

WE CAN'T KEEP FROM SPEAKING

Pentecost Journeys

June 17, 2007

TEXT: Acts 4:13-22

THEME: Boldness

HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

The landscape of history is littered with examples where people have spoken out boldly, but their message has not been heard. This often leads to tragedy. Let's take a look at a few examples. The medical community relates a sudden rise in brain tumors, thought to be the result of cell phone radiation. The cell phone industry was quick to counter this allegation insisting their products were safe. Ralph Nader was a leading consumer advocate who began his career speaking out against unsafe cars that were produced a couple of decades ago. Many of these safety issues resulted in death. Again, the auto industry was quick to counter these allegations. Geologists had advanced warnings that Mt. Saint Helen's was about to erupt. Still, people refused to pay attention to these warnings. Some lost their lives. Bold messages are often ignored because we don't want to upset the status quo, and because we think the consequences will not affect us personally. In the post Pentecost days, there were no cell phones, no automobiles, and no one knew about Mt. Saint Helen. Still, the disciples faced the same resistance when they made a bold witness.

THE SPIRIT OF BOLDNESS

When we think of Pentecost, automatically, almost as if by default, we think of the first gift of the spirit was the disciples' speaking in tongues. What is often overlooked is the first gift of the Spirit was a spirit of boldness. That is, standing up and speaking the truth of the Gospel. In our previous study in Acts, we learned that before Pentecost, the last place on earth the disciples wanted to be was in the temple. Why? The Jewish religious authorities were gunning for the disciples. After Pentecost, this situation changes. In our lesson for this morning, Peter and John stand boldly before the council and others in authority including the captain of the temple, the priests and the Sadducees.

A DIFFICULT PROBLEM

These collective religious authorities faced a difficult problem. The Sadducees were upset because they did not believe in the resurrection. The disciples taught that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. The religious

authorities were also upset because many of the people believed the bold message the disciples proclaimed. In fact, there were several thousand. The Gospel message of the resurrection was not the only thing that was an issue for the religious authorities. There was the issue of good deeds done to those in need. Refuting the physical evidence of someone who was healed is a very difficult thing to do. Who can argue with this powerful reality? The religious authorities detained the disciples overnight. Then, these authorities held a special meeting the next day to discuss a plan of action to neutralize the bold witness by the disciples. The religious authorities could not shut down the problem from the perspective of the people. Too many people had come to believe. Then there was the healing. How could these authorities speak out against someone being healed? They had to come at this problem from another perspective. That perspective was shutting down the bold Gospel message and the good deeds done by the disciples. So, the authorities called the disciples and told them to speak to no one and further in the name of Jesus. I'm sure they were also strongly encouraged to stop the good deeds thing as well.

WE CANNOT STOP FROM SPEAKING

The disciples were issued a warning. They would not be punished or suffer any further consequences if they complied with what the religious authorities wanted. In this situation, Peter speaks out with a bold message. He tells the authorities that it is their right to judge if it is right in God's sight to listen to the authorities or to God. Then Peter goes on with a very bold proclamation. "We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard."

DO WE WITNESS IN BOLD WAYS?

Do we witness with the same kind of boldness today? If not, why not! Perhaps we don't witness in bold ways because we don't want to upset the status quo. After all, what can possibly happen if we don't make a bold Christian witness? Maybe there is another reason we may lack a bold witness. Remember the words of Peter. We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard." Maybe we don't take the time to see the Gospel miracles that take place everyday. Maybe we don't take the time to hear God speak to us. God calls us to make a bold witness to the Gospel just as the disciples were called to make the same bold witness. Listen to the word of God and see the miracles that take place everyday. Then you too can make a bold witness. Amen