

Tuesday of the Second Week of Easter - Acts 5:27-42

²⁷ And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, “We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” ²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. ³⁵ And he said to them, “Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. ³⁶ For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. ³⁷ After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. ³⁸ So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail; ³⁹ but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!” So they took his advice, ⁴⁰ and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

Sometimes the people in the Bible seem so strange to me. Peter stands up to corrupt and unreasonable authority. I always appreciate that sort of bravery. He must obey God rather than men. He suffers for it. I can honor him for that, just as I might honor others who have been beaten or imprisoned in a quest for justice and fairness. It is the final two verses of this passage from Acts that really get to me. The disciples were rejoicing in the opportunity to suffer for the name of Christ.

There is a part of me that wonders if we don't have medication for this sort of thing. Would we think today that Peter and the rest of the disciples are a little psychotic? Probably. Yet, there is also something very true and good about them which I also see. Yesterday we prayed that our lives and words would confess Jesus as Lord and God.

As we sit in homes this Easter season, kept from our churches and separated from one another by a virus and love for the vulnerable among us, we wonder whether and how we will come back to normal. Our confession of Christ's Lordship and Divinity through public worship has been upended.

I am sure that Peter and his fellow Apostles who left the Sanhedrin rejoicing had never imagined that they would bear witness to Christ with bruises and lacerations. How will you bear witness? God has plans for you, too. We once bore witness through attending church on Sunday morning. How will that witness be made in the days of a pandemic. What happens may not always be pleasant in the moment, but He finds the way to weave them into the praise of angels and archangels.

God be with you until we meet again. In Jesus' love and mercy, Pastor Wulf