



Acts:

A Life of Witness

Week Four: Acts 3:1-10, 4: 1-20

The Witness of PROCLAMATION

Opening Question: The world proclaims lots of things to us everyday through slogans, advertisements, feeds. What are some of the most common “proclamations” that you notice or can easily recall that come into your life on a pretty regular basis?

CONTEXT

A quick look back: What did we learn last week about shalom? Did anyone have the chance to practice their own small act of shalom? What have we learned so far about a life of witness?

Today's Passage: In Acts 1, Jesus told his followers that they would be witnesses in their own neighborhood and all the way to the ends of the world. Today, we watch as God opens up the opportunity for that witness to happen in Jerusalem- in the neighborhood and streets and among people that Peter and John very likely already knew well. This story takes place around the temple- the center of all Jewish life and worship. Peter and John encounter a beggar- very likely one that they had seen and heard on other days as they went to the temple to engage in their Jewish faith practices. But today, having been filled with the Spirit and keenly aware of their call to bear witness, a beautiful new thing is going to happen at a gate rightly called Beautiful. And on the other side of the miracle, no one is going to be able to stay quiet about what has happened. Through this story, we learn why proclamation is such a powerful part of our life of witness.

CONTENT

Read Acts 3: 1-10, 4: 1-20 out loud and then pick ONE of the following ways (Option A, B, or C) to help your group engage with this passage.

Option A. Notice/Wonder: Ask everyone to read the passage again quietly on their own. As they read, ask them to make a list like the one below. Remember that what people notice or wonder can just be small, simple things.

What do I NOTICE about this text? What do I WONDER about?

Once everyone has had the chance to make their list, come together as a group to share and discuss your observations, writing them in a place where everyone can see the list as it develops.

Option B. Creative Engagement: Give everyone paper and drawing supplies. Have everyone read the passage again on their own, then invite them to spend some time illustrating the passage (or a part of the passage) in whatever way they want- concrete, abstract, colors, images, lists, words. When everyone has completed their art, come together to share and discuss what you drew and why.

Option C. Guided Bible Study Questions:

1. Look at the details of the interaction between Peter and the crippled man in vs 4-7. What do you notice about their physical interactions? This miracle could have happened in many ways- why do you think these details are included?
2. There are lots of faith proclamations that happen in these verses. Look at the different ways Peter proclaims the person and work of God (3:6, 4:2, 4: 8-12) and the ways the crippled man proclaims the person and work of God (3:8-9). What do you learn from these different ways of proclaiming?
3. Where does the crippled man go when he is healed? Why do you think he goes there?
4. In 4:2, Peter and John are proclaiming "the resurrection of the dead"- a message that has at its core God's unstoppable plan to put everything right once and for all in the world. How does the miracle in Acts 3 help to strengthen or illustrate this message?
5. In 4:13, what ends up being the explanation for how Peter and John could possibly do what they did and have the courage to proclaim it?
6. The Jewish leaders order Peter and John to stop speaking or teaching in the name of Jesus- to stop their proclamation of the gospel truth. What is their response in vs 20?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- The crippled man cannot contain his witness when he is healed. He walks and jumps and praises his way to the temple courts, where everyone is astounded at what they see. Have you ever encountered someone who is filled with this kind of joy? Or someone who easily and naturally speaks about Christ to those around them? Share with each other.
- When Peter and John are before the court of Jewish leaders, the men accusing them realize that the courage and the miracles they are seeing from these men come from one source: they have been with Jesus. There are all kinds of ways that we can tie our hearts to Christ and open ourselves to His already-there-presence. What are the most meaningful ways that you spend time with Jesus?
- The actions that flow out of our faith are incredibly important. But there are times when God invites us to witness with our voices- to speak out loud about what He has done in Christ and what He is doing in our lives or in the world that are signs of His kingdom restoration. But we often need practice at this:) Spend a few minutes thinking about one important thing that God has done in your life that you could share with the group. And then listen well to each other and celebrate as you share your own proclamations of God's goodness and presence with each other.

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the passage to guide your prayer.
- Raise up your "wonderings" from the notice/wonder section to God in prayer
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer taken:

Healing God-

All around us there are signs of your kingdom restoration- big and small miracles that you work in our lives and in the world that bear witness to who you are. But we admit that sometimes, the noise of the world gets so loud, and our lives get so busy, and our eyes are so often turned inward, that we miss the opportunity to see you at work. And because of that, we miss the opportunity to tell of your work. So God, open our eyes to the small ways, even today, that you are present and at work in us and in the people around us. And then give us the courage to share that holy witness with someone who might need to hear it. May we be people who join with Peter and John in proclaiming, "We cannot help but speak about what we have seen and heard."

We pray this in your name- THE name- Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Amen.