

"Get to the Point"

Text: Acts 4:8-14

God grant to each of us an unobstructed and uninterrupted view of eternity, directing each thought, word and action to that end and to the glory of the God who there resides. Amen.

Dear Fellow-Representatives of one true Triune God:

If the title of this morning's sermon has ever been directed at you, if anyone has ever directed you to "*get to the point*," I wouldn't be surprised to hear that you still remember the bruise that it left. It's not a particularly nice expression. People tend to use it when they feel someone is babbling on interminably, or when there is a critical piece of information to be conveyed and the speaker insists on taking the scenic route in getting there. Again, it's not a particularly nice expression, but at times it's necessary. No one wants to hear about how and where your bursitis is acting up as an extended lead-in to the news that it caused you to drop a skillet of hot bacon grease and that the kitchen is now fully engulfed in flame. If it is in your nature to be longwinded, it's best to make friends with the occasional interruption. Windbaggy and sensitive is a bad combination.

Obviously there's a necessary balance here. There's a time for chatting and telling stories (hopefully eventually with a point, or at least a concluding chapter) and there's a time to simply and clearly convey necessary information. Although this a maxim that holds pretty steady through life, it takes on a much more urgent character when the timeframe is eternal life.

Life on earth is the time that God gives us to learn about Jesus, and to share with others what we have come to know. Sadly, Christians seem to be forgetting how to communicate the vital information we possess, especially in our interactions with the unbelieving world. You and I know the true relationship between time and eternity. We also know that our time on this earth is anything but unlimited. We need, in other words, to be reminded of the need to get to the point. That's part of the truth revealed to us in our text for this morning, as we are also reminded exactly what that point is. Our text is found recorded in the Fourth Chapter of the Book of Acts:

ESV **Acts 4:8-14** *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." 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. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

This is God's Word. In fact, if these were *not* God's very words, spending any time at all on them would be pointless – an exercise in futility. Confident instead that our God *did indeed* give us these, his very words, so we pray, "**Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your word is truth.**" Amen.

Our text begins with a phrase that most often passes unnoticed: "**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them...**" We probably tend to skip over the concept of "**filled with the Holy Spirit**" because we don't fully understand what that means, or what it meant in Peter's day. One thing we can know for certain: no one who is "filled by the Holy Spirit" could ever speak anything but the truth. That means that whatever comes from the mouth of someone "filled by the Holy Spirit" is absolutely trustworthy and accurate. No possibility of error. Nor does anyone "filled with the Holy Spirit" fill the air with pointless chatter. So when we read that Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit when he spoke the words of our text, clearly we can not only trust what he says, we can know the message is important.

To understand the message of our text (to gain all that we should from this part of God's Word) we first need to understand the setting. Peter and John were standing before the same men who had sentenced Jesus to death. It had to be both intimidating and terrifying for Peter and John to be hauled before powerful and unscrupulous men that could pronounce death sentences on a whim. Remember too that, unlike their accusers, Peter and John were simple, uneducated fishermen. Historians tell us that everything about the Jewish Sanhedrin was designed to intimidate. Yet Peter and John were not intimidated. How was that possible?

Do you remember *why* the two had been summoned by the Jewish authorities? Peter had healed a lame beggar – a man *born* lame.

Jesus, you will recall, also healed a man with a congenital handicap (a man blind from birth) but he did so on the Sabbath – which was the point on which the Jews accused him. Peter had not healed the cripple on the Sabbath, so why had the two been summoned? For telling others about Jesus. The Jewish leaders were finally abandoning their pretense and hypocrisy. They were finally admitting their true and basic motive: they hated Jesus Christ and the gospel that he taught. They were finally, in other words, *getting to the point*.

Peter also masterfully did the same. He accomplished two things with his very first sentence. To get to the point, first he cut away all the nonsense. Performing a kindness to a suffering human being was not the problem. For the Jews, Jesus was the problem. Second, Peter masterfully redirected the whole affair back to the real question, and he put a name to the problem. Hear again the words of a man "filled with the Holy Spirit": ***"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 ..."*** (even the Jews had to admit that to arrest someone for healing a man born lame was nonsense.) He goes on: ***"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."***

Peter got right to the heart of the problem, didn't he? He got right to the point. These men could not care less about a lame beggar. Their hatred for Jesus, however, permeated their whole being. Clearly the Jewish rulers were *not* filled with the Holy Spirit. No one who is filled with the Spirit could be filled with such blind hatred toward something as pure and holy as the sinless Son of God, nor of his message of forgiveness, life, and peace. Peter knew this, which was no great insight. What *is* notable here is the fact that he tackled the real problem head on. Remember that he stood before cruel, unscrupulous, bloodthirsty men who had murdered the Son of God. He knew they would certainly not hesitate to do the same to Jesus' disciples. Yet note well what Peter did, for his actions reveal one of the great lessons for us in this text. ***"Filled with the Holy Spirit,"*** the very first thing that Peter did was to deflect all attention away both from the cripple *and from himself*, and onto Jesus. This wasn't about the crippled man. It wasn't about Peter and John. It was all about Jesus the Messiah. The Holy Spirit, speaking through Peter, made this clear with a proclamation of both pure law and pure gospel. The law message here couldn't be any more obvious: ***"By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified..."*** Then also the gospel: ***"...whom God raised from the dead... And there is salvation in no one else."***

We live in a time where no one is supposed to accuse or condemn or label anything as false or evil. Yet Peter did just that, boldly accusing the Jews of murdering Jesus, and doing so *clearly, unambiguously, and directly*. And they make no denial. Of course the Jews killed Jesus. They did so by means of the Roman cross. Why would these men even try to deny it? They were *proud* of it. They were happy to be rid of the man. They regarded his death as a good thing. That's as good a picture as any of the face of evil.

Peter goes on with words of power that truly shocked his Jewish accusers. The power of his words didn't come from Peter, of course, but from the Holy Spirit. Hear again Peter's closing message and the reaction from the Jews: ***"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."*** Talk about a politically incorrect dialog. You recall the reaction of the Jews: ***"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."*** The enemies of Jesus had no answer to any of this. Our text ends this way: ***But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.***

The *highly educated* rulers had nothing to say. What *could* they say? They couldn't deny that a miracle had been performed (the healed man was standing right in front of them) and they couldn't bully those lowly fishermen into submission – not when those lowly fishermen were filled with the Holy Spirit. When man fights God, man always loses. Peter and John had thus faithfully fulfilled their divine calling. Rather than hide, they boldly spoke. Rather than accept any personal praise for healing the lame beggar, they immediately and expertly redirected attention away from themselves and to their Savior. This wasn't all about them. It was all about Jesus Christ. All life – every precious moment of it – is all about Jesus Christ and the unending existence with him in heaven. That's the point, isn't it. Time is all about eternity.

Test that statement (*time is all about eternity*.) Turn it over in your mind. Examine and reexamine it from every conceivable angle because it gives purpose to our lives and direction to absolutely everything we do. It gets us *to the point*. The longest life is nothing compared to the unending expanse of eternity. Life is just the time to come to know Jesus, and to tell others what you've come to know and believe. Paul said much the same thing in a little different way: ***So,***

whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ^{ESV}(1 Corinthians 10:31) Again in Philippians 3:18-21 he said, "***For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.***"

Life is all about Jesus, *because* Jesus was all about us. We share *his* words, not ours, because his words reveal the only path to eternal life. Disturbingly enough, those who hated Jesus probably would have agreed that "time is all about eternity." Their problem was that they spent their time pointlessly trying to earn what they could never earn by their own actions. Our calling is to reflect the truth and glory of our Savior, and to direct the focus of others onto that one pure Light, the one true source of all that is good. There they will see the very thing that salvation is made of: Jesus Christ essentially wrote a check to God the Father (drawn on his own personal store of perfect behavior) as payment in full for the sins of the world. God the Father accepted his Son's payment, and has, as a result, declared the debt of every single one of our sins to be paid in full. Our sin debt has been canceled only because Jesus paid the bill. Believing that Jesus did what he said he did, his perfection is ours – which means full and complete forgiveness of our sins is ours, now and for all eternity.

We need to be reminded, moment by moment, to get to *that* point, to direct our words and actions here in time with a view to the eternity that will follow. Our acts of charity and kindness are never to be an end in themselves but a means toward a goal. Peter and John did not heal the crippled man in our text just so that the poor man could have a better life on earth, and certainly not in a futile attempt to earn God's forgiveness and love – which they already had through faith in Jesus Christ. They did what they did so that the crippled man (and countless others) could come to know Jesus Christ. Jesus is the point. It really is all about Jesus.

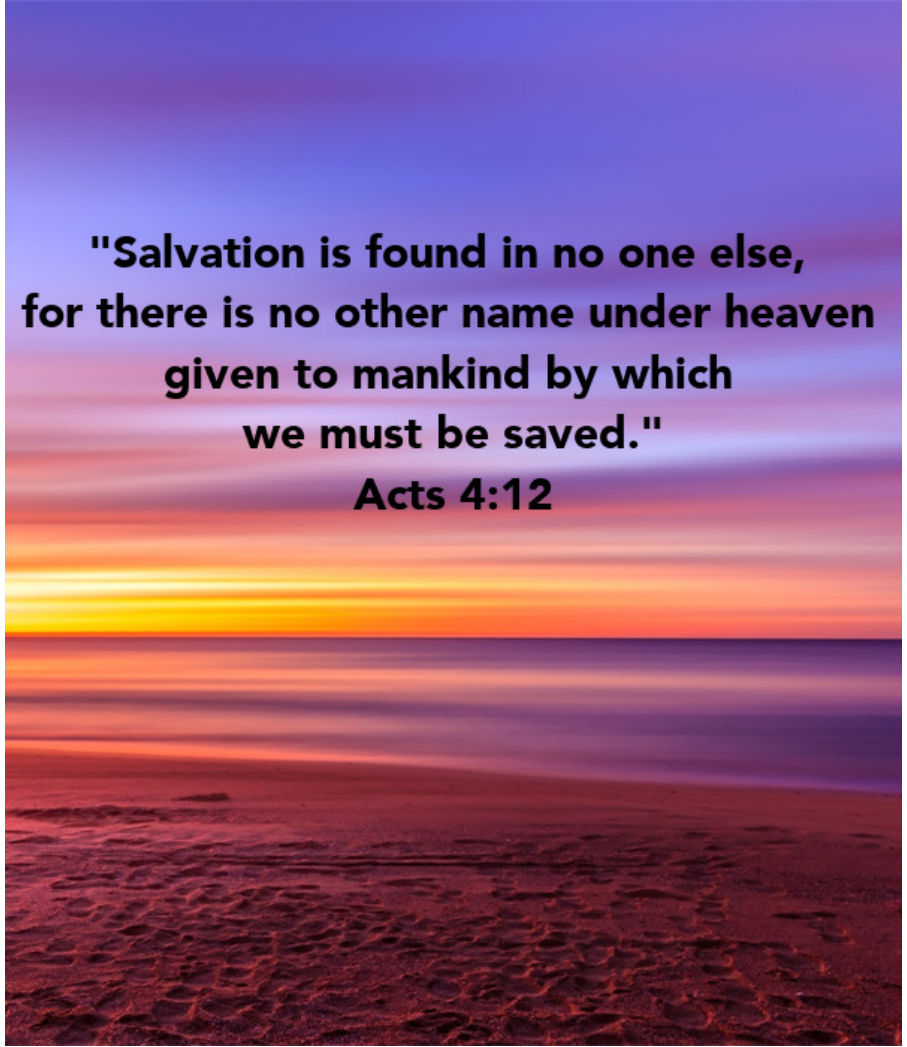
God grant us grace to be selfless, as was our Savior, and to reflect Christ's glory in every aspect of our lives – all with a view to the eternity that will follow this short time on earth. Walk through this life remembering that one day every human being will stand before their Creator, to be judged not on the basis of how good they have been, but on the basis of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Whoever believes in Jesus Christ will spend

an eternity with him. God hasten that great day, and direct our thoughts, words, and actions here in time accordingly. Amen.

ESV **Isaiah 55:1-5** "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call a nation that you do not know, and a nation that did not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

ESV **Romans 9:1-8** I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- ² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. ⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. ⁶ ¶ But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, ⁷ and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." ⁸ This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

ESV **Acts 4:8-14** 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." 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. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition.



**"Salvation is found in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven
given to mankind by which
we must be saved."
Acts 4:12**

ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA

ST. PAUL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

2510 E. Divide Ave. Bismarck, ND 58501

Parsonage and Office: (701) 223-4885 Cell: (701) 425-5483

Website: www.bismarcklutheran.org

Mick Johnson, President Angela Pfennig, Organist

Michael Roehl, Pastor

The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost – August 6, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 237 (Red Hymnal)

"All Glory Be to God on High"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (Brown Hymnal)

The Scripture Lessons: (Printed on the back page of this bulletin)

The Old Testament Lesson: (Isaiah 55:1-5) Our Old Testament lesson draws a striking comparison between earthly food and drink, and spiritual food and drink. While all men realize the need for the physical, most neglect their far more critical spiritual needs. Tragically, the focus of Christianity today has shifted from the spiritual needs of mankind and is now focused on the lesser needs of the body. God give us wisdom to seek and to share the greater good – that "one thing needful."

Psalm 100 (Supplement page 35) (Brown Hymnal)

The New Testament Lesson: (Romans 9:1-8) There is no doubt that Paul had a deep and abiding love for his own people, the Jews. Yet it is foolish to imagine that God's favor is based on anything other than faith in the Promised Messiah. When the Jews rejected God's Son, God also rejected them. When the Jews rejected Paul's message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, Paul also turned away from his own people and took the message of the gospel to the Gentiles. Christians are the new "Israel."

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – page 15. (Brown Hymnal)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 756 (Brown Hymnal)

"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"

The Sermon – Text: Acts 4:8-14 (Printed on the back of this bulletin)

"Get to the Point"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Post-Sermon Hymn – 411 (Stanzas 1-5) (Red Hymnal)

"From Eternity, O God"

The Offering followed by the Prayers

The Benediction

The Closing Hymn - 411 (Stanzas 6-7) (Red Hymnal)

"From Eternity, O God"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors who might be with us this morning and invite you to join us every Sunday at this time. St. Paul is a congregation in fellowship with the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC) – a conservative Lutheran synod with churches and missions throughout the United States and around the world. We are glad you are here. Thank you for letting us share the Word of God with you. Please record your visit in our Guest Book, and come again.

Attendance – Sunday (26) Average (43)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:30 a.m.	– Church Picnic
Monday	-10:00 a.m.	– Study Conference in Mapleton
Next Sunday	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service w/Holy Communion
	-11:15 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Missionary Peter Evensen is considering the call to Resurrection of Corpus Christi. Pastor James Albrecht is considering the call to Calvary of Marquette. Pastor Samuel Rodebaugh is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire.

Church Picnic – Our annual Church Picnic is scheduled for today immediately following the Sunday service. The location is the same as last year – Lion's Park Pavilion 1. (Go west on E Divide, left/south on N22nd St, follow that around to the west as it turns into E Boulevard, and then left/south onto the one-way into the park.) Please join us, even if you are just visiting or were unable to bring food. There is always more than enough.

ILC Opening – The opening worship service for Immanuel Lutheran High School, College, and Seminary will take place on Sunday, August 20, at 3 pm in the campus fieldhouse. For more details about the opening weekend schedule, see ilc.edu. May the Lord richly bless both students and faculty in the upcoming year as all grow together in the truth of God's saving Word.

Study Conference – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to attend a Study Conference tomorrow in Mapleton.