

Acts 4:8-12

3rd Sunday after Easter

April 17, 1994

*8Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, 9if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, 10let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. 11This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' 12There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."*

Na, na na na na na. Our God is better.

Na na na na na na. Jesus is better.

Will you join me in that? We could start over at the Jewish temple. Then race over to the Mosque where the Muslims gather. Maybe after we could find some Hindus from India. Gather in the yard of a Buddhist from Japan.

Hey, we could rent a bus. And on the side we could print the verse from our first lesson which is our theme: "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

Let's print up cards: Jesus says, "I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by me."

Maybe also a poster that would say: "Those who believe in him are not condemned but those who do not believe are condemned already because they have not believed in the only Son of God."

Got the spirit? Ready to join me? "Na na na na na - Jesus is better."

What's wrong? You don't like the way this sounds? You don't think Jesus was given to die and be raised so that we could look down our noses on other peoples whom God has created? You say that Jesus was given to die on the cross and raised from the dead because God loves those people, wants to bring together Jews and Muslims and Hindus and Buddhists all into one family? One people? One faith?

Well, why would they want Jesus? Don't they already have their own faith? Why would they want Jesus?

I don't think they would want Jesus if Jesus is like the thing you put on the end of a cake decorator. You know those things that squeeze the frosting into the right shape. Sometimes we thought that is what Jesus is, God's squeezing us into the right kind of persons so we would all come out the same. Hand folded, smiling faced, tight, kinds of persons.

No, and I don't think they would want Jesus if he is the right answer on our final exam. The kind of answer you could write down on the palm of your hand to sneak a peek in case you forget. Some of you remember how we used to line our children up in front of us all and make sure they got the answers right so that they would pass that final test.

No, and I don't think they would want Jesus if he is the membership password into a select club - Jesus and his friends the insiders and everyone else outsiders. Kind of like South Africa before the elections, a place for we and our kind, and keeping them and their kind where they belong.

So why would they want to come to Jesus? Why would they want Jesus at all?

Why do you?

Have you witnessed in him a light in which there is no darkness? No darkness at all?

Have you tasted his love that can never be limited by your sin - your weakness - your death - his love for you that knows no bounds and no end?

Have you sensed the heart of this man, as you have listened to his stories, like the one about the beaten robbed man, the victim?

He was left for dead beside the road. Some very religious people walked by him. They had no hope for him. But an outsider came along, cleaned and bandaged the wounds, took him to a place where he could be cared for, paid for his care. Kind of sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? He collects beaten and wounded people like us and brings us together for our healing here, provides for our care. Some of us know just how true this story is, others of us are only now learning.

Or the story about the the workers: Some hired at the beginning of the day, others later, some near the end. And everyone was paid the full wage. Some of us aren't nearer to Jesus or more important to him. Everyone is most important, loved with just the love they need. You need.

Or the favorite story of all: The son who goes away and wastes every advantage - throws it all away and still is greeted with joy at his return. Jesus is the father rushing out to you. Loving you.

Why do you believe in Jesus?

You know that with Jesus love is not just a story. You watched how he dealt with those who failed him, denied him, persecuted him. Peter, Paul, the other disciples. You heard him

speaking to them this morning, "Peace be with you," was his greeting, his first word. No blaming, criticizing, accusing from his mouth.

Why do you believe in Jesus?

Have you believed in him, trusted in him and found he did not fail you?

Have you feared death and been lifted from that grave of fear as you hear the joyous news, Christ is risen.

Why would others believe? Because Jesus is God's most perfect gift, precious gift, wonderful gift. Jesus is God's love for you and for every one.

Why would they believe? Because we would tell them about Jesus, our treasure, our hope, our joy.