

Sermon: The Undeniable Truth

Text: Acts 3 & 4

Discussion Questions:

From what you know about the life the Apostle Peter, what would you guess to be the very lowest point of his entire life? My guess is that it was the night we now call Maundy Thursday. The night that Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with His disciples in the upper room, and was later arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Things really started to go wrong for Peter when, during the meal, Jesus looked at Simon Peter and said: “*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.*” (Luke 22:31). Peter shot back, “*Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and death!*” To which Jesus replied, “*Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.*”

A bit later that night, while in the Garden, Peter (and to be fair, all of the other disciples) can't remain awake at the moment in Jesus' life when He needs him the most—which is terribly disappointing to Jesus. And when the soldiers arrive to arrest Jesus, Peter (I'm sure thinking he's making good on his promise to “die for Jesus”) literally cuts the ear off of one of the men who has come to arrest Jesus. It was NOT the right thing to do. But things got worse. In his moment of deepest darkness, Peter did exactly what Jesus said he would. He denied that he even knew Jesus—all of this as Jesus was being condemned to death.

- Put yourself in Peter's sandals. This goes way beyond feeling embarrassed or “stupid.” These missteps must have taken Peter to a very dark place. Can you relate? Has there ever been a time in your life when you felt like you let yourself or others down like this? How long does it take to get over these kinds of things?

This morning, we are looking at the events of Acts chapters 3 & 4. These two chapters tell the story of a day when Peter and John were going to the temple in Jerusalem—and on their way passed by a disabled man begging for money. Instead of handing the man a couple of coins, Peter takes the man by his right hand—pulls him to his feet—and heals him “in the name of Jesus!” This healing was an undeniable display of God's amazing power (the man had been unable to walk his entire life—more than 40 years!). All of this caused a crowd, which drew the attention of the religious leaders, which led to Peter and John being thrown in jail for the night, which led to Peter preaching a sermon, and which ultimately led to hundreds of people putting their faith in Christ. Peter BOLDLY proclaims to the religious leaders in Acts 4:12 that, “***Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved,***”

- The first thing we need to understand about this account is that it took place within a few months of the crucifixion (and the night that Peter denied Christ). How is it possible that a man (Peter) so broken—could then be so filled with faith and power within the span of less than 100 days? What had to have happened?
- Look very closely at the CONTENT of what Peter was preaching in Acts 4:1-2. What was it that he and John were proclaiming?
- The religious leaders wanted to know “by what power” Peter healed this man. Take a closer look at verses 8-10. How does Peter answer this question?

Examination:

- Read **Acts Chapter 3**
 - Think back to the days immediately following the cross and resurrection. Jesus appears to the disciples in the upper room—and the door is locked tight! Why?
 - Here we are less than 100 days later, and Peter & John are walking to the temple in the middle of the afternoon through one of the busiest gates. They don't display even an ounce of fear. Why is that? What happened? What changed?
 - The fact that Peter had to tell the man to "look at us!" in verse 4 tells us that this man wasn't looking. What's your guess as to why not? Where was he looking?
 - Why do you think we're told in verse 7 that Peter "took him by the right hand"?
 - What are some words you would use to describe the disabled man's response?
 - Peter addresses the crowd (vv. 12, 17) as "fellow Israelites." He then talks about "*The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of OUR fathers, (who) glorified His servant Jesus.*" Why is this important? Why does Peter make this connection?
 - Peter makes it clear that the people he was speaking to were the same people who shouted to spare Barabbas and crucify Jesus. They knew exactly what Peter was talking about. Take some time to read (out loud) verse 15. **WHAT HAPPENED THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING?** What happened that changed Peter? What happened that gave Peter the power to heal the lame man? What is that same power able to accomplish in OUR lives?
 - What does Peter tell the crowd in verses 19-20 that they must do? Do you understand what this means? Is this something that you, personally, have done?
 - Peter talks in verse 21 about the fact that "heaven must receive" Jesus until the time comes for all things to be restored. What do you think this means?
 - Peter makes clear in verse 16 that it's not just the name of Jesus that healed the man—it is FAITH in the name of Jesus. I recently heard a pastor say that faith isn't a "lever" (something we "pull" to make God "do something"); rather, it's a lens (a way of seeing the way things really are). What does faith enable us to see?

- Read **Acts 4:1-20**
 - We learn from 1 Corinthians 15:6 that "Jesus appeared to more than five hundred people" after the resurrection. Some of them might have even been in the crowd that day in the temple. How does this VERIFICATION of the resurrection change everything? What do you think the religious leaders said in the face of this undeniable truth?
 - What do you think the religious leaders expected Peter to say when they asked him, "By what power or what name did you do this?" (v. 7) What does Peter say?
 - Take a much closer look at the words in verse 10: "It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified **but whom God raised from the dead.**" How does the resurrection change everything? How did it change Peter? How is it that the resurrection of Jesus stands at the very center of Christianity? How does the resurrection of Jesus PROOVE that Jesus is the Son of God?
 - What "undeniable truths" are found in verses 13-17?
 - Peter says in verse 20 that he can't stop speaking about what he has seen and heard. What has he seen and heard that he can't stop speaking of?

Application:

What area of your life do you need God to help you with? Call out to Him! He is alive!