

Peter & John

Acts 4:1-13

Courage is the result of being with Jesus.

A **British publication** once offered a prize for the best definition of a friend. Among the thousands of answers received were the following:

"One who multiplies joys, divides grief, and whose honesty is inviolable."

"One who understands our silence."

"A volume of sympathy bound in cloth."

"A watch that beats true for all time and never runs down."

The winning definition read:

"A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out."

Bits & Pieces, July, 1991.

Who has influenced your life the most?

Me? Delores McQue-guidance counselor at Perrysburg High School. Fall of 1967.

Who we know and who we associate with can make a profound difference in our lives.

Peter and John were ordinary men-fisherman who has the remarkable privilege of walking with, listening to, and experiencing the reality of Jesus.

Their relationship with Jesus changed their lives.

So much so that they went from being cowards in the Garden of Gethsemane to courageous witnesses for Jesus when facing hatred, antagonism and possible death.

Acts 4 tells us the story of Peter and John proclaiming to the Jews that this Jesus was indeed the one and only savior for all the universe.

4:1 And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, 2 greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. 3 And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. 4 But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

Pharisees and Sadducees were beside themselves with both envy and anger.

Notice the verbage used of the Sadducees: “they were greatly annoyed.”

Why? Peter and John were being successful in preaching Jesus. So much so that the scripture say about 5000 men became believers in Jesus.

Also? Peter and John were popular and outshining the Sadducees.

Envy is always a problem.

Nobody wants to be second place.

So they had them arrested and brought before the religious high counsel.

5 On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”

They demanded to know where Peter and John got the authority to proclaim this Jesus!

This is the first problem we are always going to be running into when we stand for Jesus in this frightening world is this: “By what authority do you make these claims on sin, repentance, Jesus and eternity?”

In my early years of walking with Jesus I did a poor job of standing for the truth and representing Jesus.

Someone would say to me, “Why do you believe in a literal heaven and hell?”

My response would be something like this:

“Well, because I do.....or.....The Bible talks about hell.....or.....its a matter of faith.”

Most of you know I am a historian and do extensive historical and biblical research.

Most of what I know can be overbearing and overwhelming.

It doesn't work however in convincing a cynic or skeptic.

What does work?

Someone would say to me, “Why do you believe in a literal heaven and hell?”

“Because I know Jesus personally and by his authority he says that heaven and hell are real!”

In the years to come, as Christianity becomes more like the Christianity in the days of Peter and John with persecution and hatred, we need to rely on the authority of Jesus not our intellect alone.

“Sounds good pastor but what do you mean by personally knowing Jesus?”

To Know Jesus Christ

If I were to go to the White House in Washington D.C. and ask to see the President what are the odds I would get in? Next to zero!

Why? I don't know the President personally nor does he know me.

On the other hand if I were the President's child and wanted to see him what would those odds be?

Pretty good because we know one another and have a level of intimacy as parent and child.

In the same way the Bible instructs us to know Jesus not merely to know things about Jesus.

One of the dangers we face in the church is that we can use language such as: knowing Jesus, being saved, hearing his voice; while not defining what that actually means and how it happens.

What does it actually mean to know Jesus Christ? It means three things:

1. It means to receive Him as Lord & Savior.

- Salvation is a free gift of God's grace in Jesus.
- We cannot earn it, nor do we deserve it.
- God comes looking for us before we even knew we needed him.
- John reminds us in **John 1:12** *“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—“*

- Just as we receive unearned gifts at Christmas so also we receive the grace of Jesus Christ by faith in him.

2. It means to love Him above all else.

What does it look like to be in love?

- We have eyes only for that other person.
- We think about them all the time.
- We want to please them totally.

Back in the late 1950's a musical group called **"The Teddy Bears"** who came out with a song you still hear on radio today: *To know Him is to Love Him*. **Play on Powerpoint**

Lyric: *To know, know, know Him is to love, love, love Him, and I do, and I do, and I do.*

*Just to see him smile makes my life worthwhile,
To know, know, know Him is to love, love, love Him,
and I do, and I do, and I do.*

This is truly what it means to "know" Jesus.

We love him with a growing love that motivates everything we do.

The longer we follow Jesus the more we love him and measure everything in life against that love.

There is nothing greater than to make Jesus smile.

So we make our life decisions, our relationship decisions even our political decisions based on loving Jesus and pleasing him.

3. It means that we will follow Jesus wherever he leads us.

- I like to be comfortable.
- I don't like to make major changes.
- I like to know what is coming from beginning to end.

If we value these three things above all then following Jesus is going make us miserable.

This however is how we get to know him intimately when we have to trust him completely outside our comfort zone.

Quiz:

1. What is the mission of Hope Lutheran Church?

To know Jesus, to be his disciples, to make disciples.

2. Who is to be our focus for worship and trust? Jesus.

3. What should we do if anything stands in the way of doing these things? Get it out of the way!

4. What should we do if we as a church physically run out of room, can't get new people into the church and the mission begins to dry up?

This is where following Jesus gets real.

It means we look for another piece of property, another building another location to continue the mission.

Few churches will ever make that decision. Why?

They know the mission, they just don't want it to interrupt their lives.

They like where they are at and are more secure with their comfort than the mission to the lost.

They love the building and the history of the building more than they do the mission of the Gospel.

Like the church at Ephesus in Revelation chapter 2 many churches are going to hear this word from Jesus:

3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

What's the problem?

They are working hard and standing for the name of Jesus.

However, their love for Jesus is slipping away.

They are going through the motions but don't really love Jesus.

They are the model church on the outside but lacking life on the inside.

To know Jesus means that we will risk everything for him and go where he wants us to go.

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, 9 if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. 11 This Jesus [is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. 12 And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Peter and John clarify the basis of their authority-Jesus!

Jesus is the only authority you and I ever need to stand up for the truth, to defend the weak, to proclaim his righteousness.

Verse 12 is the cornerstone, the only foundation, the greatest truth of all for the church of Jesus Christ and every single believer.

And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Jesus is often portrayed by the media and even the church as a gentle, tolerant, easy going, totally accepting person.

In fact Jesus is the most intolerant, most aggressive, most demanding person in the universe.

Peter and John made this statement in vs 12 about Jesus because Jesus made this statement about himself.

John 14:6 "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Jan will often buy a big canister of mixed nuts.

Contains cashews, almonds, brazil nuts, walnuts.

I like the cashews and the walnuts. Bad habit of searching for them and not eating the almonds and brazil nuts.



Jan finds it irritating.

Jesus finds it more than irritating when we pick the verses we like about his nature and character and will and forget, skip over or ignore the others.

We cannot have just a part of Jesus (love, gentleness, the mercy) without the other (intolerant of other beliefs, demanding and aggressive for our souls).

13 Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

It doesn't matter if you are educated or uneducated, rich or poor, a good speaker or a weak speaker like Moses.

When we have been with Jesus (know him personally) then we are more than up to the task of facing the hatred of the world.

But it takes courage from knowing Jesus to taking that step of faith into the fury of the world.

The way we live in faith and courage now will be reflected in what our children, grandchildren and friends write on our tombstone when we are gone.

Permit me to show you what I want my tombstone.

Tom Parrish

A sinner forgiven by Jesus Christ.

A man who loved Jesus and knew him personally.

A man who had been with Jesus.

John 11:25-26

What do you want on your tombstone?

Verbal Response!!

How do we get that written on the hearts of our children and friends?

By knowing Jesus know, being with him, and taking the steps of courage like Peter and John.

Yellow Card

_____ Tonight I will ask Jesus to enable me to "know" him the way Peter and John knew him.

_____ From this moment forward I will attempt to make all my life decisions based on my "knowing" Jesus.

_____ This week I will encourage other Christians by telling them I see that they have been with Jesus.