

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.” (Acts 4:8-12)

Share the Name

Very seldom is a name just a name. It’s more than letters on a page or sounds coming out of the mouth. It describes a person. Dad isn’t just the man who fathered you, it’s everything that he is, how he raised you, and your relationship with him. A name invokes thoughts in our minds. Michael Jordan, you think of basketball. Tom Osborne, Nebraska football. Michael Jackson, musician. Certain names bring up emotions. Just hearing a certain name might lead to us being upset thinking about how they treated us. Other names make us feel all warm inside thinking about them. Ancient folklore taught the idea that knowing someone or something’s true name gave you power over them. Names are special. Your name is who you are. It identifies what you have done.

Then there’s Jesus’ name. His name already had power before he was raised from the dead. Then when God raised him from the dead he gave Jesus the name above every name that every knee should buckle to the earth at the mere mention of him. How quickly we forget that. Too easily do we treat it like any other name. Too often is it used with little respect or thought in our minds. It’s a name that doesn’t just invoke certain feelings, bring forth certain memories; there’s power in the name of Jesus.

That’s what we see in Acts 4. A lame crippled man now walks. Two men stand in the temple courts preaching about a different man who was crucified, raised from the dead, and now lives again. None of this sits well with the leaders of the Jews; it greatly disturbs them. They didn’t like hearing that name. They thought they finally rid themselves of that man Jesus. They didn’t want to hear anything about this rising from the dead business. So, send in the troops. Arrest Peter and John. Throw them into jail overnight. The next day they drag Peter and John out of jail and demand answers: **“By what power or what name did you do this?”** They

recognize a miracle has happened. There's a guy who couldn't walk now walking. You cannot ignore the facts. But how did you do it?

We see such a different Peter from the one hiding behind locked doors in Luke 24. Filled with the Spirit, Peter responds: **“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...”** as if Peter is putting the leaders in their place, “Are you seriously arresting us for doing a good deed? Are we in trouble because of an act of kindness to a person who couldn't walk but now can? Fine, if you are going to be that way, let this be known: **“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.”** It is by the name of Jesus...the Name. This would have made them sit up a little straighter in their seats while upsetting others. The Name. That's how the Jews refer to God's proper name. Instead of saying the word that we translate “Lord,” they say, *Hashem*, the Name. It refers to the Lord and all that he is, all that he did, and all that he continues to do. *Hashem* is power and authority. And now Peter does the unthinkable: he connects the Name with Jesus. Remember, how much the leaders hated Jesus and everything he stood for. They had him killed! And now Peter is claiming that this Jesus is Lord with all the same power and authority, raised from the dead, and it's by the name of Jesus this man walks.

But Peter is not done. He continues: **“Jesus is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.”** You killed the Name. You rejected him. You despised him. You decided he was worthless. He wasn't the Messiah you wanted to be. You threw him away. It doesn't change the fact: **salvation is found in no one else.”**

You know this. Many of you stood in front of church and confessed you believe this on your Confirmation Day. The cornerstone/capstone was the most important stone in a building. It would make no sense for the builders to point out, “Here's the cornerstone!” And then proceed to not use it. That doesn't make any sense. The building would fail!

And, yet, it's not just the Jewish leaders who have despised the cornerstone that is Jesus and His Name. How often do we hear someone make the point that Jesus is the most important thing in their life and then their decisions and how they act say otherwise? Instead of building on the cornerstone of Jesus we can find ourselves building on all the other “names.” It might be your name—that is, your reputation, your legacy, your accomplishments, your finances, successes, willingness to help and ability to do. It may be connection to other names—membership list (i.e. you

belong to this church) or it's about who you know. It might be built on the name of whatever cause you are fighting for and the group you stand behind.

We aren't the ones who handed Jesus over to be crucified. But we despise him when being in the Word, at church, is for when you don't have anything else going on. When you hear the encouragement to come to Bible Class, to bring your kids to Sunday school, you are being told: "Here's an opportunity to build in the Name and that cornerstone." But what goes through your mind? Have you ignored it so much you no longer hear it? Have you told yourself, yeah I should, but that's as far as the intention goes. You're okay with making the claim you are a Christian as long as it's not going to ask too much from you. As long as it doesn't make you too uncomfortable around other people. As long as you can continue living the way you want. And there we are, setting Jesus off to the side choosing other stones on which to build.

But why is it so easy? We treat Jesus' name like any other name. We forget or doubt the power of Jesus' name. As you deal with life in this world and the questions you have, it easily seems like God doesn't give us enough to work with. The money questions in church, the delinquency issue in our congregation, the turmoil in our nation, the sickness within the family, the injured pride and the broken/struggling relationships, the sin in your life—there has to be something more we can do! Continued encouragement to be in the Word, sharing the name of Jesus can't be enough can it? We've already tried this before haven't we? And we end up despising the very thing that we need.

It is a simple truth: **“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”** Here is the gift to us with the name sinner and lost and condemned. His name is Jesus because he comes to save us lost sinners from sin. He is the Word who takes on flesh to live here with us. Jesus is the Word of life who allows himself to be nailed to a cross for us who have despised His Word, his Name, and his gifts. Because of your sin, Jesus dies on that cross. Jesus is crucified for our sake and is raised to life for our justification. Jesus lives! So in the name of Jesus, your sins are forgiven. In the name of Jesus, you are saved. You have been baptized into Jesus' name and have been given the name, “God's child.” In those waters you died with Jesus on the cross, and you have been raised to new life with Jesus. That same Word who took on flesh, rose in the flesh again so we are sure we too will be raised to live in the flesh with Jesus forever. As he did for his disciples in the Upper Room, so he sends the Holy Spirit to you to open your minds and your heart to believe. You don't have to go searching for another name, another place, anything else to save you. It's here in Jesus. And with saving faith the Spirit creates, believe it's yours.

So what are you doing with this Good News? When you have some knowledge on a situation—home remedy for that sickness, a trick to fix that household problem, some advice for a young parent—you share it even without someone looking for helps. If you knew the way to get rid of COVID, you wouldn't keep that to yourself. If you knew the cure to cancer, you wouldn't hoard it to yourself. And, yet, here we are with the one thing that truly saves, the name of Jesus, and what are we doing with it? We can sit there and talk about so many different things with our friends and our family, but when it comes to speaking the Name of Jesus and about the most important thing in our lives—our relationship with that Name, with Jesus—it's awkward, uncomfortable and we say little to nothing. And before you get defensive with the various reasons you have and "But Pastor..." save your breath. I have a good feeling I know what you are going to say because there's a good chance I've said it myself.

Stop deceiving yourself with more excuses and different reasons. They aren't going to help. Instead, confess with me, "I have sinned against the Name of Jesus. I have sinned against Jesus with how I have treated his name." And Jesus assures you, when we have confessed our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all righteousness. And he does. And you are. Because he is the atoning sacrifice who has already taken your sins away.

Jesus doesn't want to hear your excuses; there's no time for them. No, the time is now for us to go out and share the Name. The cancer is still going to be here. Who knows what will happen with COVID and the fallout. National turmoil, church's future questions, what will happen next month, week, tomorrow for you, I don't know what is going to happen and neither do you. What we do know is that there is only one name that saves. Jesus could have used rocks, as he said on Palm Sunday. He did speak through a donkey, as he did with Balaam. He could use whatever he wants. He wants you. He's chosen you. He chooses me. He uses us together to share this Good News that salvation is not hidden. It's revealed through the Word and by you sharing the Word. It's done by you in your daily life, in your conversations actually sharing the name of Jesus and his love for you and them. It's you imitating the love of Jesus in serving your neighbor. It's you giving your offering to support the continued work of our church, our school, our Wisconsin Synod at large so the name of Jesus is spread. By the Spirit, you know and believe the one way to be saved is in Christ alone. Boldly proclaim and share the Name. Amen.