

(Peter replied) Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled men, they were astonished and noted that these men had been with Jesus. Since they could see the healed man standing there, there was nothing they could say. So they conferred. "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further, we must warn these men to speak no longer in this name."

Then they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." After further threats they let them go. All the people were praising God for what had happened.

How important is a name? Very, right? One of the jokes we told at the Seminary demonstrates that. Years ago, when they were selecting a new Pope, a man from Spain was given strong consideration. His name was Cardinal Sicola. However, the College of Cardinals decided against him in the end. Could you imagine the name, Pope Sicola?

"There is no other name!" Peter and John were part of a culture who understood the construct "name" perhaps a little differently than we do today. To mention the name of a god was not something done lightly. The name of the god represented the power and presence of the god and its use brought the god too close for comfort. Hence rival factions invoked the names of their gods at the time of battle to bring to bear the fierce power of the gods. We keep the tradition alive when we pray to God or ask that "God bless America!"

Peter and John understood the God of the Jews in a new and significant way. The teachings of Jesus cast the law in a new light; in fact, Jesus, in his person, was the fulfillment of the law. God's love and mercy were revealed in a new way. God was, in fact, Jesus.

Jesus has opened the door for us to reclaim our life with God. **He is the only way.** There is no other name to give us a place in heaven. That may sound arrogant, but not if it is what the Bible teaches. And, if that is only my opinion, that would be quite true. But it's not an opinion, it's Biblical truth. Hindus, the Muslims, and Buddhists may seem like good people, but they not going to heaven if they don't embrace Jesus.

What will God look for on judgment day? Faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Nothing more; nothing less. Jesus is and always will be the only name, the only way to salvation. What does it say in Mark's Gospel? **"He that believes and is baptized will be saved; he that does not believe will be condemned."** That's just the truth from God. It remains the business of the believer to proclaim Christ as redeemer to anyone who listens. It is God's business and the business of the Spirit to take it from there. Salvation is found in on one else.

What is salvation? It's one of those 'church-words' that we know is good but have a hard time defining. Salvation is God saving us for eternity in Heaven. He did that through Jesus' efforts on our behalf which the Holy Spirit leads us to believe.

Let's see how the Holy Spirit sought to plant seeds of faith in Jesus in the hearts of the people. To recap what's happening in Acts 3, there is a narrative about a lame man who was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful. Friends or family brought him to that gate to beg. This was the first century equivalent of a welfare program. When this poor man saw Peter and John about to enter the gate, he asked them for money. But, boy, did he get a surprise. Peter turned to the man and said, ***"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."***

Instantly the man's legs became strong and he began walking and jumping, and praising God. This was one happy guy. People who recognized him were filled with wonder and amazement. A huge crowd gathered. Peter began preaching to the crowd about the resurrected Jesus. This disturbed the Sadducees, for many who heard the message believed.

The Sadducees were particularly disturbed by the Apostles' claim that Jesus was resurrected from the dead. The Sadducees didn't believe in resurrection from the dead. Christ's resurrection, if true, presented them with a real dilemma. It struck down one of their core beliefs. And so they seized Peter and John and had them put in jail. The following morning those who were disturbed by the Apostles' teaching interrogated Peter. ***"By what power or what name did you do this?"*** they asked. Instead of answering their question, Peter took the opportunity to do a little teaching.

Peter confirmed that this lame man was healed through the name of Jesus. This was the same Jesus, he said, whom the religious leaders had crucified but, in fulfillment of scriptures, God had raised from the dead. It was God's power in them to do this miracle. And since it was from God, he continued, tell us, ***"is it right to obey God rather than men?"***

Then we read another important point of our reading today: they noted that Peter & John had been with Jesus. What a difference he made in them. Can people say that of you? How are you different? What does it mean to be with him? I know if I were not 'in Jesus' I would be very different. Not only would I not be in Woodbridge, but my whole attitude would be very different. Wouldn't yours? I'd try to get away with everything I could, right? I would care only about myself. I would live selfishly. Most people would do the same, wouldn't they?

But being with Jesus means we are different. It means we hold our heads high because the name of Jesus is in us and for us and through us. Being with Jesus calls us to a higher level cuz we represent the King. Jesus put his name on us in Baptism. We are his and He is ours.

What does the name Jesus mean to you in your everyday life? There are people who use Christ's name only as a curse word. Should we? Can we? Heaven help people who use it like that. It is a precious name to us. It is a name we use each time we pray. When we serve the Lord's Supper or baptize or when we attend to any of the ministries of the church, we do it in Jesus' name. It is a name above all names. And as you leave this place today, take that name with you and treat it with reverence.

A former professor of mine was preaching in a crusade in Romania just after the Communist world of Eastern Europe was collapsing. His audience, so long deprived of God and His Word, was large and attentive. As he preached, he became conscious of a sound that swept across his audience. Slowly he recognized that the wave of sound came every time he used the name of Jesus. Then he realized that it was the people in the crowd crying. When communism was shown for its true bankruptcy, the name of Jesus takes on great power.

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, told them that, if they were coming to them because of what had happened to this handicapped man, then they should know that, **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. There is no other name by which we must be saved."** Here is the line drawn in the sand. There is no other name . . . Here is where we separate ourselves from all other religions. There is no other name . . .

There are 3 major differences between Xnity and other religions. First, our Scripture is error-free. All others have mistakes and corruptions in them. Second, we have a God that serves us, not the other way around. Heaven is free; we don't have to make sacrifices or complete actions to make Him happy. And, finally, and most importantly, Grace. God loves us even though we don't deserve it.

Jesus Is God's attempt to reach out to humanity. Here is why we say that **"there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."** Jesus is not humanity's attempt to reach God. Jesus is God's attempt to reach humanity. Jesus shows us God's heart, God's love, God's forgiveness, God's grace.

Have we dishonored Jesus' name by throwing it around carelessly? Ignored him for days at a time as if he was totally unimportant? Worshipped him a few times a year as if he hasn't done much for you? He loves us even when we disobey like when we fail to treasure his name. When we resist his commandments; when we aren't loving to God or to others; when we disgrace God's name by our disobedience. We can't fix huge mistakes we've made before God. But God did. He fixed all our sins—huge and small—with the sacrifice of his Son. Jesus died and God forgave all your sins. His complete forgiveness is for you, for your children, for all people wherever they live.

What we are seeking, then, is to introduce people to the person of Jesus. We believe that Jesus is **"the Way, the Truth and the Life"**. What we believe about Jesus is this: he is the bridge between God and humanity. Salvation is found nowhere else, for there is no other name under Heaven given to men by which we must be saved. That is Biblical certainty.

Now, I know I'm dating myself, but do you remember Alice Cooper? It was shocking when Cooper reported that he had become a believer in Jesus a few years ago. In an interview with a London newspaper, Cooper commented, "Drinking beer is easy. Trashing your hotel room is easy. Getting girls is easy. But being a Christian, that's a tough call. That's rebellion."

It isn't easy being a Christian. But it is wonderful. I believe if you truly come to know him, you will have a passion for him. People will note that you too have been with Jesus. There is no other name by which we can be saved.

EXTRA MATERIAL

Some of you perhaps have seen the movie *Cast Away* starring Tom Hanks. It was a big hit a few years ago. Hanks' character finds himself alone on a tiny island in the South Pacific, the lone survivor after an airplane crash. Desperate for a friend, Hanks paints a human face on a volleyball that has washed ashore. Then he begins to speak to the volleyball as if it were a human being. He even gives his volleyball a name, "Wilson." Once the volleyball has a name, he is able to relate to it as if it were human.