

What I Have I Give You

Acts of the Apostles, Chapters 3 and 4

What We Found

The first miracle Luke narrates in detail happened on the way to prayer, at the hour of the evening sacrifice. A man lame from birth, carried and laid daily at the temple gate to beg from the worshipers going in, was told to look up, and heard the Church's permanent bank statement: "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (3:6). Word, name, and touch together, and the man went in "walking and leaping," exactly as Isaiah 35:6 promised the lame would do when God came to save.

Peter refused all credit: not our power, not our piety, but the Name, and faith in the Name (3:12-16). Yet the Name chose to work through Peter's voice and Peter's hand, the pattern behind every sacrament: God's power, man's instrument. Before the same court that condemned Jesus, Peter declared that "there is salvation in no one else" (4:12), and the council could find only one explanation for the boldness of uneducated, common men: "they had been with Jesus" (4:13).

And we found where boldness comes from. Threatened and released, the community did not pray for safety. They prayed Psalm 2, asked God for boldness to keep speaking, and the place where they were gathered was shaken (4:29-31). Boldness is not a personality type. It is a grace, and it can be asked for.

Voices of the Church

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Bede the Venerable, Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles (8th century)

St. Bede reads the man lame from birth as an image of fallen humanity: laid daily at the door of worship yet unable to walk into it by his own strength, until he is raised by the hand of the Church acting in the name of Christ. What silver and gold could never do, the Name does, and his leaping is the joy of every soul lifted by grace.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles (4th century)

Chrysostom lingers on the council's astonishment at uneducated, common men. The apostles' power was not eloquence or rank but the evidence that they had been with Jesus. The man who is much with Christ in prayer, he says, will not be able to stay timid about Him in public.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

St. Cyprian of Carthage, On the Lord's Prayer (3rd century)

St. Cyprian taught that the Church's prayer is public and common, one people praying as one: we say Our Father, not My Father, because our prayer is common, offered as one body. The believers of Acts 4 lifting their voices with one accord, and the room shaking, is the picture of what united prayer does.

Live It This Week

Two assignments, both small and both real. First, pray for boldness by name: choose the one situation where you consistently go quiet about your faith, and every day this week pray the Church's prayer from Acts 4:29, that the Lord grant his servants to speak the word with all boldness, naming that situation out loud. Second, give what you have: one act this week of giving Christ rather than things, and the simplest form is an offer to pray with someone, not just for them, on the spot, briefly, by name.

Memory Verse

"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." (Acts 4:12)

Before Next Session

Read Acts 5:1 through 6:7, once. Some of it will disturb you. Let it; we will face it honestly together.

Catechism References

CCC 1421 (Christ heals through His Church) · CCC 2666 (the name of Jesus) · CCC 776 (the Church, sacrament of salvation) · CCC 425 (we cannot but speak)