

Sermon followed by Service - August 23, 2015 Acts 5:17-42

They did what? What were they thinking?

The apostles had been told by people with swords and spears and whips and jails: “Do not talk about Jesus.” So what do they do? They talk about Jesus. And then when they’re arrested for teaching about Jesus, when God sends an angel to get them out of jail, what do the apostles do? First thing in the morning, they go to the temple courts and start teaching about Jesus. When they get out of jail, they don’t lay low for a while. They don’t save their Jesus-teaching for some out-of-the-way room. They don’t go into hiding. But first thing in the morning, they go right back to teaching about Jesus, in a place where they’re sure to be seen and heard, a place where they’re sure to be caught. What were they thinking?

And then when they’re arrested again, and the people with swords and spears and whips and jails say: “We told you not to teach about Jesus,” what does Peter say? “We must obey God rather than men.” And when the men with swords and spears and whips and jail say: “You’re trying to make us guilty of this man’s blood (Did you notice? They wouldn’t even say Jesus’ name),” what do the apostles say? “You did kill him.” The apostles didn’t keep quiet. They didn’t go soft on the Truth. Even when faced by swords and spears and whips and jail, they said it like it is. What were they thinking?

And then ... this is what gets me. When the apostles were beaten and flogged - Luke says it like it was no big deal - after they had gotten a good thrashing, what do the apostles do? They don’t sulk. They don’t roll over and hide. They don’t whine and complain. They don’t turn against God or quit on Jesus. What do the apostles do? They rejoice!

We might wonder: “What were they thinking? What was going through their minds?” Luke tells us. They rejoiced **“because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.”** Some day we will see ourselves in the glory of heaven, sharing the glory of Jesus, and we will rejoice in that glory of being with Jesus in heaven. But here the apostles are rejoicing in their disgrace - “We’re being thrashed for Jesus! We’re being counted with Jesus!”

What was going through the apostles’ minds? A new way of thinking. “Life isn’t about me and my comfort. Life isn’t about me getting my way. Life is from God and life is for God. Jesus gave his life for me. Jesus is giving new life to me. What will I do with this new life Jesus is giving me? I will live my life for him.”

It almost sounds easy, doesn’t it? I’m not saying it was easy or is easy. The apostles saw the swords and spears and whips and jails. They heard the hate. They felt the pain of the thrashing. Not only that, but at the same time, they saw so many of their neighbors going about their business with little thought of God. They heard their neighbors having fun with no real thought of God. Hearing that, seeing that, I imagine they were tempted just as we are tempted - to live with little or no thought of God, to live as if life were about getting our way, getting our share of the good life.

But those apostles saw something more than their neighbors doing their own thing with little or no thought of God. They saw something more than their neighbors living the life of the world. And they saw something more than swords and spears and jails.

They saw Jesus. They saw how Jesus faced a world filled with so many people willing to live with little or no thought of God. They

saw how Jesus faced Satan and temptation. They saw Jesus live with all his heart, all his soul, all his strength for God. They saw how Jesus faced sword and spear and cross and death. Nothing would stop him from doing what God gave him to do. Sin and Satan couldn't stop him, all the evil in this world couldn't get Jesus to quit. They saw Jesus live for God and they saw Jesus die for them.

And the apostles saw something more. Now those who can't stand what Jesus says, those who want to silence Christ and his church - they refuse to see this. And those who go about their business with little or no thought of God - they don't see it. If they did see it, they wouldn't just be going about their own business, would they? They'd be fired up for God's business, wouldn't they?

So what was that something more that the apostles saw in Jesus? The apostles saw that Jesus wasn't just a good guy killed, dead and gone. They saw Jesus as sent by God to live for us, to die for us, to gain God's forgiveness so we can live life with God. And no matter what Jesus' enemies did, they couldn't stop Jesus; they couldn't break Jesus. Instead, God raised Jesus back to life and exalted him as Prince and Savior in heaven. What did that mean for Peter and the apostles? With Jesus in heaven as Prince and Savior, no matter how Jesus' enemies might try to stop them, break them, shut them up, Peter and the apostles knew - with Jesus - they were free and safe to live the life Jesus had for them. They were free and safe to share the promise of forgiveness in Jesus, the promise of life in Jesus.

With that forgiveness, Jesus gives something else. Jesus gives repentance, a change of mind, a new mind. Instead of being stuck thinking that this life - good or bad - is all there is, we get to live like we're going to heaven. The bad of this world doesn't have to break us. The good of this world doesn't have to distract us. We have Jesus

as our Prince and Savior giving us a new way of looking at this world - we get to live like we're going to heaven.

So when the apostles saw the swords and spears, and felt the thrashing, that didn't break them. When they saw so many of their neighbors doing their own thing, enjoying life with little or no thought of God, and with no thrashing, that didn't distract them. They kept on living the life that God gave them - a life of witnessing to Jesus ... a life of finding joy in being counted with Jesus! ... no matter who or what was against them.

“Isn't it a relief to know that God isn't giving that life to us? Isn't it a relief to know that Jesus sent the apostles out, that he sends others out, but our place in this world is just to go about our business?” That's devil-talk. That's the way the devil wants us to think. The devil wants us to think that sharing Jesus isn't our thing. The devil wants us to think we're too guilty, too much the sinner to talk about Jesus. The devil wants us to think that we're too outnumbered, too alone to talk about Jesus. The devil wants us to think that life is too hard and we're too tired to share Jesus. He wants us to think that life is too good and we're too busy enjoying life to talk about Jesus. I could go on, but I don't need to, do I? Because that's not just devil-talk, we recognize that talk as our own old way of thinking.

But Jesus has given us a new way to think. Jesus didn't just call the apostles or someone else, Jesus has called you and me to share the Good News of life with God. We don't have to let past guilt shut us up, we get to speak up as if we are forgiven and right by God, because you are forgiven and right by God. We don't have to let fear shut us up as if we were alone and outnumbered, we get to speak up as if Jesus himself is with us - because the Prince and Savior of heaven is

with you! We don't need to live like this life, this world with its good and its bad is all we have and all that matters; we get to live like we're going to heaven - because with Jesus you are going to heaven.

Thinking like that, there may well be times we say things or do things that get people wondering - "What are they thinking? What's going on in their minds?" But that's alright, because what are we thinking? What is going through our minds? Jesus! And there's no better thinking than Jesus! Amen.

NEW MORNING PRAISE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... for what or for whom would you be willing to die? For what or for whom would you be willing to stand up and speak up knowing that you would be knocked down?

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see and hear of apostles and prophets willing to be knocked down, even willing to die - we see them standing up, speaking up, praising God for the opportunity to serve and suffer with Jesus. What are we willing to do or to give up for Jesus?

OPENING HYMN

“Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus”

Hymn 704

Let us ever walk with Jesus, follow his example pure,
flee the world which would deceive us and to sin our souls allure.
Ever in his footsteps treading, body here, yet soul above,
full of faith and hope and love, let us do the Father’s bidding.
Faithful Lord, abide with me; Savior, lead; I follow thee.

Let us suffer here with Jesus, to his image e’er conform;
heaven’s glory soon will please us, sunshine follow on the storm.
Though we sow in tears of sorrow, we shall reap in heav’nly joy,
and the fears that now annoy shall be laughter on the morrow.
Christ, I suffer here with thee; there, O share thy joy with me.

Let us also die with Jesus; his death from the second death,
from our soul’s destruction, frees us, quickens us with life’s glad breath.
Let us mortify, while living, flesh and blood and die to sin,
and the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate to heaven.
Jesus, here I die to thee, there to live eternally.

Let us gladly live with Jesus; since he’s risen from the dead,
death and grave must soon release us. Jesus, thou art now our head.
We are truly thine own members, where thou livest, there live we;
take and own us constantly, faithful Friend, as thy dear brethren.
Jesus, here I live to thee, also there eternally.

OPENING SENTENCES - SUNG

O Lord, open my lips, **and my mouth shall declare your praise.**

Hasten to save me, O God; **O Lord, come quickly to help me.**

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION OF SINS

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: **Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.**

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will. **Amen.**



Give glory to God, our light and our life.



Come, O come, let us wor - ship.

COME, O COME, LET US SING TO THE LORD



Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,

let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;
 come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,
 come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.
 1 You are a great and a won - drous God,
 2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,
 cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.
 kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.
 You made the hills and the moun - tains high,
 You are the God whom we call our own,
Refrain
 you made the seas and the dry land.
 we are the flock that you shep - herd.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty and most merciful God, the protector of all who trust in you, strengthen our faith, and give us courage to believe that in your love you will rescue us from all adversities; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles.

Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people." At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings! The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross. God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt.

He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.”

His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 27D

Refrain

We are sing - ing, for the LORD is our light, we are
sing-ing, for the LORD is our light. We are sing - ing, for the
LORD is our light, we are sing-ing, for the LORD is our light.
We are sing-ing, oh, we are sing-ing, for the
LORD is our light. We are sing - ing,

oh, we are sing-ing, for the LORD is our light.

Verses

The LORD is the strength of our lives; of
 One thing have we asked of the LORD, yes,
 When bur - dens are heav - y to bear, our
 We walk in the strength of the LORD; God's

whom shall we be a - fraid? Though foes may be
 this is the thing we seek: to dwell in the
 shel - ter is God a - lone. Our feet are
 love is ev - er sure. We shout that the

near to de - stroy, the LORD will be our light.
 house of the LORD, to live with God for - ev - er.
 lift - ed high, yes, high up - on a rock.
 world may hear; we sing a joy - ful song.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Mark 12:10b-11

Alleluia. "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes!" Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Mark 8:31-38

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

HYMN

"Blest Are They"
Hymn 690

Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.
Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

Refrain

Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!

Blest are they, the lowly ones, they shall inherit the earth.
Blest are they who hunger and thirst, they shall have their fill.

Refrain

Rejoice and be glad! Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad! Yours is the kingdom of God!

Blest are they who show mercy, mercy shall be theirs.
Blest are they, the pure of heart, they shall see God! *Refrain*

Blest are they who seek peace, they are the children of God.
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs. *Refrain*

Blest are you who suffer hate all because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom; shine for all to see. *Refrain*

SERMON

Acts 5

HYMN

"God, We Praise You"

Hymn 971

God, we praise you! God, we bless you! God, we name you sov' reign Lord!
Mighty King whom angels worship, Father, by your Church adored:
All creation shows your glory; heav'n and earth draw near your throne,
singing, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts and God alone!"

True apostles, faithful prophets, saints who set their world ablaze,
martyrs, once unknown, unheeded, join one growing song of praise,
while your Church on earth confesses one majestic Trinity:
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God, our hope eternally.

Jesus Christ, the King of glory, everlasting Son of God,
humble was your virgin mother, hard the lonely path you trod:
By your cross is sin defeated, hell confronted face to face,
heaven opened to believers, sinners justified by grace.

Christ, at God's right hand victorious, you will judge the world you made;
Lord, in mercy help your servants for whose freedom you have paid:
Raise us up from dust to glory; guard us from all sin today.
King enthroned above all praises, save your people, God, we pray.

OFFERING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, fill each and every one of our hearts with your deep concern for lost souls; with your Son's spirit of willing sacrifice; and with your Holy Spirit's power to spread the Gospel far and near. **Amen.**

OFFERING

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

"God of Grace and God of Glory"

Hymn 770

God of grace and God of glory, on your people pour your pow'r;
crown your ancient Church's story, bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the facing of this hour.

Lo, the hosts of evil round us scorn the Christ, assail his ways.
From the fears that long have bound us free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage for the living of these days.

Cure your children's warring madness; bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

Save us from weak resignation to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage, serving you whom we adore.

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

M: O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING



The Lord bless and keep you.



A - men.



The Lord's face ev - er shine up - on you.



A - men.



CLOSING HYMN

"Onward, Christian Soldiers"

Hymn 869

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
 with the cross of Jesus going on before.
 Christ, the royal master, leads against the foe;
 forward into battle see his banners go!

Refrain

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
 with the cross of Jesus going on before.

Like a mighty army moves the Church of God;
 brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.
 We are not divided, all one body we,
 one in hope and doctrine, one in charity. *Refrain*

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
 but the Church of Jesus constant will remain.
 Gates of hell can never 'gainst that Church prevail;
 we have Christ's own promise, and that cannot fail. *Refrain*

Onward, then, ye faithful, join our happy throng,
 blend with ours your voices in the triumph song:
 Glory, laud, and honor unto Christ the King;
 this through countless ages saints and angels sing. *Refrain*

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