

Message for Sunday, October 4, 2026

Scripture: Acts 4: 5-12 NRSVUE

Title "Identity"

Welcome

Announcements:

Giving Options... online, in the back, offering plate, QR code; Special Offering for October is World Communion Sunday (explainer video);

October is Pastor Appreciation Month (Carol Quasula will announce this)

Interfaith Workshops start on October 25th at 2PM. First One is Buddhism;

Sunday School starts at 8:30AM;

Food pantry needs all non-perishables.

Church Conference will be on November 15th at 5PM

(you may or may not want to do that one as we have plenty of time)

Fellowship of Love

Song

Call to Worship

L: The heavens proclaim the glory of God!

P: We too proclaim what God has done in our lives.

1

L: Voices of praise shout to the ends of the earth.

P: May we join the chorus, as we sing of God's great and abiding love!

Unison Prayer

Creating God, like the earth around us, we gather to proclaim your glory.

We pray that you will revive our souls today.

We pray that you will help us become a little bit wiser.

We pray that our hearts will rejoice at the sound of your name.

We pray that our eyes will be opened to your ways.

We pray that we might live in peace and harmony with one another.

And we pray that today, and every day, we will again choose to follow in the ways of Christ, so that our lives may become an example of your love and grace to the world.

In the name of Christ, we pray.

Amen.

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L: As we come to this time of offering, let us remember that giving is an opportunity to respond to God's generosity with our own.

Offering/Song

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⁵The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem,

⁶with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.

⁷When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"

⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders,

2 ⁹if we are being questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are being 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.'

¹²"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."

L: The word of God for the people of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Meditation: (Communion Sunday) Identity

What is going on in this passage? We step from a story about healing last week, and the call to live Jesus' mission...right into an argument, and that kind of is the point. Proclamation of the Gospel in Acts always happens when the disciples are challenged. On the day of Pentecost, where we first started our series, the disciples are accused of being drunk and Peter proclaims

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the gospel to them. This is the next step in that line. Peter and John healed a person, thus through action showing that they were going to uphold Jesus' mission. And guess what happens? They get in trouble for it!

This is one of those few passages in Acts where the antagonists are quite clear according to the text. Here it states, "rulers, elders and scribes." These are the people in charge. Peter's issue is not with the general population of Jewish people; his problem is with the authorities who are in control of the temple and by extension the religious people in Jerusalem. The short end of Peter's message here is that "you want trouble? Well you got trouble!" Peter lays out clearly that Jesus is their problem and not his.

The culmination of this passage is in the final verse which seems very exclusive. The final verse claims "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved." Over the past few months, when we were in Romans, and as we set up the beginning of this short series on Acts I made a point of showing you how the gospel isn't about dogmatic lip service to Jesus. I am pretty sure what I say is that following Jesus isn't about a get out of hell free card. Knowing this, how do we handle this passage because it feels very exclusive and not inclusive.

3

I'd like to offer you a reminder. The disciples were in the process of setting up Christianity. As one author I read this week said, "they were not trying to exclude future religious movements but to validate the message of Jesus." This type of boldness is different than pushing people out. This is a message saying who we are; as opposed to what we believe. This is their story of identity.

Years ago when I was in seminary I took a break from the United Methodist Church. I did so I could explore and make sure that the Methodist Church was where I belonged. I took an in-depth psychological analysis in order to become a pastor in the Methodist Church, and when I took that I remember the psychologist looking at me and asking me if I really wanted to be Methodist. The reason was because I have issues with authority...well yeah, that's still true. My point in bringing up both of these situations is I know who I am. I am Methodist. I am *certain* of my identity because I questioned it, and because it was questioned.

I give our former Presbyterians a hard time, I give Baptist and Pentecostals a hard time. I do that in play. There is nothing wrong with knowing who you are. It's even okay not to know who you are. Peter reminds us here that what it means to be Christian is ultimately to cause trouble. Because if we are going to follow the gospel of Jesus, if we are going to follow Jesus' message and calling, then we are going to call people to live out the year of Jubilee.

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If you don't know who you are right now that's ok. There are some days I don't know. There are some days where I'm not sure what I believe, why I do what I do, or even where I am going. The benefit to believing in Christ is that no matter where you are at in this identity journey Christ is with you. Amen.

Entering Into a Time of Holy Communion **Katherine's Communion Litany**

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them up to the Lord

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4 L: Let us give thanks to the Lord Our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

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L: O God, you created the universe with a shout of joy, a word of delight, and a big bang. You made gravity holes and antimatter, swirling electrons and dancing quarks, shooting stars and sapphire blue planets.

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You filled the ocean with clown fish and sharks, with dolphins and killer whales.

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You filled the air with doves and hawks, songbirds and hummingbirds. You covered the land with shimmering aspen and weathered pine. And You blessed all the creatures of the earth:

The bugs, snakes, lizards, the lions, tigers and bears, the puppies and the hippos, the zebras and the penguins.

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And You blessed all the children of the earth every shape and size, every color and complexion, every makeup and mood, every style and substance.

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But we, O God, preferred to go our own way. We messed things up. We wanted to be in charge. We wanted to be in control.

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We thought everything belonged to us. We polluted the environment. We destroyed each other.

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We turned playgrounds into battlefields, school yards into mine fields, hospitals into death camps, and children into killers.

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But God, you never gave up on us. You never walked away or walked out. You always honored your promises even when we broke ours.

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You always welcomed us home with open arms and a warm heart even when our fists were clenched and our minds still closed.

5

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When we walk through sorrow and chaos, You are with us. When we live through moments of war and acts of terror, You walk with us.

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When our homes are destroyed, You help us to build new homes and finally lead us home to you.

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And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise Your name and join their unending hymn:

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P: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord,

God of power and might,

Heaven and earth are full of your glory,

Hosanna in the highest.

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**Blessed is the One
who comes in the name of the Lord.**

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Hosanna in the highest.

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L: In the right time, in the fullness of your time, In the nick of time, you sent your Son to bring us back to life. He opened a window into your new creation.

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HE showed us a vision of your way: where every child has enough to eat, and can sleep safely all through the night,

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where every graveyard is a front porch of heaven, where the untouchable and unlovable are given the seats of honor, where tears of mourning become tears of laughter,

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where grievous wrongs and horrid suffering are made right and fair, where children hunt Easter eggs on playgrounds made from battlefields, and where everyone is welcomed and loved.

6

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L: In the dead ends of our lives,
Jesus clears a way ahead.

In the dead spots of our relationships, Jesus speaks words of hope and renewal. In the dead zones of our cities, Jesus calls forth a new kingdom.

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L: When we are dead tired, Jesus picks us up and carries us to a place of rest. When we are dead wrong, Jesus confronts us with the truth.

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When we are dead last, Jesus tells us that he has won us for eternal life.

And so on the night in which he gave himself up for us...

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L: Jesus took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said,

"Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

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L: When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said,

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"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

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L: And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

P: Christ has died. Christ has risen. Christ will come again.

L: Pour out Your Holy spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by His blood.

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L: Renew our communion with all your saints, especially those who now live with you. Since you have refreshed our souls from the waters of life. Help us refresh and renew others. Since you have given us strength for the journey, Help us to strengthen others on their journey.

7

(Congregational Response)

Send your Spirit to renew our faith and transform our souls so that we may hear your music, work for justice, delight in heavenly food, and strengthen one another in love and grace.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Communion and Songs

Benediction

Song

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