

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Fourth Sunday of Easter — April 21, 2024

“By what power or by what name did you do this?”

– Acts 4:7b –

Important people are mentioned in today’s passage. They were men of power and position; they were from the high priestly family. They were accompanied by the rulers, elders and scribes. These men made up the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews. The court was mostly made up of Sadducees, men from a sect of Judaism that did not believe in resurrection. Though some Jews believed in a doctrine of resurrection, the Sadducees adamantly rejected it. This is why the disciples’ preaching was particularly disturbing to them. They could not allow the idea of resurrection to gain popularity among the people. They had to put a stop to it, so Peter and John were arrested.

The catalyst for this arrest was the healing of the lame beggar who asked Peter and John for alms. Instead of money, Peter commanded the lame beggar to walk, by the name of Jesus. Peter gave the man a new life and then told the amazed crowds that it was not by his power or ability that the beggar was healed; the healing came by the power of the one they had crucified, the one God raised from the dead. Peter told the people, “Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.” He spoke about the forgiveness that comes from Jesus Christ.

The court asked Peter and John about the power and name they invoked for the healing. Peter answered, “If we’ve been arrested because we kindly helped a cripple, then know this: it is Jesus’ name that healed the man.” Jesus is the source of their power. The Sanhedrin might have let them go, except they did more than just heal the man. They offered forgiveness of sins, the same blasphemous crime that Jesus committed.

The Sanhedrin, especially the high priests, rejected the capstone of everything the disciples preached: the resurrection of Jesus which gave Him the authority to transform the world. This was the crime for which they had been arrested. The proclamation that Jesus is the only way to salvation took away the power of the Jewish leaders; that is why they destroyed Jesus in the first place and why the world still threatens the faithful today. We need not fear because Jesus continues to be the power and authority behind the forgiveness that blots out our sins.

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