*DEVOTIONAL*

November 13 - 18

*“Boldness”*

**Monday, November 13 Acts 4:1-4**

 *“They preached the resurrection from the dead”*

 Acts 4 marks the beginning of resistance to evangelism in the life of the church, a feature that has been true of her life during the twenty centuries that have followed. Here, as at the outset of the ministry of Jesus, the Jewish people in general seem to have been favorable towards the church while the authorities are beginning to express hostility.

 The apostles preached the resurrection – Christ’s and their own – with boldness. They were the Easter people for whom Christ’s resurrection was the central fact of history and the focus of their faith in a living Lord. The experience of the empty tomb gave them a mission and a message. What had happened to them, they wanted to happen through the Spirit to everyone who believed in Christ. And, many believed!

 Peter and John are seized by the priests, the captain of the temple guard, and the Sadducees who were particularly disturbed about the message of the resurrection. To say that Christ rose would buttress people’s hope in the resurrection, a belief the Sadducees rejected.

*May your church, Lord, continue to preach the resurrection of the dead. Amen.*

**Tuesday, November 14 Acts 4:5-12**

*“He was healed in the name of Jesus”*

 The name of Jesus was at the center of the apostles’ ministry. The Lord had promised that he would be with them and whatever they asked in his name would be given them. It was in the name of the Lord Jesus that they had healed the lame man who now stood with them before the Sanhedrin as living testimony. And yet, it was with a supercilious, mocking tone that the high priest had asked by what name they had performed the miracle, implying that it had been by some magical formula or incantation of an exorcist.

 Peter’s response leaves no doubt as to what name healed the lame man. It was Jesus of Nazareth, the same Jesus whom the Sanhedrin condemned to crucifixion. Peter goes on to make very clear that this Jesus was none other than the Messiah, and only in his name can we be saved. The powerful name of Jesus is available to us today. In the name of Jesus, we have access to the heart of God and an assurance of his salvation, guidance and power.

*I pray in your name, Jesus, for it is the name that has saved me. Amen.*

**Wednesday, November 15 Acts 4:13-22**

*“They were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John”*

 The ruling of the Sanhedrin was a gift of God! The prohibition against speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus solidified the apostles and the church in courageous witness in a way that could never have happened without opposition. Peter and John had to decide whether to be obedient to God or to the Sanhedrin. Now they could understand experientially what Jesus had meant when he had challenged them to seek first the kingdom of God and put him first before family, friends, recognition, or popularity.

 We live in a time when strong convictions about faith are suspect, and our need to be liked drains our courage. C. S. Lewis says about a character in one of his novels: “Mark liked to be liked. There was a good deal of spaniel in him.” There may be a good deal of spaniel in all of us. But when the issues are focused, we are forced to decide where the real center of our lives is located – in the name of Christ or in the opinions of the world. Opposition is difficult, but it has the ability to toughen us and help us become the disciples of Christ we were meant to be.

*Give me strength to stand, Lord, in the face of opposition. Amen.*

*DEVOTIONAL*

November 13 - 18

*“Boldness”*

**Thursday, November 16 Acts 4:23-31**

*“Give your servants great boldness in their preaching”*

 The response of the church to Peter and John’s report of the threats of the Sanhedrin is amazing. The apostles had narrowly escaped imprisonment and physical punishment – even death, if the chief priest could have found a way. The church did not react with fear, anxiety, or desire for safety. Instead they went to prayer. Their prayer time is a model of prayer for sustained boldness.

 First, they were convinced of the absolute sovereignty of God. The faith of the church is that the Lord is in charge of all things. Second, they recognized that what they were enduring had happened to the Lord’s people through the ages. They were in good company! Third, they believed that God would intervene to accomplish his good purpose. He had done so with his Son, allowing the cross for the sins of the world and following it with the victory of the resurrection. Fourth, they asked for courage and boldness to continue the mission of preaching Christ, and for continued manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s power.

*Give us boldness, Lord, to speak your Word courageously. Amen.*

**Friday, November 17 Acts 19:8-10**

*“Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly”*

 Luke tells us that as a result of Paul’s proclamation of the kingdom of God, all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus Christ, both Jews and Greeks. That’s quite an accolade for a short time of teaching in the synagogue and two years of daily meetings in the lecture hall of the philosopher Tyrannus. Research reveals that Paul probably was given use of the hall when it was not being used by the philosopher, the hours of 11:00am to 4:00pm. These are the hours of rest when all work in the city stopped – five hours a day when most people would be free to listen leisurely.

 We can be sure that Paul was disappointed when he was put out of the synagogue because of the hardness of the hearts of the Jews. But the closed door again led to an open door of opportunity. The hall of Tyrannus was a perfectly suited, natural place to reach the inquiring Greeks who would be interested in a new philosophy. But Paul gave them more than a new set of ideas. He preached Christ and the kingdom of God.

*When one door closes to the gospel, Lord, another becomes available. Amen.*

**Saturday, November 18 Micah 3:1-12**

*“I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord”*

 The three paragraphs (vv. 1-4, 5-8, and 9-12) of Micah’s sermon are unified by their common condemnation of the leaders of Judah, who are unjust in their treatment of people. There is a progression from God’s giving no answer when the political and civic leaders cry for his help (v. 4), to his giving no answer when the false prophets look for help (vv. 6-7), to the implied no answer from God when the temple is destroyed (v. 12).

 Micah does not speak his own words from his own imagination but is filled with powerful words from the Spirit of God. God’s power is the source of strength to stand up against opposition and discouragement, and Micah’s life is filled with, not merely touched by, the fire and motivation of God’s Spirit. He does not let his own agenda determine what he will say; he surrenders his will to let the Spirit guide and empower him for his task. This filling by the Spirit results in a strong sense of God’s justice and the courage to declare his word to others.

*May the leaders of your people, Lord, govern by your Spirit. Amen.*