

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 25th 2014

The first reading and the Gospel reading intrigue me, fill me with awe and make me smile. To get the full picture of what is going on in Acts 4, you have to read Acts 3. Peter and John have just healed a man who was lame from birth. He wasn't even asking to be healed – he was begging for money, as he did every day. But Peter feels moved by the Spirit to give the man the ability to walk, saying, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!"

The man begins to walk and then even jump, praising God all the while. Peter uses the occasion to tell all the people gathered about the risen Christ and God's plan for salvation. Well, that causes quite a stir and Peter and John are questioned and taken into custody by the temple leaders, as we read in Acts 4. Despite their detractors, Peter and John convince some 5,000 people to become believers in Christ. The next day, they testify again before the leaders and elders and tell them that Jesus, the stone rejected has become the cornerstone and “there is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved.”

Reading a little beyond verse 12, we find the temple leaders are totally bewildered by the healing of the man and the preaching, and finally dismiss Peter and John after failing at silencing them.

I love the humanness, the drama, the chaos of the account – the healed man jumping around, the strength and conviction of the formerly cowardly apostles, and the flummoxed officials. I especially love the simplicity of the Christian message that is delivered.

So too the Gospel. I love that Jesus is frying fish over a fire to cook breakfast for his friends. What an ordinary, human thing to do! I love that Jesus knew where a big catch of fish could be found beneath the sea's surface, and how impulsive Peter jumps into the water to get to the risen Jesus faster, leaving his friends to do the work.

Both of these accounts tell me wonderful things about our God: God has a sense of humor; cares about our basic needs (such as breakfast and walking); knows things we can't (where schools of fish are lurking); and, most of all, has a very simple plan for salvation. I repeat: I am entertained, captivated and comforted all at once. What a wonderful God we have!

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