

## Teddington Circuit Worship at home sheet Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2020

This short act of worship has been prepared for you to use at home. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you. With thanks to David Priddy and to the Connexional Team

### Opening Prayer

As you come to worship you might like to picture the Extra Mile or Baby Basics ministries and thank God that those who have plenty can share with those who have little.

As I come before you today Lord, I thank you that you are the great provider for all our needs. I thank you for those who have helped me in these difficult times and ask that you would give me health and strength to help others.

### Today's Psalm: Psalm 46

#### Song (StF 18) - Be Still and Know that I am God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zN0XfOTC8U>

Pray - Lord, as we are still before you and consider these thoughts help us to see your love and our responsibilities afresh. Amen

An audio recording of the main message is available [here](#) or from [davidb.priddy@gmail.com](mailto:davidb.priddy@gmail.com).

### Thought

We live in unusual times, with self-isolation and social distancing being the new normal. Life for the early disciples was also a new normal. In the early part of Acts, we find them in self-isolation – for fear of their lives not a virus. Their lives were turned upside down when the Holy Spirit came and as we come to Acts 4 we get a synopsis of how Holy Spirit affects them and establishes a new normal.

Their new normal revolves around meeting together for prayer, worship, teaching and sharing bread, wine and their possessions. Their faith not only sustained them, but we see in verse 2 how it motivates them to proclaim the good news.

### The Inquisition

Acts 3 describes an amazing miracle when Peter and John healed a crippled beggar in the Name of Jesus. Full of faith, Peter takes the opportunity to boldly tell the indignant religious leaders some home truths about Jesus when they were hauled up before them.

*Acts 4:1 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup> They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. <sup>3</sup> They seized Peter and John, and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. <sup>4</sup> But many who heard the message believed, and the*

*number of men grew to about five thousand.*

*<sup>5</sup> The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. <sup>7</sup> They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*

Peter and John are being held to account for their actions, probably by the same religious leaders who demanded that Jesus account for his actions in cleansing the temple. They could arrest the apostles but not the gospel.

Jesus had no fear, nor do Peter or John. They are able to respond to their inquisitors because they have the power of the Holy Spirit to help them. The day they were filled with the Spirit is fresh in their minds, but more than that, they experience Him in their lives – the crippled man is not an isolated incident as you can see in chapter 5.

Peter answers their question:

*"By what power or what name did you do this?"*

It's an either / or question but Peter gives it to them with both barrels: they have been able to heal in the power of the Holy Spirit **and** in the name of Jesus.

It's not either or, it's both. It's faith in Jesus in action, fuelled by the Holy Spirit.

### The Inquisitors

Maybe this was a day to remember for the inquisitors; a day when they were confronted by some uncomfortable home truths. Steeped in religious duties, they are confronted with the reality that they need to be saved in Jesus' Name. Let's read from verse 13.

*<sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. <sup>14</sup> But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.*

When the religious leaders had been with Jesus their response was wholly negative – a result of their own pride. Peter and John were ordinary people, with little or no education, but they had been with Jesus and had faith. **He** gave them courage.

Rather than side-lining Jesus as the leaders tried, the disciples made him central. They knew that with the

Holy Spirit the ordinary can be **extraordinary**.

I find that helpful – we don't have to be highly educated or intellectual – the Holy Spirit comes upon us regardless of our background. We don't need degrees A-Levels or even GCSEs to be able to share our faith. We need Jesus and his Holy Spirit.

### The verdict

After a private meeting, the details of which must have been leaked after the event, Peter and John are brought back for the verdict. Look at the powerful response:

*<sup>18</sup> Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*

*<sup>19</sup> But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God. <sup>20</sup> For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."*

That's quite something – their faith was so real that they could not help sharing the reality of it. If you are anything like me, I can find it difficult to start speaking, but the disciples' experience meant they just could not help it.

As result, notice in verse 21 that 'all the people' were praising God.

### The Response – Sharing Faith

With no credible charge against them, Peter and John are released and return to their fellow-disciples. Verse 24 tells us that

*<sup>24</sup> When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God.*

So often we hear of wrongful arrest being a reason to seek compensation – we live in a compensation culture. Peter and John's reaction is to pray and reflect upon scripture. They don't go to the lawyer to sue for wrongful arrest – they don't lodge a compensation claim, they simply turn to God. They quote Psalm 2 and put Psalm 46 into practice when it says:

*<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. ...<sup>7</sup> The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

They are not standing alone; look at Acts 4v32 when it says

*'the whole group of believers was united'.*

We are reminded of the power of unity expressed in

*Psalm 133:<sup>1</sup> How good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters live together in unity!*

So, as Irving Berlin reminds us, unschooled people get on by "doing what comes naturally". These disciples were in prayer – that's what came naturally.

They trusted God and prayed. It was their lifestyle and they were able to take God literally at his word because they had experienced his faithfulness first hand.

They followed Jesus and remembered his words

*"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Matthew 7:7)*

So that's what they did and they shared their faith as doors were opened.

The disciples faced a number of problems. I wonder how we pray when faced with difficulties?

- Lord please stop this happening?
- Please give me a way out of this situation?
- Lord, I'm being threatened, so please help me?

That is NOT what the disciples prayed.

When they prayed they **didn't** pray for protection. Take a look at verse 29:

*<sup>29</sup> Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. <sup>30</sup> Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*

Their prayer was 'Lord despite all this trouble there has been and all the trouble there is likely to be, make me bold in speaking out your word and may I be the channel for miracles performed in your name.'

They didn't need a course from a motivational speaker. The power was in the name of Jesus. They were not ashamed of the gospel, or of lining up behind the Saviour who died on the cross.

They wanted the ability to speak boldly and they knew that if they did, the Holy Spirit would convince many of the truth of Jesus.

That's a great approach I want to follow. Yes, that was a **real** prayer meeting, but it was also a way of life. But just look at what happened after the prayer. We read verse 31 –

*<sup>31</sup> After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.*

It was like Pentecost again! Prayer – filling with the Holy Spirit – sharing the good news.

### Sharing Possessions

Their faith brought them together as a group. There is no evidence that they were living together at this time, indeed the church had grown significantly. As a group they are able to express their faith in another way as the last part of this chapter demonstrates:

<sup>32</sup> *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No-one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.* <sup>33</sup> *With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all.*

I believe that the way they shared their possessions was a natural expression of their faith. Their actions not only cemented their fellowship, but I suggest it had a profound impact on those around them. We can read a similar passage in Acts 2, which includes a sign of how sharing their faith had results beyond their group

<sup>43</sup> *Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*

#### So What?

I think Acts 4 is a wonderful example of the power of the Holy Spirit and the name of Jesus being experienced and then proclaimed by the early Christians.

They were driven by their love of Jesus and had a fantastic vision that they could be channels of God's grace to the people around them. Through their unity, they could pray and **confidently** expect answers.

The prayers of the disciples were not "get me out of here prayers", but prayers for boldness in proclaiming the truth in places where the truth hurt.

In these days of disruption to what used to be, may we be those who stand up for Jesus and demonstrate our faith to those around us. Sharing our faith and sharing our possessions. In that way we will shine the light of Jesus to those who need His touch

#### Song (StF 397) – The Spirit Lives to Set Us Free

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnt4ST8HGQA>

#### A cry for our land

Let's pray aloud for our nation, our neighbours, our families and cry out to Jesus for their need of Him. (If you have company then one give the invitation and all respond).

- We shout for the streets; **More Jesus!**
- For the cities and towns; **More Jesus!**
- For the lonely and silent; **More Jesus!**
- For the frailest and smallest; **More Jesus!**
- For the bound and the hopeless; **More Jesus!**
- For the gangs and the guns; **More Jesus!**
- For the dads and the mums; **More Jesus!**
- For the wounded and bleeding; **More Jesus!**
- For the lost and the weeping; **More Jesus!**
- We shout for our churches and cry for our leaders;  
For agents of help - fire, health and policing;

For the triumph of goodness, compassion and mercy;

For freedom and justice;

We shout for your glory, we shout for your story;

**More Jesus! More Jesus! MORE JESUS!**

We long for more of Jesus, but recognise that we are His mouthpieces, his hands and his feet. Respond with

#### Song (StF 663) – I The Lord Of Sea and Sky

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcl9S5a3weUk>

#### A time of prayer

Father, I come to you recognizing that I am weak compared to you, but knowing that you love each one of us as we are.

*Pause to read the next paragraph and then pray the phrases which you feel comfortable with.*

I want to know you more; I want to share the good news with those who have yet to appreciate your love; I want to see you glorified through our actions. Please help me.

I pray for my friends and family, remembering especially {name those who are sick} and ask for your healing touch upon their lives. I pray for {name those who do not yet know Jesus as friend and Saviour} may they know your presence even as I pray and come to experience your peace.

On this Sports Chaplaincy Sunday, I pray for those who minister to sportsmen and women, the coaches and all who support the teams. May they be sensitive to your Spirit as they speak about you and demonstrate your love in difficult circumstances.

#### The Lord's Prayer:

*Our Father .....*

#### Hymn (StF 707) Make me a Channel of Your Peace -

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D\\_SQy7glSw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D_SQy7glSw)

#### Prayer

Father, help me to bring your light into the world around me, grant me your peace and help me in the week ahead to be a channel of your love. May I share my faith in you with those I can greet and my possessions with those in need.

**A blessing** from Colossians 2:6-7 So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.

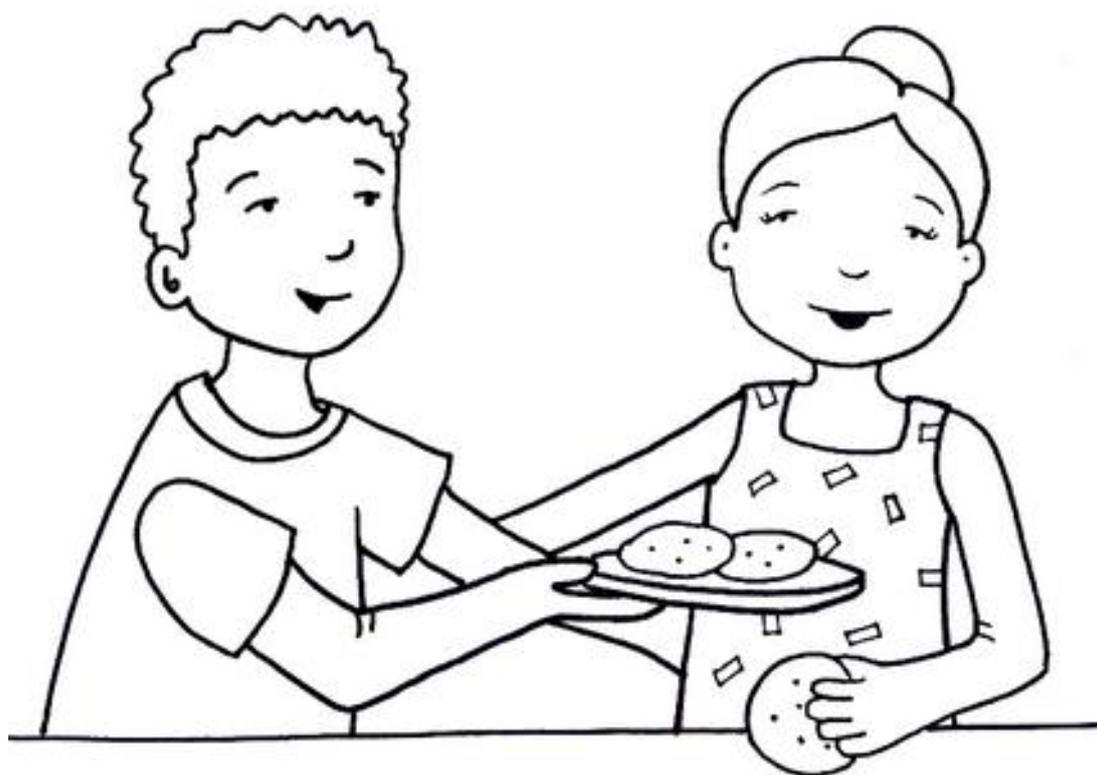




### Peter Preached with Boldness

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**They shared what they had**