

**Theme:** As You Are Going: The Church on Mission

**Message:** Boldness – Acts 4:13-37

**Aim:** We can have the boldness of the early Church. Pray for it.

**Intro:** What is it that characterizes our church today? How would you describe our church family in one word or a few words? (Opportunity for response?) Loving? Welcoming? Worship? Service? Giving? Truth? Those are good, descriptive words I hope we can always live up to. But another word that describes the early church & should describe us is boldness. Boldness is defined as “willingness to take risks &/or act innovatively; confidence or courage; a brave & confident way of behaving; the opposite of shyness or fear.” As we find the word in our text today, it means, according to Strong’s, “confidence; freedom in speaking, unreservedness, free & fearless confidence, cheerful courage.”

Theme: As you are going; the Church on mission. I would submit to you that if we are to be a church on mission, we need to have the boldness of the early church. I would further submit to you that we can have the boldness of the early church! Acts 4:13-37 [READ]. I) **Their boldness was Holy Spirit boldness; truth boldness.** As Pastor Derek pointed out last week, Peter & John were arrested & brought before the Sanhedrin, made up of Sadducees & Pharisees & High Priests & priests & elders – all religious leaders & highly educated men. Luke reported that these aristocrats were “astonished” at the boldness of Peter & John. “They perceived that they were uneducated, common men.” Peter & John had been fishermen, who were as a group often unlearned, even illiterate. The Greek word for “common” is “idiotes.” It’s clear what English word we get from that (idiots). It means they were “unskilled, unlearned, untrained,” except, as far as they knew, in fishing. But they also recognized that these 2 “had been w/Jesus,” which Peter & John would tell you made all the difference. They had spent 3 ½ years w/Jesus & had been taught by Him, & more than that, they had seen & touched the resurrected Jesus, & their lives were transformed. I wonder, do others recognize that we have been w/Jesus? Is His light/love reflected in our lives? You don’t have to be highly educated/trained to serve God or be a witness for Christ. Get all the good education you can, be a student of God’s word; but most important is Holy Spirit teaching & leading. The

apostles were educated by Jesus & the Holy Spirit & they knew the Scriptures. They had been filled w/the Spirit, so their boldness was Holy Spirit boldness. They were convinced of the truth of the resurrection of Christ, & they were witnesses of the healing of the lame man, truths they could not deny, & so their boldness was truth boldness. The religious leaders couldn't deny the healing of this man & they had no argument against the resurrection of Christ. David Gudzik remarked that the "Jewish leaders did not make any attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus. If it were possible to do, this was the time to do it, yet they could not." F.F. Bruce agreed: "Had it seemed possible to refute them on this point, how readily would the Sadducees have seized the opportunity! Had they succeeded, how quickly & completely the new movement would have collapsed!" So, Peter & John were bold w/Holy Spirit boldness. A. T. Pierson wrote: "No one attribute is more needed today for Christ's witnesses that Holy Spirit boldness due to Holy Spirit fullness." II) **They made a bold choice.** They put Peter & John out of the meeting & discussed the matter further. It's possible that the Apostle Paul, then Saul of Tarsus, later told Luke what the council discussed, as he would have been a young Pharisee at the time. The council decided they would "warn them to speak no more to anyone in" the name of Jesus. To the council, it was that simple, cut & dry. No one would dare defy their authority. However, they should have realized that these bold men who had been w/Jesus would not be deterred that easily. They warned them, but Peter & John – both of them simultaneously – answered: "*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge.*" What would they advise anyone else, these leading religious men who claimed to speak for God? "*We cannot but speak of what we have seen & heard.*" We can't stop speaking; we cannot not speak of Jesus. Peter & John couldn't know how the council would response, but they only had one answer, one choice, as far as they were concerned. That reminds me of Martin Luther, when ordered to recant his claims against the Catholic Church: "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason, I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other. My conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and

will not recant anything.” So, Peter & John made the bold choice that they would not/ could not be pressured into silence. They had to preach Jesus, come what may. That was probably somewhat unexpected by the council, but they didn’t know what else to do, because the people were praising God for the miracle of healing & many more were being added to the Church. So, they threatened them further & then let them go. III) **They (Peter & John) & the others prayed a bold (& essential) prayer.** Peter & John went straight to where their friends/companions were gathered – perhaps it was the rest of the apostles & who knows how many others, probably gathered to pray for Peter & John. They reported to them what the council had said, then the whole group joined in prayer – vs24-30. As Gudzik remarked, they prayed in unity, remembering to whom they prayed – our creator God, the Sovereign Lord who spoke thru Scripture. In their prayer they quoted Psalm 2, which David wrote, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It was a very fitting Psalm, describing what had happened to Jesus & was happening to them. The Gentiles (nations, represented by the Romans) raged against God & His anointed, Jesus, crucifying Him. These same religious leaders who arrested Peter & John were complicit in the death of Christ, delivering Him up. It was Psalm 2 being fulfilled to the fullest. But it was all according to God’s sovereign plan & purpose. Now the religious leaders were threatening the disciples & the young Church which the Holy Spirit planted. Peter & John had boldly declared their choice, but what about the rest of the Church? They prayed – not for God to simply protect them & make things easier for them; not for the religious leaders & worldly powers to let them be. They prayed for boldness, to be confident, like Peter & John, to speak the word of God/gospel w/all boldness, while God stretched out His hand (as He had already done) to confirm the truth thru miracles of healing, deliverance & transformation in Jesus’ name. They didn’t throw up their hands & bemoan. They didn’t resign themselves to defeat. They didn’t even consider forgoing their witness for Christ. They prayed for boldness, for freedom in speaking, for

cheerful courage in the face of this opposition. Brothers & sisters, if we are to be a church on mission, that must be our prayer! Luke records that when they had prayed, “the place in which they were gathered together was shaken...” God, by His manifested presence, provided an earthquake in response to their prayers, like that which shook Mt. Sinai when God came down upon it. “And they were all filled w/the Holy Spirit...” Like Pastor Derek shared last week, the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost. His presence hadn’t diminished. Yet, Paul urges us in Ephesians 5:18 to be “filled (continually being filled) w/the Spirit.” I think that means giving way to the Spirit, to be under the influence/control of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit moved in & among them. We need to give way to the Spirit & be under His influence continually if we are to be on mission for Christ. “And they continued to speak the word of God w/boldness.” This described not just Peter & John & the other apostles, but all the disciples/believers. The religious leaders had stirred up a hornets’ nest! God answered their prayer w/power & the gospel went forth. IV) **They continued in their bold commitment to Christ & one another** – vs32-37. This is another summary statement from Luke. We don’t know the time span here – perhaps months or even years from the time of the lame man’s healing. “The full number” = the whole Church, was united – one heart & soul. We must be united in Christ & in mission. As Luke reported before, these united believers “had everything in common” – no one was needy who need was not addressed. Again, this was not communism, where what you have is taken for the whole, but communion, where what you have is given by loving choice to whoever needs it. As said before, some would have definitely needed it, having been disowned by family or stayed in Jerusalem to be taught & grounded in their new-found faith; being homeless & jobless. But the Church stepped up. Those who owned land sold it & gave the proceeds to the Church to be distributed to those in need. This didn’t happen all at once but over time, as needs were made known. A prime example of this was a man named Joseph, called Barnabas by his fellow believers. He “sold a field...& brought the money

& laid it at the apostles' feet." People became more important than things. Is that true for us? Especially, do we care more about those who need Jesus than our own comfort & prosperity? Note something I skipped over – vs33: God supplied great power & great grace. The apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus w/power. God's favor & blessing was upon the Church, these bold men (& women) who made a bold choice to obey God, who prayed for boldness to speak the word of God & boldly kept their commitment to Christ, boldly lived for Jesus, boldly loved one other, & boldly took the gospel to those around them. If we're to be a church on mission, we must do the same, knowing that the same God who gave great power & great grace to the early Church will do the same for His going church today as well.