

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.” ¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

NO OTHER NAME

“She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” – Matthew 1:21.

“Oh Romeo. Romeo. Wherefore art thou Romeo?” It’s theatre time in schools right now and our Lutheran schools are no different. Our Lutheran Elementary School will be performing “Murder on the 518” this Friday and Saturday. Our federation Lutheran high school, Arizona Lutheran Academy is in the middle of their theatre production. They had performances on Friday and Saturday and they have a final showing of “Oliver” today at 2pm. My little Romeo and Juliet production is meant to get us to Juliet’s intriguing question, “What’s in a name?” Juliet illustrates her point by saying, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

And I suppose instead of calling them roses for Mother’s Day, we could call the same flowers “rachels” or “rebekahs” or “rapunzels” and there wouldn’t be any difference. And I suppose like the flowers, many of us, could have been given different names without any consequence. If I were a “Marcus” or a “Max” or a “Matteo” and you could have been a “Eugene” or a “Eunice” or a “Eudora,” our lives wouldn’t be all that different than they are now. Our names, in and of themselves, typically don’t describe us.

God, who created the world, was not as active in name his creatures. Adam named the animals and Adam, after the fall into sin, named his wife, Eve. And yet later on we are told how God changed Abram’s name which means, “Exalted Father,” to Abraham, which means “Father of many.” God also changed Jacob’s name which means “heel grabber” or “trickster” to Isarel, which means “wrestle with God”. These names mean what they are. And no name is more meaningful than Jesus. Jesus means “he saves”! You have heard, “If it walks and talks like a duck, it’s a duck”. And yet Jesus is called “Savior” even before he talks and walks like our Savior. He is the Savior of this world and Jesus is our Savior too. And we need him.

I don’t expect you to remember, but I do want to call your memory to the reading we had from the Acts of the Apostles last Sunday. Last Sunday I read from the lectern, *“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”* (Ac 2). Remember that joyful honeymoon from last Sunday? Glad and sincere hearts ... enjoying the favor of all the people. I bring these good old days to your attention not so that you would fantasize about good days gone by, but so that in the future you would recognize these times in your life and appreciate them. And finally, so you don’t get too worked up when the honeymoon ends and the good time in your life is replaced with a challenging time. Otherwise, you might not see the opportunity.

Peter was going through a challenging time in our text and Peter reminds people how this challenging time came about. It came about because Peter along with the Apostle John had showed kindness to a man. The man Peter and John showed kindness to, couldn’t walk. All the lame man really wanted was money, but Peter and John didn’t have any money. Instead, Peter told the lame man what they did have saying, *“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk”* (Ac 3). And instantly the man jumped to his feet and began to walk. More concerning to others than this sudden and complete healing of this lame man was this healing being done in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This not so little detail would put Peter and John in jail for the night. And the next day Peter would testify to the rulers and elders of the people. Among the people, a

couple of passage before our text tells us were Annas the high priest and Caiaphas. Two individuals who played very instrumental roles in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

In the not-so-distant past, when, Peter, the rock-man, faced this kind of challenge, Peter didn't do so well. Back then it wasn't a big crowd but a small campfire. Back then it wasn't Annas and Caiaphas, but an unnamed servant girl. For the rest of his life, every time Peter heard a rooster crow, Peter would have a little reminder of how he was up for the challenge and how he had denied the Lord three times. What would Peter do with the name of Jesus this time?

What are you doing with the name of Jesus especially when all the good times turn into a challenging time. Out of Peter's mouth came praising and curses, what is coming out of your mouth? Do your words identify you as a disciple of Jesus Christ as a denier of Jesus Christ? Or do your words identify you as someone even worse, someone who is apathetic about Jesus Christ. At least hot or cold water will get your attention, an apathetic attitude like lukewarm water doesn't respond. If someone from your congregation, a pastor or a congregation leader or another member would ask you to do something, how would you respond? Would you respond? And if there is little to no response to the name of Christ inside of the congregation, what kind of response is there to those who are outside of the congregation, especially to those who are openly hostile to the name of Christ?

The good news for Peter is the same good news for us when our good intentions don't match a good confession. Jesus saves. Only Jesus saves. Jesus plus Peter doesn't save. Jesus plus whatever I have to offer doesn't save. Jesus is the way. No other name saves. And when we grasp this simple truth and we can't grasp this simple truth. When we are full of the Spirit like Peter was full of the Spirit, new situations that were previously were dreaded challenges for us become welcomed opportunities for witnessing the name of Jesus.

That's what we see in this full-of-the-spirit Peter, isn't it? Peter wasn't looking to make a name for himself. Peter was only looking to witness to the name of Jesus. Listen to this witness, "*know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead.*" Is that a witness or a death wish? Some of you know the Greek word for witness. The Greek Word for witness is martyr. And for Peter and all the other Apostles except John, that was their testimony. They not only witnessed to the name of Jesus with their voice. They also witnesses to the name of Jesus in their death. This wasn't their wish, but based on what we see and hear from Peter these witnessing times, whether in the congregation or in the world, whether with a receptive audience or a hostile crowd wasn't a challenge like it used to be but an opportunity to let people know, "Salvation is found in know one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

And because of the name of Jesus we have been called children of God, sheep of the shepherd, light of the world, salt of the earth, chosen ones, holy ones, friends of Jesus, ambassadors of Christ, redeemed, heirs of heaven. All of these names mean something. All of these names describe us as we are because of the name of Jesus. Amen.