

“The Mountain & the Wave”
Acts 4:23-31

Introduction: Pg. _____

Context: Peter heals a lame man. The city celebrates. Peter preaches Jesus as the name who brings healing, salvation, and compels obedience even in the face of opposition. We saw that the religious establishment did not like the fact that Peter and John were preaching that Jesus was raised from the dead and drawing the people away to worship him.

So they arrested them and “charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.” (4:18) That’s pretty clear. That’s pretty comprehensive. BUT rather than cowering back, “Peter and John answered them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.’” (4:19-20)

In the face of this opposition, the apostles go back to their friends, report what happened, and the group of Jesus of followers, in that moment decide the *best thing they could do is: guess what? PRAY.*

I want to give you two metaphors to hang on to this morning: The mountain and the wave. The mountain is all about seeking God, and seeking God primarily through prayer.

- Moses (Exodus 18) went up on the mountain to talk with God face to face and receive the revelation of the law for Israel.
- Elijah (I Kings 18): vs. The Prophets of Baal - prays down fire from heaven, and then backs that up by praying down rain after an _____ month famine! 7 times...
- Jesus...
 - Luke 6:12 (“In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.”)
 - Matthew 14:23 - (“And after [he fed 5,000], he went up on the mountain by himself to pray.”)
 - Luke 9:28 - (“he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray.” [When his glory was revealed in the Transfiguration.])

Mountains (especially for us who live in the city) can be places of retreat, solitude. The mountain is a metaphor for the place of prayer. It’s not God hear us better if we if climbed a little higher! :) [[If that were the case, let’s take field trips to Mt. Washington, you know what I’m saying? “My car climbed Mt. Washington - TO PRAY!”]]

Here’s the point: It’s about us pulling back from everything else to press into God through prayer. That’s what the mountain is all about.

Read 4:23-31

With these words we find these early Christians praying past their fears. In other words, prayer takes you beyond your fears. Why?

We learn three things from their time on the mountain... #1

I. Prayer calls on the God over the opposition.

Not: “over” as in “over it” I’m over it. I’m done with that. NO. “Over” as in reigns above. He is in control.

Verse 23-24

- Their prayer was reflexive. Whoa.
 - “When they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God.”
 - They didn’t let their minds become consumed with worry.
 - They didn’t play the “what if…” game.
 - They didn’t strategize for a way to avoid persecution.
 - They prayed to persevere through the persecution (which reminds us that prayer - at it’s essence - is not about retreat but advance!)! And…
- Their prayer was unified.
 - “They lifted their voices *together*.”
 - It is likely a group of followers gathered to pray for the release of Peter and John. Now, their prayer led to more prayer.
 - When God ignites your heart for prayer, that’s what it looks like. Prayer on top of prayer, on top of prayer, on top of more and more and more prayer.
 - You want to pray? I’m already there. You don’t have to ask me twice!
 - The longer I walk with God, the more I love praying with other people.
 - Our Prayer Night Thursday night was amazing.
 - The weekend before Easter we will be hosting 24 hours of Prayer at our Community Center (3/23, 6p - 3/24, 6p. Sign up or show up!

T: Every time we we pray, we pray to the…

God over the opposition.

- Notice how they address God, “Sovereign Lord.”
 - We are praying to the one, true God who rules and reigns over everything.
 - He has authority over all the eye can and cannot see.
- “Who made the heaven and earth and sea and everything in them”
 - He has authority over all things because he created all things.
 - Don’t you see the connection between God’s power and our fear?
 - If the God who spoke the world into existence is for us, nothing can touch us unless he allows it.
- Prayer calls on the God who is King over all kings.
 - And they remember the words of David from Psalm 2
 - Here’s a pro tip: when you pray, pray the Bible! Pray (for God to open your eyes and draw you close), read his Book, and then pray God would help you live the story you just read about it.
 - We don’t want to read history, we want to make history.
- Why do they pray Psalm 2?
 - They are seeing it before their eyes. Herod (king of the Jews) and Pontius Pilate (Governor of Rome) conspired against Jesus at the demands of the crowd to see to his crucifixion.
- Typically, when we see a Scripture quoted, the writer is calling our attention to the whole Psalm, not just verses 1-2.

- Psalm 2 tells us, not only kings who take their stand against God because they want to be god.
- Psalm 2 tells us that God sits in heaven and laughs because his Messiah (oh, yeah - JESUS) will rule over every nation, and he warns all people to “take refuge in him.”
- As we think about God being over our opposition, it is instructive how these early followers held the tension of God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility. These are not opposed but compatible.
 - In the death of Christ.
 - Man planned it, but
 - God also planned it before the world was formed!
 - The wickedness of man was on full display, but God, in his goodness, used their wickedness to accomplish the greatest good.
 - Don’t miss the same thing about prayer.
 - God you have to do it, but also...
 - We have to step out (in your strength)

God has got this. God alone is God. God is victorious over every enemy. (Hello Easter! Death died in the death of Christ!)

T: Here’s an amazing thing that happens as we call on the God over the opposition....

II. Prayer makes God bigger and people smaller.

Listen closely - I’m speaking from our vantage point. You can’t add to infinity. You hear me? We can never make the infinite God bigger or better.

Prayer brings God into focus. We see him more clearly for who he really is!

- It’s one thing to see the skyline from Stoneham. It’s another thing to stand at Trinity Church and look up.
- Prayer changes our vantage point. When you seek God on the mountain, you see things you couldn’t see before.
 - Prayer is all about fixing our eyes on God.
 - This hit me this morning: the connection between sanctification (2 Cor 3:17) and prayer.
- Prayer not only changes what I see. Prayer changes me!

In our trials, in our suffering, in our fears, our greatest need is a enhanced view of God.

- “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” - Tozer
- We need to know where the Scripture ignites certain aspects of our faith.
 - Want a greater hunger for the Word - Read Psalm 119 - again and again.
 - Need hope in trials - read 1 Peter and the crucifixion narratives!
 - Need encouragement toward the Spirit’s fullness and sharing your faith - read what? ____ ACTS! Yes!
 - Need a reminder of God’s greatness and power, read the back half of the prophet Isaiah... Just listen to these words.

Read these. **References only on the Screen**

- Isaiah 42:8
- Isaiah 44:6, 8
- Isaiah 46:8-10
- Isaiah 51:12-13, 15.
- Isaiah 57:15

Have you ever noticed how wind typically increases at higher elevation?

- That is because objects on the ground create friction that disrupts the flow of air.
- The higher you go, the less friction, the faster the wind.
- And I'm just saying - give me that wind, the wind of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2; John 3).

- God, in prayer, help me rise above the friction, help me rise above the distraction, because *I know* Satan loves to distract me by helping us fix our eyes on people, so that they become big and God becomes small. And *I know* Satan loves to distract me with incessant social media posts and mindless video games, and hours of consuming Netflix and sports.
- God, in prayer, help me rise above the friction of my sin that resists and grieves the work of the Spirit in my life and holds me back from the fullness you want me to experience, because I can't be full of you, if I'm full of junk!

T: Prayer makes God bigger and man smaller, AND...

III. Prayer replaces our fear with God's boldness.

Look at the shift in *verse 29*. Here we have their request.

- "Grant"
- Boldness is a gift from God.
- Boldness is a fruit of the Spirit.
- We need God to produce this in us. "You make me brave!"
- It flows from our relationship with God.
 - **"The fear of man lays a snare..." (Proverbs 29:25)**
 - **"But the righteous are bold as a lion." (Proverbs 28:1)**
 - I'm so convinced... the more we press into this vision (The fullness of God in us...), the more we will see God overflow through us with bold and loving witness.
- Do you know how many times in the Bible, God tell us not to fear? 70, more than any other command! There is so much to fear in this life: health woes, financial trouble, relationships, problems at work, what people think of us. We have fears around anything that means something to us.
- We need God's boldness to move us past our fears.

How do we get it? WE ASK!! God, make me bold. God, make us bold. God, help us fix our eyes on your love (1 John 4:18) and your power that we no longer FEAR but move forward in FAITH!

SO ASK FOR IT!!!

- Eph. 6:18-20 - Paul prays for boldness. Peter & John pray for boldness.
- **If you lack boldness, pray for boldness!**

And they asked with Faith! They not only expected God to give them boldness. They expected God to continue moving powerfully, yes miraculously, in their midst through the name of his holy servant Jesus.

What happened?

1. The place shook! I'm still waiting for that on Friday mornings, but I'm not waiting on God to shake our souls for him and his mission. It happens every week!
2. They were filled with the Spirit!
 - Continually filling... (Acts 2 and again?)
 - Combustible (4:7ish) explain the difference - ongoing and spontaneous..
3. They continued to speak the word of God with boldness!

Here's the Point: Prayer on the mountain brings Waves of the Spirit's boldness.

The activity of God, especially intimes of revival and awakening, have been associated with waves. Why? Here are a couple of thoughts, because waves build over time, waves are powerful, and waves come with consistency. It's wave after wave after wave after wave. Is that not what we see here in Acts? That's what we are praying for as a church in 2018. The fullness of God to overflow in Waves of revival and awakening across Medford and Greater Boston!

Prayer on the mountain brings Waves of the Spirit's boldness.

Let me set a couple of things straight:

- Boldness is not contradictory to humility.
- Boldness comes through all kinds of different approaches to sharing Jesus and...
- Boldness comes through all kinds of different personalities

APP:

- If you are like me - you need a breakthrough of boldness. And let me tell you something, if it's been weeks or months or years since you've attempted and actually shared the message of Jesus with someone, you need a breakthrough! Not just like wanted to talk about Jesus, but actually opened your big, fat mouth (:)) and shared the good news with someone.
- Beautiful feet... (FEET MOVE!! Go. Move!)
- Now, there is no condemnation in Christ. If all that brings conviction to your soul, because the Holy Spirit is saying - Tanner is right - then so be it.
- My job is not to discourage you but encourage you, to BUILD YOU UP, so that by the Spirit working with his Word, will embolden you to pray for boldness and to step out in boldness to be about the greatest business under the sun!
- And this is the greatest business under the sun. You tell me what's greater? Tell me one thing you could ever do that is more important than helping bring someone to God.
- That's why Satan is working so hard to keep you from it. If you don't think he is breathing lies into your ears about this all day long, just know - he has you right where he wants you.
- So we're going to talk back to him - shut your mouth, get behind me...

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- And more importantly, we're going to talk to God and say, "God change me, God, now. Grant me boldness to speak your word and to do so for the sake of your name."
- So how can we engage in this *greatest* business under the sun. Two options?

Stealth... (more covert)

- Nothing wrong with weaving it in. Probably best in the majority of situations and relationship. It is probably also the most natural approach. Helps the message of Jesus be a bit more palatable.
- Examples
 - From God's work in you (testimony/witness).
 - From the brokenness (and goodness) around us.

BUT we don't always have to weave it. OK? Sometimes we need to be...

Overt... BOLD...

- The next time we hang, I'd love to share about what God has been doing in my life.
- Hey, I'd love to talk to you about the most important thing in my life.
- Hey, I want to talk to you about Jesus. When can we make that happen?

Conclusion:

- Please listen to this!! Please! We have less to fear than we think we do!
 - (Will... Leaders; Foloso... - CGs)
- A new believer said it in CG: "I'm close enough towhees guys, I can just say: "hey, there's something I want to talk to you about."
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Who knows? Maybe with that kind of Spirit inspired boldness - can might just turn this city upside down, through the beautiful feet of his people unafraid to speak the name of Jesus.

The mountain of prayer brings waves and waves of the Spirit's boldness. Let's seek God for it together!

Prayer... (Easter = 400) "Let us never fear what you've put in our heart to share!"

Introduce: King of My Heart...

Let the King of my heart
Be the mountain where I run,
The fountain I drink from,
Oh, he is my song.

Let the King of my heart
Be the fire inside my veins
The echo of my days
Oh he is my song

He is good, good, good, good!

Sing this. Don't hold back!!