it is, beautifully put together by Luke by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

But not just that, I want you to see three things specifically in verses 8 and following. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, says to them, rulers and people of the elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man.

Now, don't lose the nuance of that. An inquest would normally come to figure out the facts on how somebody died. An inquest would normally come to figure out what happened when something went wrong.

An inquest happens by parents or judicial authorities when they feel someone has broken the law. when something bad has been done. There's the irony here. Peter says, if we're being, if I've had to come to an inquest concerning a good thing done to a guy who had no chance on his own, well, let me tell you what the answer might be.

And he leaves no doubt. Let it be known to all. To all of you, that is, the dozens that were seated before them rothed with judicial authority, let it be known and you can almost hear his voice trying to find its way back out into the plaza.

[17 : 45] Let it be known to all the people that it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Look at the particularity.

I mean, it's a full-blown name. I'm going to talk to you about Jesus, he says. There are a lot of Jesuses out there. I'm talking about the Jesus that is the fulfillment of the messianic promises. He is the Messiah.

I'm talking to you about Jesus Christ. Now, don't get me wrong. I'm talking to you about Jesus Christ, the guy that actually came out of Nazareth, of which you wondered if anything good could come out of. None of you came from Nazareth, who are sitting here before me, says Peter, but that's the one I'm talking to you about.

Good things happened for the crippled man through Jesus, the Messiah, the one who came from that little northern town. I mean, he's ruling out everybody else.

But take a look at the organization of the speech as put together by Luke. It's organized around what we've been singing of today, the name of Jesus.

[18 : 50] Verse 10, by the name of Jesus Christ. Look at the way 10 moves on, by him. Look at verse 11, this Jesus.

Or look at verse 12, a doubly told negative that just brings further emphasis to him. There is salvation in no one else, no other name.

Can you see the organization of his message? He stood in the courtroom and said, let me say something, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, by him, right in the middle of it, this Jesus, and then he comes back out from it, no one, no one else.

The whole sermon, the whole response, the whole answer to the inquest, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know, fills my every longing, keeps me, according to the lame man, dancing as I go.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, I was at a wedding yesterday, there was a song called Tremble, it just kept repeating the beautiful word, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, says Peter.

[20 : 17] It happened from Jesus. This Jesus, the peasant preacher Jesus, Jesus, that is how this man was made well.

What rhetorical flair in the presentation of the material here. I know there are people that are like, oh, I don't think the Bible is true, you know. How did Luke get this?

This would have been behind closed doors. You just took us into the courtroom. He's fabricating some story. Come on, give me a break. In chapter 6, 7, it's actually going to indicate that by that time many priests come to faith in Jesus.

We know that he did eyewitness research, field work, interviewing people. There are dozens of people that Luke could have had access to that knew what happened at that time to enough to be able to say, if you want to know what Peter said when he was in there, he was talking to them about Jesus.

He was talking to them about a particular Jesus. He wanted to make sure they didn't get mistaken with any other Jesus. What rhetorical flair.

[21 : 37] To this claim, though, it would have been difficult for Peter to prove anything if he doesn't actually have Jesus show up in the courtroom. So, he actually moves on from his answer, which

was troublesome enough, to further a tonal quality in his preaching.

He felt pretty good before this body. That actually would have agitated the assembly even further. He moves from one that's being examined to one who actually begins to place blame on those who are examining him.

Did you pick that up in the text? let it be known to you that all the people of Israel, that the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, here we go, whom you crucified, this Jesus, later on in verse 11, that was rejected by you.

I mean, this is now a hostile witness. I think they've moved a little bit from annoyance to feeling that they have a man before them that they are now going to need to deal with.

He is bold, whom you crucified. There's a lot we could say about this. I'm going to let it slide this morning because I want to stay clear on the main things.

[22 : 57] The main things are the organization of his message show that the speech is organized around the name of Jesus. And the emphasis of that speech is something about Jesus in particular, namely his death, on our account, your account, the resurrection, on God's account.

Whom you crucified, verse 10, whom God raised from the dead. You see it again in verse 11. The stone that was rejected by you is now the corner stone.

In other words, what he's arguing isn't just something about Jesus. He's saying that this Jesus was the one who was rejected by men but was vindicated by God. That's the Jesus I'm talking about.

The one that we walked away from and that God walked in on and actually raised up. Now this is amazing. It's the third time we've already seen this kind of provocative speech against Jewish people and their religious leadership and there's more that's going to come down the road.

But know this, he is not anti-Semitic in that he's speaking against the Jews as Jews. He's anti- their worship. Just as they stood at that outer gate and said, silver and gold have I none.

[24 : 12] In other words, this external cultic form of worship, I got nothing to give you from here. In the same way he's saying you rejected him but God actually vindicated him.

My problem isn't with you and your ethnicity, my problem is with you and your religious attachments to anything outside of Christ. Christ. So there it is.

He's now stoked the embers of agitation before the court. And so if I'm on that court, I'm saying, okay, let me put it to you this way.

You probably need an illustration by now. I watched a few good men the other night again. If you've been lost for a while, come on back. I don't like to pay attention to him when he speaks of the scriptures, but if you'll tell me about Tom Cruise, well, then I'm back.

So now perhaps you're back. I can hold you for a moment. A few good men, one of the great courtroom scenes. And Tom Cruise kind of gets, you know, out over his skis, feeling good, feeling good about how he's carrying forward his case.

[25 : 25] And the judge leans down and watch yourself counsel. In other words, I've given you some rope, but you better make an argument pretty soon before you hang yourself with that rope and I get hold of my courtroom.

I'm guessing that's kind of the way they felt at this moment. He's annoyed me. He's agitated me.

He's been personally now offensive to me. Watch yourself, counsel.

Do you have an argument you want to make? Or you just want to purport something about Jesus that you're not going to walk him into the courtroom on? Or do you think you want to hang us with something which isn't going to fly in our decision making either?

In other words, what's your argument? And there it is. Peter says, well, I do have one. It's not just emotional stuff here.

Verse 11, this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the corner stone.

[26 : 27] with this verse, Peter was calling their attention to something they never could have anticipated, namely this, that what the ancient psalmist predicted would happen to the coming Messiah actually happened and was accomplished when they rejected Jesus.

Jesus. In other words, he brings documentary evidence and lays it on the council's table and says, my exhibit A isn't just that I'm all rung up emotionally today.

My exhibit is Psalm 118, which predicted that when the Christ came, those who are in charge of building the work would reject him but in that moment God himself would vindicate him.

So he's got an argument here. So we need to look at this. We need to look at this. Locate your verse.

Turn back with me, Psalm 118. This was what he put on the table in the courtroom. The location of his illusion is grounded in Psalm 118, verse 22.

[27 : 57] There it is. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. Now, watch this. Stay on that psalm for a moment.

The psalm opens extolling the Lord for steadfast love that endures forever. An illusion all the way back to Exodus 34, when God says, you want to know my name?

You want to know my name? I am slow to anger. I am abounding in steadfast love. So the name of the Lord is being extolled in the first four verses of the psalm.

But then the anointed one takes up his own voice in verse five and is calling out on the Lord to answer him when he is afflicted having been rejected by those who hate him.

Verse! Verse 10, all the nations are surrounding him. And notice what he's ascribing his deliverance to.

[29 : 00] Verse 10, in the name of the Lord I cut them off. Verse 11, in the name of the Lord I cut them off. Verse 12, in the name of the Lord I cut them off.

So what he's arguing is that the name of the Lord actually preserved him while he was rejected in the world. And then he says verse 17, I shall not die but I shall live and recount the deeds of the Lord.

He has not given me over to death. He's been answered. And that's where the quotation comes.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the corner stone. Watch how this thing continues to move. I was stunned by reading this this week. Look at verse 26 of the same psalm.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. I mean this reverberating sound blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord is only weeks old out of the lips of the crowds when Jesus himself made his way into the city.

[30 : 12] So here comes Jesus humble mounted on a colt. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord in through the gates taking the title of the anointed upon himself rejected by all yet in God's doing set up as the unhewn stone upon which God will save the world.

And then notice how the psalm ends. Verse 26 we bless you from the house of the Lord. That's the temple. They're giving thanks to the Lord for he is good.

This is the very thing the lame man was doing. Giving praise to the Lord. So if you want to know why I'm a Christian today let's let this thing hit the ground where it belongs and then I'll sit down.

Pastor why are you a Christian? It's not merely because Peter was eloquent in his emotional attachment to Jesus as forceful as that preaching was.

It's because it is rooted in the Old Testament scriptures which for me provide the best fulfillment centered around his work.

[31 : 47] So I would ask you this morning where does your forgiveness come from? Where does your health come from? Where does anything good in your life come from?

And on what basis will you actually hold fast to that? It comes from Jesus. And it comes from no one else but Jesus.

And it comes from a Jesus that's actually the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic promises. It comes from a Jesus who actually helps me read my Bible in a way where the whole thing becomes one single story.

Let me say one word about the way this sermon closes. It says no one else.

Not going to be saved by no one else. Or let me put it differently. No other name. And you know how you feel about that in Hyde Park today? Oh man, I like the first half of this sermon but not the last half.

[32 : 52] But let me put it to you this way. The exclusivity of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the simple consequence of God's completed plan in Christ.

God either worked out your salvation through this one man in accordance with his prophetic promises or he did not. And if he did work out his promise for your salvation through fulfilling all of the Hebrew scriptures in the work of Jesus 2,000 years ago, than to reject Jesus on the grounds that you need a number of ways to get to God might sound nice, but you're actually cutting across the facts of how God decided to work with a fallen world.

He engineered your salvation in Christ. This is not like going to CarMax and deciding whether you want to drive a Toyota or a Chevy, whether you want a Prius that runs like a golf cart or you want something that burns gas as if any is applicable to get you from A to B.

What Luke is saying is there's only one guy who God took thousands of years through prophetic discourse so that when he came along you could not possibly miss it unless your eyes were closed. And you're going to look at all that intricacy you're going to look at all that beauty you're going to look at all that magisterial power and you're going to say no I don't think so I really think there ought to be a number of ways who's the elitist to require God to work in any way you see fit is to thumb your nose at the work he accomplished in his son so I wish that everyone here would become a Christian for it is the clearest cleanest most glorious reading of the scriptures by way of promise and fulfillment well we'll have to see next week what they did with the message come on back they're not all they weren't all compelled to believe but many priests did and I hope many here will as well our heavenly father we want to come to receive the lord's table we want to move from the beautiful gate to

[35 : 57] Solomon's portico to the halls of hewn stone we want to peer back over that wall get outside the city and go to a little hill and look on Jesus who died to save us from our sins help us to feast on him in Christ's name amen