

# ***Been With Jesus***

Acts 4:5-22  
April 29, 2018

## First United Methodist Church, Lindstrom

(This is a manuscript prepared for sermon delivery and may not represent actual words spoken.)

*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.*

So in chapter three of Acts the crippled beggar was healed. We looked at this last week. Peter preached the gospel. People were getting saved. This resulted in some angst among the higher ups in the religious establishment. The religious leaders were quite perturbed that the Apostles were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees were particularly bothered because they did not believe in resurrection in any way, shape, or form. So Peter and John were tossed into jail.

They spent the night in jail. The next day they were brought before the rulers and elders and teachers of the law. Annas was there. He was kind of a big deal. He was the high priest. This ruling body was known as the Sanhedrin.

Now a word or two about this Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one members...give or take. The high priest was what we might call the ex officio president. There were other priests. Many of them were Sadducees. The Sadducees were the ones who were most interested in preserving the status quo. They were the don't-rock-the-boat group. They were the ones who would have said, "We've never done it that way before." There were Scribes on the Sanhedrin. They were the experts in the traditional law. There were Pharisees. They were fanatics when it came to observing the law. Sadducees and Pharisees, by the way, were often at odds with one another...kind of like liberals and conservatives...what have you. There were elders. These were guys who were respected in the religious community. They were what you might call at-large members. There

were other men who were of the high priest's family.

Okay...so this was the group before whom Peter and John stood. Say what you want about those seventy-one—give or take—members of the Sanhedrin; they were considered elite. They were looked upon as very intelligent. They were the cream of the religious crop.

Now...get this contrast. Several weeks before this, Jesus appeared before the Sanhedrin. Not that much time had passed. So Peter and John were before the same group that also questioned Jesus...the same group that reached the conclusion that Jesus was a blasphemer and worthy of death...the same group who ridiculed and mocked Jesus. While Jesus stood before the Sanhedrin, Peter was out in the courtyard. He was warming himself because it was chilly. And a servant girl—a servant girl, mind you—looked at Peter and said, "This man was with him." She was saying that Peter was a companion of Jesus. Peter looked at that servant girl and said, "I don't know him."

Now in our text, Peter is not out in the courtyard face-to-face with a servant girl. He is before the Sanhedrin. They asked Peter and John, "By what power or what name did you do this?" They wanted to know how the healing came about. And Peter did not say, "I don't know." Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit and he looked at them and he said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 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...Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name

under heaven given to us by which we must be saved.”

Don't even suggest that Jesus and the power of his resurrection and the power of grace and the power of forgiveness and the power of the Holy Spirit is not able to change a person...is able to make a difference in a person's life. Way to go Peter!

So this Jewish supreme court looked at Peter and John. In looking at them, these religious leaders took note of a thing or two or three. They saw the courage of Peter and John. I mean it took some real courage for them to stand up to these high ranking officials.

They further noted that Peter and John were uneducated and ordinary men. They were unschooled. Now literacy was quite high among Jews in the first century. Folks could read and write. But most of the everyday people—at least in the eyes of these religious officials—could not carry on any kind of theological discussion... unless they had formal training from a rabbi...unless they had been to college and seminary. The apostle Paul made a point of saying that he was educated at the feet of Gamaliel. That carried some weight. Peter and John were uneducated. They were laymen. They were fishermen. And they were able confidently to engage in a bit of theological debate. They used good words and sound argument.

So there was only one explanation. They had been with Jesus. Jesus was called rabbi and teacher. He taught as one who had authority. Now Jesus had no formal training. He didn't need any. He was the truth. The Sanhedrin concluded that Peter and John had been with Jesus. Furthermore, there was the healed man standing right there before them. What could they say to that?

Okay...so this religious high court threatened Peter and John and told them not to speak about Jesus and all that. Peter and John chose not to obey their order.

But the part that stands out for me is the Sanhedrin “took note that these men had been

with Jesus”. Peter didn't deny it this time. Does anyone ever take note that I've been with Jesus? When we leave this time and place of worship and go about our week, will anyone take note that we have been with Jesus?

You know...our best witness for Jesus is not anything we say. Note that I am saying our best witness for Jesus is not anything we say. Our best witness for Jesus is just who we are. And who we are...well, we are people who spend time with Jesus. Those highly educated and smart religious men could have debated theology with Peter and John. They would have done well in a debate. But what they had no answer for was these men had been with Jesus...and Jesus made a difference in their lives. Let folks see that we have been with Jesus...and Jesus makes a difference in our lives.

Has Jesus made a difference? This is the question I challenge us with today. Reflect on that. Has Jesus made a difference in our lives? Has Jesus made a difference in your life? If so, what is that difference? Can you articulate the difference? Maybe start that reflection with another question. What would I be doing today if not for Jesus? I have often asked myself that question.

You've heard me say it before, but I got serious about following Jesus the end of my junior year in high school. What difference did that make?

Well, speaking on a practical level, I would probably not be preaching this sermon. Maybe I would have been that lawyer I always wanted to be. Who knows? I certainly would not have ended up at Bethel College...where I responded to an ad to become a youth director at the United Methodist Church in Hibbing...where I responded to this nudge to go to Seminary...and then all this happened.

But at a whole other level...Jesus has made quite a difference in terms of the hope I have and the peace I experience and the joy I have. You know, there are those three things I believe to be true. Some of you have heard me state those three things often enough, so you

could repeat them. Number two on that list of three things is we win. We win. Many Jesus followers say that these days; it has become almost a cliché. You know, “I read the end of the book, and we win.” But this truth, because of Jesus, means something in my life. It has made a difference. I’ve expanded and refined it a bit. I mean, if we win, let’s party now. Usually most people wait until the final buzzer sounds to start celebrating. Now...we can celebrate right now...today. Party on. The world encourages us to party like there is no tomorrow. I say we can party because there is a tomorrow. Jesus makes that difference. We have hope and peace and joy...because of Jesus. We have courage in the face of trouble and opposition—just like Peter had—because of Jesus.

Now, you know, we may not be able to articulate this with big, fancy words. We may not be able to present to folks a well-reasoned theological expose as to why we have all this hope and peace and joy. But we sure can show it. When we leave this place today, folks should take note that we have been with Jesus. They should see in us courage in the face of all that is happening around us. They should see in us hope and peace and joy. All because we have simply been with Jesus.

And...if you today are feeling hopeless... without peace...no joy...fearful...then turn to Jesus. Be with him. He will make a difference. I can guarantee that...because of Jesus.

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