

Let It Be Known

Easter 4

Pastor Josh Frazee

Acts 4:1-12

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

“Everybody ought to know, everybody ought to know, Everybody ought to know...” Everybody ought to know, what? “(W)ho Jesus is.” That’s the chorus of an Ongoing Ambassadors for Christ song my peers in Junior High and High School and I used to sing in church services every so often at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Beardstown.

Again, that was just the chorus. The words went on: “He’s the Lily-of-the-Valley, He’s the bright and morning star, He’s the fairest of ten thousand, Everybody ought to know...What a Friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear, What a privilege to carry Everything to God in prayer. Oh what peace we often forfeit, Oh what needless pain we bear, All because we do not carry, Everything to God in prayer!...On the cross He died for sinners, And His blood makes white as snow; Loving, Living, coming Savior, He’s the One you ought to know.”

Those are the words of the three verses, in-between which were the repeating of the chorus that “Everybody ought to know, who Jesus is.”

This song of praise is useful in a few ways. For one thing, while it does repeat a phrase several times over, that is not the only thing which the song says. Many songs of praise today have you repeat the words over and over, but never tell you why we should worship Jesus. This song does, in the verses.

Another way in which this song is useful is that it teaches that knowing “who Jesus is” is more than just knowing John 3:16. All of the Scriptures point to who Jesus is, and this song refers to some. “He’s the bright and morning star,” for example, comes from Revelation 22:16, where Jesus refers to Himself as that star; and this is a fulfillment of the oracle given by Balaam back in Numbers chapter twenty-four.

The Name “Jesus” itself denotes that He is a Savior; and He was and is the Savior who was to come and who will be coming again. So we sang in Beardstown that “Everybody ought to know, who Jesus is,” just as Peter made it known that it was “by the name of Jesus Christ...(the) man (was) standing...well” in our text this morning.

Verse 1

Our text began: “(A)s they (that is, Peter and John) were speaking to the people (just a short time after Peter had declared to a lame beggar: “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk”), (after these things) 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 five thousand.”

This text is just a few verses before the sermon text which we studied a few weeks ago in which the disciples shared everything in common. It is the text in which the second movement of men came to believe in Jesus; and here we hear why. In the name of Jesus Christ, a lame beggar had been healed. Yet even here, it was not just the words “the name of Jesus Christ” which were proclaimed. “(A)ll the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s. And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: ‘Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?’” And beginning with these words, Peter declared and proclaimed to them the Word about Jesus and His Name. So it was not just a mere mentioning of Jesus’ Name that occurred, but a full teaching about Him. Peter received a great opportunity to make this proclamation here before our text; and he will receive another one in our text, as we’ll hear.

But before we get to that, note that the “priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees” were attempting to prevent Jesus’ name from being known. Is there any way in which you are attempting to keep the fullness of Jesus’ Name from being known? Do you proclaim to your friends, family, and coworkers everything about Jesus? Or do you just talk about those parts which are easy to say? Do you read and believe and proclaim all of God’s Word, or just the parts you like?

Verse 2

“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 their 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. This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become our cornerstone.’”

Once again, Peter, “filled with the Holy Spirit,” spoke about the Name of Jesus—not just the name by which He was called, but who Jesus was. He was the One who was crucified and who had been raised. He was killed for our sins and brought back to life the Third Day—not only as He Himself had taught—but even as the prophecies foretold. Back in the Psalms, it was prophesied that the Christ would be the “stone that the builders rejected,” and in Jesus, it happened.

Peter didn’t hold back in telling even the leaders of the Temple all of God’s Word about Jesus—that He was the One by whose Name the crippled man was healed, and that it was by them, the Temple leadership, that He was “crucified.” In this way, Peter by the Holy Spirit proclaimed Law. You are the ones—you are the one, who crucified Jesus. You are guilty. And as with any time that the Law is proclaimed, it could have brought about the necessary result: repentance. In this instance, we find after our text that while the leaders “were astonished” and “recognized that they (again, Peter and John) had been with Jesus,” and even “seeing the man who was healed standing beside them,” they convened and decided to command Peter and John to no longer preach in Jesus’ Name. They did not repent.

Verse 3

“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.””

Peter concludes that salvation may only be found in the Name of Jesus Christ, which, as we’ve already covered, involves much more than just His name only. And Peter ends it with an imperative, a command: “by which we must be saved.”” “Must be”, not could be, or maybe be saved, but must. The good news is we receive that salvation by faith.

In the Apology to the Augsburg Confession, it is worded this way: “Christ’s name is received only by faith. Therefore, we are saved by confidence in Christ’s name, and not by confidence in our works. For ‘the name’ here means the cause that is mentioned, because of which salvation is gained. To call upon Christ’s name is to trust in His name as the cause, or price, because of which we are saved (Ap IV 98).”

Jesus' Name means all of what He is and has done and still does for our salvation. It is His life in our places, His death in our places, and His forgiveness and promise of resurrection given to us freely because of His death in our places. All of this, as well as our trust in His Name, is granted to us freely through the Holy Spirit—the same Holy Spirit who caused Peter to speak so confidently and faithfully in the presence of those who did not believe in the Name of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you have received that same Spirit, a Spirit of confidence and faith, freely. Just as you have received the forgiveness of your sins and the assurance of everlasting life freely. All this you have received for the sake of the Name of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' Name. Amen.