

PUT TO THE TEST

Acts 4:1-20

Before Reading:

What do you remember from Sunday's sermon?

What did it mean to 'keep a look out'?

This passage follows shortly after Jesus returns to Heaven and the Holy Spirit is given to the disciples at Pentecost. It's the beginning a new era for God's people: a time where God's people have been commanded to spread the gospel to every nation while they wait for Jesus to return - and unlike ever before, God himself is with his people through his Spirit.

Peter and John have just healed a paralysed man, and told the astonished crowd the good news about Jesus. And then the events of this passage take place.

Immediately after preaching the good news, Peter and John are arrested and put in jail by the Jewish authorities because they were disturbed by what they were teaching (4:2-3)! How would you feel in this situation? You might think, "If this is what happens when I tell people about Jesus, then I don't know if it's worth it."

Amazingly, when Peter and John are summoned out of prison the next day they go ahead and

preach the gospel in front of the High Priest! They aren't afraid of how people will treat them; they just want people to hear about how they can be saved through Jesus (4:8-12). And even after they are ordered to stop telling people about Jesus (4:17), they say,

"Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." (4:19-20).

We aren't ordered not to talk about Jesus in the same way that Peter and John were. But even so, it can be scary to think how people might treat us if we share Jesus with others.

We learned on Sunday that Jesus predicted that his disciples would be put on trial like we see in this passage - but he also that when we our faith is put to the test, the Holy Spirit will give us the words to say (Mark 13:9-11). For us who 'keep a look out' for Jesus' return, we can be confident that Jesus is with us when we are put to the test.

Reflection Questions:

1. What areas of your life do you struggle to wear your faith boldly like Peter and John?
2. How might knowing that God is with you through his Holy Spirit encourage you to be courageous with your faith?

Prayer:

Loving God, thank you that you are always with me. You promise so many good things: forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal joy. I want others to believe in Jesus so that they can have these things too, but it can be scary to think about how people will respond. Help me to be courageous and to trust in you in all things. Amen

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Mark 14:12-26

Before Reading:

If you could choose your last meal, what would it be?

Who would you choose to eat with?

For Jesus, this is his last meal. He and his disciples are celebrating the Feast of Unleavened Bread (14:12). This was a festival where Jews would eat lamb with flat bread and bitter herbs and remember how God brought them out of Egypt (see Exodus 12 for more info). Jesus shares his last meal with his disciples – his closest friends – it seems like good company for his last meal.

That is, until he claims, “One of you will betray me – one who is eating with me” (14:18). This is hurtful and shocking news! The disciples simply can’t believe it... but Jesus insists it’s true (14:19–21).

I want you to imagine that you are sitting at the table with Jesus at this point. What would you expect Jesus do next? Will he name his betrayer and shame him in front of the disciples? Will he flee from the coming danger? Will he perform a miracle to escape his arrest?

Shockingly, Jesus doesn’t do anything like that. Instead he offers bread and wine to his disciples, calling it his body and blood (14:22–24). Jesus is telling them that he is willing to die for them – even for his betrayer who sits in their midst. He even knew that the other disciples would run away after his arrest (see 14:27–31). Even so, he offers his body and blood for them.

This is what’s so amazing and different about Jesus compared to any of us. He doesn’t pay back his enemies; he isn’t vengeful. Instead, he pays the price of death that his enemies deserve so that they can be forgiven. The son of God dies the death of a sinner so that sinners can become God’s children.

Jesus finishes by saying that he won’t drink wine again until he’s in the kingdom of God (14:25). I like to think that it’s Jesus’ way of saying that he looks forward to celebrating our return home when we finally go to be with him.

Reflection Questions:

1. How does it feel to know that Jesus willingly gave his life for you?
2. What is reassuring about Jesus' promise to give his life for his imperfect and cowardly disciples?
3. How can you show your thankfulness to Jesus this week?

Prayer:

Jesus thank you so much for your death for me. It's so amazing how loving you are; you chose to die even for people who fail to love you. Please come back soon to bring us home to heaven. Help me to live for you and get rid of the sin in my life as I wait for you to come back. Amen