

FRIDAY – April 24th

CENTERING BREATH PRAYER: May I have faith...in your name, Lord Jesus.

Dearest Lord, as we come together today I praise and worship your name. To worship in your name is an ever-present joy. May my faith grow and my appreciation of your name, in all its possible meanings, bring me a greater awareness of your great love and compassion for humanity, including me. May my witness bring your name before those with whom I come into contact this day so that they may be touched by the love and compassion you have for each of them. In your saving name, I pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:12-16

KEY VERSES: Acts 3:15-16:

(15) “...and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. (16) And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you” (NRSV).

Our scripture passage for today immediately follows the first healing done by Christ’s disciples, now called Apostles after Christ’s death and resurrection. Peter has used Jesus’ name to empower him to boldly claim healing for a crippled man well known to the community. Although the disciples had healed with Christ’s authority when sent out during Christ’s ministry, this is the first instance of a healing after the crucifixion. For the fledgling Apostles this was a validation of the transferring of Christ’s mantle through Jesus’ name. Peter, who was the first to seize the opportunity to witness to the crowds following the outpouring of Christ’s Spirit on Pentecost, uses the healing of the cripple as an opportunity to do so again. Remember, we are in Jerusalem within a few months of Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection. The people of Jerusalem have been buzzing about these events, especially since Pentecost, when Peter first received the power and authority which the Holy Spirit brought to speak boldly and eloquently about the identity of Jesus and daily brought many into the fledgling church in Jerusalem. The church in Jerusalem was not a tiny group (remember after Peter’s powerful testimony on Pentecost, 3,000 people professed their faith and were baptized) and had banded together in communal living, sharing what they had and was growing by leaps and bounds.

When the cripple was healed, one who was very familiar to those who went to the temple on a regular basis, a large number of people began to gather around them in wonder and awe. Some of them had probably listened to Jesus teach prior to the crucifixion. Now they stood around Peter and he seized the opportunity once more and began to proclaim Jesus’ name as the power and authority which had accomplished this deed. Peter was quick to give credit where credit was due. How many of us remember to give Christ the credit when good things are happening in our churches and in our lives? When people tell me that these devotionals speak to their needs, that the prayers are powerful or any other praise is given to me, I point out that the Lord is the one who empowers me in the writing. Peter knew that he was not the one who had done the healing. He had only spoken the words, it was Christ who did the healing. Peter acted out of compassion for the crippled man, but he also knew a good opportunity to witness to Christ’s loving and compassionate power in the midst of the event. Peter doesn’t mince words. He lets the people know that they had participated in the death of Christ and that their God had resurrected him. Some in the crowd had probably been present

when Christ arrived in Jerusalem with great fanfare. Others (and perhaps even some of the same ones) may have been present when Pilate tried to free Jesus and shouted for his death. Some knew about the church group that lived together and shared their possessions. But, most had probably discounted the rumors about Jesus being resurrected. Now, Peter stands before them and tells them the one who was healed received this gift not from Peter, but from Jesus. Peter followed the leading of the Holy Spirit within to extend the healing to the crippled man. He also knew how to use the opportunities presented to him to give testimony about Jesus. How often do we waste opportunities to tell people about the power and authority of Jesus to heal our souls? The healing of physical ailments seems rare or even non-existent in our world today, yet Christ's power to heal our wounded and crippled souls is still powerful and just as miraculous today as it was when Peter told the crippled man to rise up and walk. The boldness of Peter came through the Holy Spirit, which we will welcome once again in a few weeks at Pentecost. Christ used Peter's brash and impulsive nature as a powerful orator after the resurrection. As a disciple, Peter had identified Jesus as the Messiah, gotten out of the boat to walk on the water with Jesus (though his faith faltered, at least he tried) and boldly swore he would follow Jesus, even to the death. His boasts had gotten him in trouble, but he made attempts to faithfully do what he believed Jesus would want. Now, he has become steadier, more consistent in his faith and does not fail to carry through what he begins. It is the Holy Spirit, Christ's Spirit within him that strengthens his faith and empowers his efforts to witness. We, too, have the Holy Spirit to strengthen our faith and empower us as we walk this resurrection journey. Hallelujah! Christ is risen! And his power, wisdom, compassion and love are present in our hearts. We need only to walk in them. Hallelujah!

ADDITIONAL SCRIPTURES: Matthew 14:22-36; Matthew 16:13-20

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND/OR JOURNALING:

1. What opportunities have I squandered to share Christ's powerful and compassionate name with others?
2. How well do I trust in the healing power of the name of Jesus? How can I build that trust?
3. How well do I listen for direction from the Lord to use the opportunities placed before me?
4. How can I improve my comprehension of the opportunities presented and use them wisely?

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION:

1. As you go through the day, actively look for opportunities to witness to Christ. It may be a simple word or two that shows someone you are a believer. It may be the opportunity to perform a compassionate act in Christ's name.
2. Make a list of the times you have listened to the opportunities to share Christ with someone.
3. If your list is short or non-existent, pray about how you can improve your perception of the opportunities.

Jesus, name above all names, I pray for your Spirit to make me aware of the opportunities you place before me to witness in your name. Let me be open to share you with everyone today in one way or another. Open my heart to the needs around me and my abilities to meet those needs in your name. May I always live in the power of your name in which I pray. Amen.