

I.N.I.

Third Sunday of Easter  
April 15, 2018  
Acts 5:12, 17-32

In Christ Jesus, in whose name we declare forgiveness of sins through His shed blood and resurrection from the dead, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

In the first five chapters of Acts, Luke reports of an explosion of miracles and extraordinary events. Last week from Acts 2 we heard of the sound of the mighty rushing wind, the ball of fire and flames of fire on the heads of the apostles, their speaking in different languages and the conversion of some 3,000—the miraculous outpouring and work of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. In Acts 3 we see Peter miraculously heals a crippled beggar at the temple gate. In Acts 4 we hear of the courageous witness of Peter and John when they are arrested and hauled before the Sanhedrin. When they are **COMMANDED NOT TO SPEAK AT ALL NOR TEACH IN THE NAME OF JESUS. PETER AND JOHN ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, "WHETHER IT IS RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD TO LISTEN TO YOU MORE THAN TO GOD, YOU JUDGE. FOR WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD."**

When they were released and met with the other believers and praised God the house they were in was miraculously shaken and they were again filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the Word of God with boldness.

In Acts 5 we hear of two hypocrites within the church, Ananias and Sapphira who were exposed and immediately dropped down dead before Peter and great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things.

That brings us to our text. The enemies of Jesus first tried to stop this Jesus' movement by the guards and the seal on the tomb. When that did not work and Jesus was resurrected they lied and said His body was stolen by the disciples. When that didn't work because Jesus appeared to people for 40 days and the Apostles boldly went on proclaiming Jesus' life, death and resurrection they attacked the Apostles themselves with regulations and commands. Stop preaching! Stop speaking in Jesus' name!

We heard Peter and John's response earlier, but in our text we hear of their boldest response to date: **"WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN."** And that is our theme this morning:  
**WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN!**

These are not your pre-Pentecost Apostles speaking here. Before Jesus' resurrection, before His Ascension, before Pentecost the disciples would probably have responded by fleeing in silence. But now filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and the powerful Good News of Jesus' resurrection they could do nothing but refuse to obey those commands by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Senate.

**I: MEN, EVEN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS,  
WANT TO SUPPRESS THE EASTER MESSAGE.**

Filled with passionate anger these political leaders laid their hands on the Apostles and put all of them in a common prison. "We warned them once, and they had the audacity to not listen to us, now we will demand of them to be silent, to stop preaching this message in Jesus' name." No doubt all those religious leaders went to bed that night assured that their political power and might would cause the disciples to cower in fear and be silent. This Jesus' movement would be stopped.

But what happened? Another miracle. During the night an angel appears, unlocks and opens the doors of the prison and commands the Apostles: **"GO, STAND IN THE TEMPLE AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."**

The angel did not say, "Go, run home and get away. Keep quiet and be safe." No, the angel commands **"STAND IN THE TEMPLE"** for all to see you. The angel commands **"SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LIFE."** In other words all that Jesus has told you, you tell others. Continue to speak about Jesus' incarnation, His virgin birth, His perfect life of obedience, His suffering and crucifixion and His glorious resurrection and ascension. **ALL THE WORDS**—the full message of Christ crucified and risen again.

So the next morning when the officials went to the prison to bring out their prisoners they found the prison empty with the doors still locked. Did that remind these Jewish leaders of their attempt to

keep Jesus in the tomb with guards and a seal? That did not work, neither did this! Where were they? What had happened? With puzzled looks on their faces they wondered, what does this mean?

When suddenly someone comes running in and says "**LOOK, THE MEN WHOM YOU PUT IN PRISON ARE STANDING IN THE TEMPLE AND TEACHING THE PEOPLE!**" So much for their demands. The disciples were not intimidated at all!

Notice how the officers treat these disobedient men, **THEN THE CAPTAIN WENT WITH THE OFFICERS AND BROUGHT THEM WITHOUT VIOLENCE, FOR THEY FEARED THE PEOPLE, LEST THEY SHOULD BE STONED.** At this point in time, many Jews responded to the Apostles words and the people held them in high regard. The captain and soldiers did not want to get pelted with stones or cause a riot so there was no arrest, no show of force, just a summons to appear before the Sanhedrin which the Apostles obeyed.

In anger and possibly pretty upset the High Priest shouts, "**DID WE NOT STRICTLY COMMAND YOU NOT TO TEACH IN THIS NAME? AND LOOK, YOU HAVE FILLED JERUSALEM WITH YOUR DOCTRINE, AND INTEND TO BRING THIS MAN'S BLOOD ON US!**" Two important things to note. The High Priest reminds the Apostles of the Sanhedrin's serious charge, a **STRICT COMMAND, DO NOT** teach in this name? Second, the High Priest couldn't even say the name that is above every name, the name of Jesus.

Earlier Peter had said this to the Sanhedrin after the lame man had been healed, "**LET IT BE KNOWN TO YOU ALL, 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 STANDS HERE BEFORE YOU WHOLE.**"

These words especially **WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED**, nailed the Chief Priest with well-deserved guilt, but they were also words calling for repentance, calling them to turn to Jesus for forgiveness. And thankfully they are powerful, loving words for us too. For we are just as guilty as the High Priest. We did not give the command and cry out "Crucify Him! Crucify Him", but our sins did. Our sins nailed Jesus to the cross. It was because of our sins that Jesus had to suffer and die and be damned for us. Thank God that the Law has led us to acknowledge our sins and repent. How sad the Chief Priest did not.

Actually he gave the Apostles a high compliment, **YOU HAVE FILLED JERUSALEM WITH YOUR DOCTRINE.** We would love to have Jesus' enemies say to us at Peace Thru Christ, "You have filled Middleton, Madison, all of Dane County with your teaching." Wouldn't that be great!

Perhaps the Chief Priest remembered the words that he and the people spoke at Jesus' trial before Pilate, "**LET HIS BLOOD BE ON US AND ON OUR CHILDREN!**" But it wasn't God whom he feared, but the people, so again He commands the Apostles not to speak in this man's name.

And wonderfully we have a second point to our text:

## **II: CHRISTIANS OBEY GOD'S COMMAND TO TELL PEOPLE THE FULL EASTER MESSAGE.**

The Apostles really had no choice. Their hearts and lives were captured by Jesus' love and the great message of the powerful resurrection flowed through their very veins. They had a purpose to their lives, they had a calling, they had a commission and they could not be stopped. Earlier they said "**WE CANNOT BUT SPEAK THE THINGS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.**" Now they boldly declare, "**WE OUGHT TO OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN. THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS RAISED UP JESUS WHOM YOU MURDERED BY HANGING ON A TREE. HIM GOD HAS EXALTED TO HIS RIGHT HAND TO BE PRINCE AND SAVIOR, TO GIVE REPENTANCE TO ISRAEL AND FORGIVENESS OF SINS.**"

Amazing! And that is why we have this same message today. Had these disciples been silent, had they given in to fear and stopped speaking, the Gospel would not have spread, the Good News would not have been heard throughout Judea, Samaria, Asia Minor, Rome and the rest of the world and countless millions would not have been brought to faith. But they did not stop and the Gospel did not stop and it will not stop until Jesus comes again.

Notice our second point, **CHRISTIANS OBEY GOD'S COMMAND TO TELL PEOPLE THE FULL EASTER MESSAGE.** Not just Apostles, not just pastors and teachers, but Christians! All of us need to obey our Savior's command to get the full message out, to tell the whole world what

Jesus has done for us. If we stop speaking, if we stop spreading the Word, what will the next generation look like? We thank the Apostles and the past generations for spreading the Word, will there be believers in the future to thank our generation?

Peter ended with words we heard last Sunday, "**AND WE ARE HIS WITNESSES TO THESE THINGS, AND SO ALSO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT WHOM GOD HAS GIVEN TO THOSE WHO OBEY HIM.**"

When the Holy Spirit fills our hearts with the powerful message of Jesus' resurrection we will obey the Lord and proclaim His Word. We ended our sermon last Sunday with these words and I believe they bear repeating.

We are His witnesses! We are witnesses of the fact that Jesus has died and has risen again---and therefore repentance and forgiveness of sins can be preached to all the world.

May that start with each of us as we carry out our callings and speak to our relatives, neighbors, friends and strangers about the crucified and risen Jesus.

We pray it never happens, but if anyone tells us we cannot speak or teach in Jesus' name, even the government, we dare not meekly comply. Rather, we pray the Holy Spirit fill us with the same zeal as Peter and the Apostles so that we boldly proclaim Jesus' name and His wonderful works to all people. Jesus died and rose again.

He is still risen indeed!

Amen.