

Acts 4:8–12

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, ⁹ if we are being questioned today for a kind act that was done for the lame man, as to how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead! By him this man stands before you healed. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

Sermon for Easter 3, April 18, 2021; St. Paul’s Green Garden;

Text: Acts 4:8-12

Theme: “Glorify the Power of Jesus Name”

In the name of Jesus, my dear fellow redeemed,

There may be more than a little significance that the first of the four gospel as they appear in our bibles, that written by Matthew, begins with a list of names. The list traces by name, the direct ancestors of Jesus. Each name is different and each probably had significance for the parent who gave the name to their child. But no name had as much meaning as the name Jesus. It is not that the name was uncommon.

In fact, ‘Jesus’ is the Greek form of the Hebrew name, Joshua. It means, “The Lord saves”. We are told that it was a common name among the O.T. Israelites though we find only one prominent O.T. person who had that name, the successor of Moses who was Joshua the military leader. It is clear then, that O.T. believers gave their sons that name out of faith that God would keep his promise to send the Savior. But if the name was so common why did the name Jesus, given to a babe born in Bethlehem, have so much significance? Simply because Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the fulfillment of all the promises made by God and hoped for by His people. He was the fulfillment of all the hopes represented by the people who were given the name Joshua by parents who trusted the promise of the Savior.

Now think of what the name ‘Jesus’ meant to Jesus’ enemies while he lived on earth, when he died and what it meant to them when they had to deal with the reports that Jesus had risen from the dead. Think of what the name of Jesus meant to his disciples as they followed him and learned from him. Think of what it meant to them after his resurrection and the power that they must have associated with the name Jesus. What does Jesus’ name mean to you today? Shortly after his

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resurrection the disciples had the opportunity to show people all over Jerusalem that Jesus' name deserves our praise and honor. Glorify the power Of Jesus' name. It becomes clear that though his was a name that was hated, yet it was a name chose by God. And time after time, scripture show us that it is the only name that saves.

After Pentecost is was well-known throughout Jerusalem that the group of Christians there, was growing. It was well known that this group gathered in the name of Jesus of Nazareth whom these people believed to be the Savior promised by God. Jesus had promised, "**Where two or thee are gathered in my name, there I am with them.**" 'Jesus' was a name that these early believers loved.

But it was also a name that was hated. It is significant that after Peter and John healed the crippled beggar at the temple gate, the rulers and elders and scribes had them arrested. Imagine that! Do something nice for someone and the authorities have you arrested! But you see, the miracle was connected to the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus had power and the authorities were trying their best to down play, and even snuff out the apostles' witness about the power of Jesus' name in the daily lives of people.

What the leaders then demanded to know for sure, was by what power or name they had restored the strength to the beggar's legs and feet. You see, they wanted to expose the disciples' preaching once and for all because they hated Jesus. They always had because he had shattered their belief that they were perfectly acceptable to God. Abraham was their ancestor and God had accepted him, so they reasoned that God should also accept the simply because they were descended from Abraham.

Yet Peter and John and the other disciples were preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead. That was scary for them because that would mean that Jesus IS GOD. They understood that if Jesus really was God then he was 100% in the right and they were seriously wrong. Then it was true that God accepted Jesus' absolute obedience and his death was the payment for our sins. And Yes, it seems they must have understood that if God accepted Jesus righteousness, then they had none they could offer God. Their pride in making themselves acceptable to God was shattered.

Then it was Peter's turn. Amazingly, he who had once disowned Jesus, denied even knowing him, now by the power of the Holy Spirit, gave a clear witness. "**Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, ⁹ if we are being questioned today for a kind act that was done for the lame man, as to how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that it was by the**

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name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead! By him this man stands before you healed.

Furthermore, Peter added, “**This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders.** You should have been building God’s church on the foundation of Jesus’ name. You should have been pointing everyone you met to the name of Jesus as the Savior. If you had really known the scripture prophecies about the Christ you would have done exactly that. But you rejected the one stone that holds the entire church together. And why? Because in Jesus God has provided the only way to life with him and the rulers and elders did not want to accept it because God’s way broke their sinful pride that intended to reach heaven by works that they had set as the standard for getting to heaven.

Jesus is still a name that is hated today. We know that it is hated by atheists who claim there is not God. We know it is hated by agnostics who claim they don’t know if there is a god. That may be nothing more than an excuse to not come right out and say that they hate God if he actually exists. But do you know that you and I have a sinful nature that also hates Jesus and his name? We have showed hatred for Jesus when we, in sinful pride, refuse to admit our sins, apologize to the person we have sinned against, set aside our sinful prides and receive Jesus’ forgiveness for our sins. Sinful pride is nothing less than hatred of Jesus. My sinful nature wants no help to get to heaven. Since our sinful nature will always be with us, instead of hating Jesus, we need his help every day, to repent and receive his free forgiveness.

God offers it to us in the name of Jesus. I sinfulness, people have often hated the name of Jesus. But we need to know and we need to tell the world that Jesus is the name chosen by God.

This is obvious because Jesus fulfilled his promise to Peter that they would be clothed with power from on high. This becomes very obvious by the boldness of Peter and John when they testified in front of the Sanhedrin. The disciples who had forsaken their Savior in the Garden of Gethsemane now could NOT be silenced.

When Jesus left his disciples on the Mt. of Olives at his ascension, he told them they would be his witnesses and that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came on them. Jesus fulfilled this promise to Peter and the other apostles at Pentecost, and again in this instance when Peter, who might have melted in fear before the Jewish authorities, instead have bold testimony about Jesus. Such bold testimony could only come from Peter by the Holy Spirit through the Jesus chosen by God.

And Peter adds the title Christ to Jesus’ popular name because it means the anointed one, or chosen one. Peter connected Jesus, the Christ, to the resurrection. This is proved from Jesus’ own words which he quoted from Psalm 118:22 and in

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Pentecost's 3000+ believers. The church was growing because Jesus is the cornerstone upon which all saving faith is built.

Jesus is the name upon which your faith and mine is built. Do we like the Pharisees and teachers of the law believe that we can get to heaven by doing enough good deeds to please God? The only fault with that, is that God says you must be perfect. And How will you and I ever have the assurance and approval of God that we have done enough to please him? Furthermore, God says, "**There is no one who does good. Not even one!**"

At the same time, God in scripture tells us that he chose Jesus to be our perfect substitute, to obey him and suffer the pains of hell on the cross. And even before Jesus went to the cross, the heavenly Father affirmed that he had chosen Jesus as our Savior, when he said at the Mt. of Transfiguration, "**this is by Son whom I love, with him I am well pleased.**" Because of Jesus you will never have to have any doubt that your sins are gone and that you are pleasing to God for Christ's sake.

Since Jesus is THE name chose by God, his is a name we cannot disregard. For Jesus is a must-have name for all of mankind. We would not have salvation by our own design. What could you and I and a sinful human race do without the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life we have because we know and believe in the name of Jesus?

Do you know that in the religious world people are trying to be inclusive in such a way as to undermine the name of Jesus? In some places in the country, in an effort to be inclusive. Jews, Muslims and Christians all get together in an effort to develop partnerships among all three religions. Such actions essentially put all three religions on equal footing. Yet Judaism does not accept Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world nor do Muslims. Very many people want to believe that Christianity is inclusive, that is, it accepts the belief of all religions. The truth is, Jesus IS the only name under heaven, given to people, by which we must be saved. There is no other way. People assume that they can argue with God about how we gain heaven. They want to believe that there are many paths to heaven, or they say, we all worship the same "God". What confusion.

This is the very sin for which God sent his ancient people into captivity in Babylon. They believed they could sacrifice at the temple in ways that were contrary to God's directives, with hearts that they had given over to sin, hearts that were not directed to God in repentance. Man's sinful efforts to make his own way to heaven deny what God says, "**That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.**"

God had to reveal the name of Jesus to us as the name we need to be saved. How did Saul become a believer? God revealed his truth to the persecutor of

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Christians so that he became one himself. How did the many gentiles to whom Paul preached become believers? God revealed it to them. How did the criminal on the cross become a believer? The word of God revealed it to him. Think of people you know, to whom you have witnessed. I remember a man who attended worship in one of my congregations, many years ago, but only occasionally. In 2000 he read the paperback history of our synod that we had made available in the church narthex. His complaint was that WELS thinks we are the only ones who are going to be saved. Yet nearly a decade later that same man brought his wife and two adopted children to worship at that congregation and has become a member along with his wife and children. How did that happen. He remembered what the word of God revealed to him and the Holy Spirit convinced him that Jesus IS the one way to salvation.

What we needed and God revealed to us, God also delivered. He delivered redemption, reconciliation, salvation, atonement, justification and all the other blessings we need to be his children and heirs of heaven. He gave us these gifts when he sent his Son, wrapped in human flesh to save us from the eternity of hell that would otherwise have been ours.

Jesus! Yes, Jesus! It has always been a name that is hated by some. But it is a name we never need to fear. For it is the name chosen by God. Yes, Jesus was chosen by his Father to be our Savior. The one who rose from the dead to deal the death blow to sin, Satan and hell. That means that Jesus is the only name that saves. Give glory to the power of Jesus' name. Amen.