

Message And Mission

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[0 : 00] All right, if you have your Bibles, let's open back up to Acts chapter 4. Acts chapter 4. Again, just a reminder that Peter and John have just healed a man, and people are amazed.

You know, every opportunity, a sign that gets done is not just to be done to wow people, it's an opportunity to share about Jesus. If you remember, at the very beginning of the book of Acts, the promise is that the Holy Spirit would fill the apostles with power.

Not just power to do things to impress people, but power so that they could be witnesses.

Witnesses to the life, the death, the resurrection, the ascension, the reigning of King Jesus.

And so again, that's what happens, and they have another opportunity to tell about Jesus. That's what they do in our passage. This message of Jesus' resurrection, it can kind of be seen as revolutionary, right?

And it challenges the powers that be, and so the powers that be arrest Peter and John, and they give them a little talking to. And despite the dangerous situation, the promise is that the Holy Spirit will give them the words to say, and will fill them with power to be witnesses.

[1 : 18] And that's exactly what happens. And everybody kind of goes when that happens, because these are just common men. It astounds them. So before we look at our outline and the passage more closely, would you pray with me for the preaching of God's word?

Heavenly Father, we pray that you would show us the truth, that you would show us who we are, that you would show us our sin, that you would show us how to live, but most of all, that you would show us Jesus, and the forgiveness and grace and astounding love and mission and future that we have because of him.

We ask all this in his name. Amen. Well, I hope you like the letter M. The outline for this morning was two words that begin with the letter M, and the outline for this night is three M words.

We've got this. The message, the messengers, and the men. The message, the messengers, and the men. That's what I want to look at from this passage. First off is the message.

So beginning of our passage, Peter and John are in a little bit of trouble because the powers that be don't like their message, and they've come to stop them. It says in verse 2 that they are actually greatly annoyed by Peter and John.

[2 : 39] You know, you can be annoying for not good reasons. As a Christian, it's possible for Christians to be annoying. Like, there's cheesy things. Maybe it's more in America. Say things like, you want to go to Burger King?

Oh, I only serve the true king. That's annoying. You don't need to do things like that. But it's also possible to be annoying as a Christian for very good reasons. That has to do with the message that we bear.

And it's Peter's and John's message that's annoying the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees. And what's their message? What's their message at its core?

Their message at its core is simply this. Jesus. And not just Jesus, but who he is and what he's come to do and what it means for other people. In other words, their message is this.

Only Jesus. You can kind of see it summarized in what they say, that there's no other name by which men can be saved. If you like Latin or you're a fan of the Reformers, their phrase was *solus Christus*, right?

[3 : 42] In Christ alone. And, you know, Peter and John, they're saying, you know, the only reason that this man who hasn't been able to walk his entire life is now standing before you, this guy that we healed, is because of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Do you remember Jesus? He's the one that you guys crucified. It's kind of like, if you remember your Old Testament, he says to them, Psalm 118.

Do you remember the stone that the builders rejected? They looked at it and they said, nah, get rid of that. It's come back and it's the most important stone in the building now.

That's what it's like. That's Jesus. And let me tell y'all one more thing. There is actually no other name. There's not one iota of salvation that you can find apart from this Jesus.

That's what they're saying. It's Christ alone. It's no other name. And I think under that, within their message, there's two different parts of what they're saying in that there's no other name that can save you.

[4 : 50] And it's these two things. It's talking about the exclusivity of Christ and also the sufficiency of Christ. It's an exclusive claim. It's also talking about how he is sufficient.

We'll look at those two things. First off, the exclusivity of Christ. That's when they're saying no other name. You know, meaning what they're saying is, you know, you who are part of the nation of Israel, you know, known for being the nation that worships the one true God, Yahweh.

He saved you from slavery. A nation tasked with bearing the message of salvation to be a light to the nations. I hate to break it to you, but you are in danger of missing out on salvation if you reject the name of Jesus, if you look for it in any other place.

And when Peter says no other name, name kind of stands for the person themselves, right?

Meaning there's nobody else. The name would often stand for a person's character, what they did, what they were all about.

It's not an isolated claim. It's not just Peter making this up in the Bible. Think about what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2, verse 5. There is one mediator between God and man, the man Jesus Christ.

[6 : 06] Think about what Jesus says to the disciples when they're like, show us the way. Which is the way? Where's the way, Jesus? And he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one, no one.

It's exclusive. No one comes to the Father except through me. Now, I've got to say this. Making exclusive claims isn't a very popular thing nowadays, right?

That's what mean people do. It wasn't very popular back then either. We live in an inclusive age, right? At least so we say. And so bold-faced exclusive claims, to be that upfront about it, rubs people the wrong way.

It feels particularly harsh. Have you ever heard the parable about the blind man and the elephant?

Kind of famous one. Blind man and the elephant, they used to talk about how all the religions in the world are true.

And it goes like this. You know, there's five blind men and they're brought in to an elephant and they're told to describe it. You know, and the first blind man, you know, he's grabbing the tail and he says, and they ask him, what's an elephant like?

[7 : 11] Well, an elephant's like a rope. They go to the next guy and, you know, he's touching the side of the elephant. What is an elephant like? Elephant's like a wall. They go to the next guy and he's holding the ear of the elephant.

I don't know. The elephant's like a giant leaf. They go to the next guy. What is an elephant like?

He's holding the trunk. An elephant is like a giant snake. And what's the point?

They try to say, well, in all the religions of the world, you know, the elephant is God. And each different religion in the world is holding on to some part of the truth. So you're kind of, all you guys, you're going at the same, can't we be inclusive?

We're all aiming at the same thing. It's all kind of the same, right? You're just grasping at different parts. It sounds so nice, so inclusive. What's the problem with it?

It's actually a very exclusive claim because somebody is saying, I am standing back and I can see the whole elephant. And poor little yous who are blind are grasping at these different, it's a claim, an exclusive claim of seeing the actual picture, the way things really are.

[8 : 19] No one sees the whole elephant except for me. I can see. It sounds so inclusive, but it's not, right? And while this message that Peter preaches is an exclusive one, right?

No other name besides Jesus. It actually, if you think about it, it's actually radically inclusive too.

This message, one of the most exclusive claims ever, no other name by which we can be saved, it's a different kind of exclusivity.

Because this message teaches us that our acceptance with God is not based on anything about us and our goodness, our moral record, our education, our race, our performance, our political viewpoint.

But God gives gift, his salvation as a gift. If we'll just repent and receive it. It's a message of humility. I mean, if you think about it, every other religious leader in the world basically says, if you want to find salvation, hey, all you got to do is, look, that's the way over there.

Follow it, you will find life. Just go that way. I went that way, just follow me, just go in the same way that I go. But what does Jesus say? It's not only for the powerful who are able to ascend the mountain by themselves, but he says, hey, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

[9 : 35] It's me. I'm not just pointing to the way. I am the way. I'm not just showing you what kind of life to live, even though he does. I'm showing you, you can't live that life.

And I've actually come to live it in your place. And while all the other religions of the world say, you need to climb up the mountain of righteousness and maybe at the end of your life, you will find God at top.

Jesus says, I'm actually God, come down the mountain for you. And I will actually live righteously in a way that you fail to do. So what does that mean? It means the message is radically inclusive.

Because what it's saying is the same failures. Come. Prostitutes. Come. Church hypocrites. Come. The poor.

Come. Rich. Come. Come. Come to him. Come to Jesus and find salvation. It's the same thing required of each of those people.

[10 : 38] Forsake all of your ways of self-salvation and come to Christ. Admit that you need him and trust that he's actually going to welcome you by his grace.

His message, it doesn't leave you in your sin, but it also doesn't require you on your own to deal and to clean yourself up before you come to him. So it's exclusive, only Jesus, but it's actually inclusive because he's come to live in our place.

But that this message of no other name, it's also not just talking about his exclusivity, it's also talking about the sufficiency of Christ. The other aspect that Peter's talking about when he says no other name is that in Jesus' work, in his life, death, and resurrection, it's enough.

It's enough. I said earlier, the name of a person represents their character, what they were all about, what they did. Remember some of the things Jesus said on the cross?

John 19, 30. He says, it is finished. What's he saying? He's actually done enough.

[11 : 44] The work that he's done in his life and in his dying is sufficient to get you back to God if you will come to him. There's not something extra that you have to do to get to God.

You simply have to come to him. His work is sufficient. His sacrifice, it pays the price for the forgiveness of all our sins in the past and the present and in the future.

So all of our obedience doesn't merit us salvation, it's an outworking of thanksgiving and joy and trust and love for God. Why does this matter, right? Why does this matter for you this week and for me?

Because we forget this all the time, right? We forget that Jesus is sufficient. Is Jesus enough? Ask it in a different way. Where do you find your meaning and satisfaction in life?

Is there like a Jesus bucket but then also there's like a money bucket, right? Or career, or family, or your reputation, or pleasure? Where are you storing up your treasure?

[12 : 48] What do you really act like the source of your salvation is? The point that Peter and John are making is a simple little math equation. Excuse me, maths equation, right?

Jesus plus nothing equals everything. It's been said by many other pastors before me. Jesus plus nothing actually equals everything.

Do you believe this? And so Peter, he quotes Psalm 118, right? Stone that was rejected by the builders. Who are the builders? He's kind of indicting the religious leaders in Israel.

The stone that was rejected is now the cornerstone. And the cornerstone is the most important stone. You know, as strong as the cornerstone is, that's how strong, you got a weak cornerstone, building's going to be weak.

You have a strong cornerstone, the building is going to be strong. And so just like the cornerstone is precious and strong, so too are the stones that get joined to it.

[13 : 45] Let me put it this way. What does that mean for us? It means that you have just as much of a right to heaven as Jesus does if you've joined yourself to the cornerstone.

That his life and his record and his merit, you get united to him. You get joined to the cornerstone. It's good news. It's Christ alone.

It's not Jesus plus our good works. It's not Jesus plus the sacraments. Jesus plus how well behaved your kids are. Jesus plus your Presbyterianism. Or Jesus plus your political party.

It's not that those things don't matter. But it's just Jesus plus nothing equals everything. That's the message that they are proclaiming. So the message is Christ alone.

It's exclusive claim. It's also talking about the sufficiency of Christ. Let's look then second at the messengers. I want to look at Peter and John for a minute because this message of Christ alone kind of what I want to know you see it working in their lives.

[14:49] The message that they're proclaiming is one that is affecting them. Right? It's coming out of their lives. So if we were to cling to this the exclusivity the inclusivity but also the sufficiency of the work of Christ how would it change how we live?

Could it change us like it changed Peter and John? Does it actually transform your life to hold on to this? So we said Peter and John they get put into custody so they can stand trial before the Jewish Supreme Court in the morning.

And you know you get this kind of this little this little idea as you're going through Acts because everybody keeps getting put in prison. And it's like they always they're trying to they're trying to imprison all these people who are sharing the message of the gospel.

But the gospel never gets put in prison. You can't chain it up right? It's always moving forward. And when the time comes for Peter and John to stand trial in verse 6 it starts mentioning some names. I don't know if they stood out to you. It mentions Annas and Caiaphas. Just a reminder the book of Acts is written by Luke who wrote the gospel of Luke.

[15:58] So a lot of times what probably happened is people if they got the gospel of Luke they would read that and then you know what you keep reading? The sequel. You couldn't put it down. It's amazing. What's going to come next? Well you read the book of Acts.

And so what's come at the very end of the gospel of Luke is Jesus goes on trial. And do you know who the people are who kind of preside over the trial of Jesus? These dudes.

And so if you've read that before you're going uh oh this isn't going to go very well for Peter and John right? Like there's this awful injustice of a trial for Jesus this cannot be good for them.

And surely Peter and John are aware of this too right? I don't know about you I'd be shaking in my boots. And verse 7 it says they set Peter and John in their midst. What it's talking they literally surrounded them.

If they would put you on trial the rulers they would stand up and like a little ark would go around you. Talk about intimidating right? Better tell the truth. It's like a predator getting ready to pounce on its prey.

[17:00] And Peter speaks up. And what's the Sanhedrin's impression of what Peter says? They're astonished. Holy cow!

Did you hear what this guy just said? These are uneducated common men. Where did they get the boldness and learn to speak? He's quoting Psalm 118 to us? What's going on?

And the answer is how did they get to be so bold? It's the last the very last thing we read they recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus.

I was reading earlier this week my ESV study Bible notes on this on this passage. ESV study Bible it's like it's worth the seminary education. There's so much in there.

I was reading the study notes on it and it came to this verse and I loved what it said. It said men like Peter and John were not expected to speak so confidently before the Supreme Court of the land.

[17:57] They had not gone through the advanced training of the rabbinic schools they didn't have an MDiv but they knew Jesus and in knowing him they knew much more than all the learned scribes of the Sanhedrin.

I want to encourage you with that. You've been a Christian your whole life or you just became a Christian. Whether you're young or old if you know Jesus that's a lot.

You've got something to share if you know him in his work and what he has done for you I would rather you know him and he would rather more importantly he would rather you know him in faith than to be able to read the Bible cover to cover in Hebrew and Greek and not know that he is enough.

It's amazing what to know Jesus can do for you and what enables Peter and John to be so bold it's Jesus right he's promised to send the spirit to make them witnesses to give them courage to give them power to witness the Holy Spirit has applied what Jesus has done to their hearts they've

understood the math Jesus plus nothing equals everything I'm guessing you don't know about the great basketball player Will Purdue right great NBA player Will Purdue in 1990 he played for the Chicago Bulls and in a playoff game he combined with some guy named Michael Jordan to score 69 points and to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers only thing was Will Purdue scored zero points and Michael Jordan scored 69 points why do I mention that?

the reason that Will Purdue was great was because he was on Michael Jordan's team the greatest basketball player to ever live and he participated in that victory because of the strength of someone else this is the joy and the assurance that we have that nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling and that can actually make you bold when you get that deep down in your heart your boldness doesn't come from you know how much my life looks like Jesus my boldness comes from how united I am to him how much what he has done has changed my life now and into the future and if you are a Christian that is a hundred percent of Jesus has come to you his triumph is yours and so you can be bold what does that mean for us it means that as a church we want to be a place where because of the redemptive work of Jesus we kind of like instinctively push out into the lives of others we push out past the petty interests and obsession with ourselves we push out past our paralyzing fears of the big bad world out there we push out into the life of one another into the life of the world bearing the joy of Jesus because we want to encounter the life of the living

[21 : 17] God and we want to then take that life to other people and proclaim this life transforming message Christ alone is such good news so we can ask then just a simple question does your life point to Jesus that's what when they look at these guys that you know their life is pointing to Jesus they recognize that they had been with Jesus and it wasn't like a oh now I know where your face is ah I've seen you before no no no what they're saying oh oh you've been with Jesus there's something different about you and this isn't meant to be a question of does our life point to Jesus of being are you a member of some religious elite because remember verse 13 reminds us it's the religious elite who are absolutely flabbergasted that Peter and John were just common men and were acting in the way that they were but do you know Jesus avails himself to you this is why we talk about sitting under his word being preached reading your bible on your own and going to him in prayer and participating in the sacraments and fellowshiping with the body of Christ and as we serve others allowing ourselves to be served because Christ actually wants to meet you he wants to meet with you he actually wants to pour his grace into your heart and to remind you that he's enough that's why we do those things we can let him form these habits of love in us so the message

Christ alone the messengers we see when they get this message there's boldness there's something different about them the only thing that can explain their lives is Jesus right that's what they're looking and seeing last thing is the men meaning the men who are carrying out the trial I don't know how it sounded to you when you read those words that Peter says there's no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved I think for a long time in my life I read those simply as a theological principle here's this theological fact there's no other name besides Jesus by which men must be saved and it's true that was kind of my first point right it is a theological principle but what stood out to me as I read it again and again and again and again is one little pronoun we there is no other name by which we can be saved why does that matter because Peter's saying there's no other name by which I

Peter can be saved and there's no other name by which that former lame man could have this happen to him and there's no other name by which you you religious elite can be saved it's a we this theological principle is an invitation it's an invitation to these men his adversaries these opponents these persecutors that they too would come to the one who can actually rescue them that they would come and love the all-sufficient Christ too Peter's messages every time listen even in indicting you there's an invitation to come and find listen it's an exclusive claim but it's inclusive would you come would you come and find life would you come and live in Christ alone there's this old made for TV movie called Brian's Song from a while ago I didn't know about it it was made in like the 70s or something

I think I was watching television as like a 17 year old didn't know that it was a tear jerker like my sister walked in in the middle of me watching it and I'm like wiping tears away and she's like what are you watching I'm like nothing go away but what it tells this movie Brian's Song it tells a true story about two guys who played American football for the Chicago there's so many American sports tonight you're learning so much their names were Brian Piccolo and Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo

and Gale Sayers they were the first interracial roommates in the NFL you know they'd all have to go and pair up and be in rooms together as they traveled around it was the first time that an African American and a white man roomed together these two guys and they became deep deep friends Gale Sayers was an amazing running back for the Chicago Bears and he hurt his knee he tore all the ligaments in it devastating injury it was Brian Piccolo who was right by his side cheering him on as he recovered and later on Brian

Piccolo ends up getting cancer and there's this poignant scene at the end of the film and Gale Sayers he's receiving the George Hallis most courageous player award and he's receiving this award and he gives his speech and he says I don't deserve this award let me tell you who should get this award my friend Brian Piccolo who has cancer and is fighting he's the most courageous person I know and then he says it's just one of the most oddly beautiful lines that just it hooked into my mind he said this I love Brian Piccolo and I would like all of you to love him too don't you want a friend like that how amazing that is why do I mention that you can witness in this way if you don't believe in Jesus clearly your system of thought is incomprehensible and you should you should just get smarter and think more philosophically and then come to Jesus because he's obviously the only way you could do that or you can say

[27 : 04] I love Jesus and I really want you to love him too that's what I would like you know Peter's the guy who's standing there who in Jesus greatest hour of need was not bold but denied him and he's standing up and saying hey listen I love Jesus because he first loved me and if you would know what a failure I was and how much grace he showed to me that he pursued me that he found me that he reassured me of his love if you would know that you would want to come to and really what I want you to do is to love him because that's where you're actually going to find joy we're running around to all these different things and it's not going to satisfy but come to him and to receive his love you can be bold and in humility you get to do that would you love him too

I love Jesus I would love for you to love him too that's the message that we extend it's in Christ alone it's such good news let's pray now father we pray what what we can sing to that nothing in our hands we bring simply to the cross we cling naked we come to thee for dress helpless look to thee for grace foul I to the fountain fly wash me savior or I die lord we confess that it's in Christ alone that our hope is found he is our cornerstone it's in Jesus that we get to cry oh death where is your sting it's in Jesus that we get to say that we're new creations it's in Jesus that we get to watch watch our shame get engulfed in mercy it's in Jesus that we know who we are thank you lord would you help us to make much of Jesus's name would you help us to live boldly this week not in our own strength but in

Christ's alone we pray all this in the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved amen the oh