

Series: You Are Sent.

Sermon #6: God will do it again!

Scripture: Acts 4.1-36

Today we are celebrating baptisms. It's a very exciting day here and something we've been talking about for a few weeks. Some of you know you are taking this step and some of you are going to wind up realizing you need to take that step. We are going to give you the chance to follow Christ by taking that step today.

The title of this message is God will do it again. See so far in Acts we've seen God do incredible things. He brought the Holy Spirit down at Pentecost. He saved 3000 people in a single day. He HEALED a guy that had never walked before. And I want today to be the day you start seeing a pattern. When the people of God are filled with his Spirit, he doesn't just move ONCE. He continues to move in big ways. And that's what we are going to see today. And the message of BELIEF that I want to stir into your hearts today is that God who has done great things...WILL DO IT AGAIN. **GOD WILL DO IT AGAIN.** And almost every time God moves in scripture, people wind up professing belief in Christ and getting baptized. See God move, Christians celebrate, non christians realize you need him, repent and believe. And everybody celebrates at your baptism. That's kind of our rhythm for today.

Today we are going to see God move in the face of opposition to the message. The objection we are going to see today is, at its core, the same objection many have today: The church preached a message that said Jesus was the ONLY way of

salvation. And that message was offensive. And it still is today. And I say that out front because to be baptized is to say I publicly believe and identify with a message that will offend some people.

- It was ok to say Jesus was a teacher, or even a prophet. Still is ok today. Our culture is used to people "having faith" and even having people who really like Jesus. But saying he is THE way, that presents a problem.
- It's just a somewhat unspoken cultural rule that you DON'T tell others their religion is wrong. I mean you can be sincere with YOUR faith...but keep calm please. Don't get too excited and certainly don't try to get people to convert to your faith.

That was the public climate the early church was under. Which is GREAT because that's similar to our present day. I think this chapter holds a beautiful picture of what it looks like to walk in faith in our day and age. Their response was characterized by **A Spirit filled testimony & faith filled praying. IN SHORT: THEY SAID WE'VE SEEN GOD MOVE! AND WE BELIEVE HE WILL DO IT AGAIN!** Let's watch it unfold and then we'll talk about what spirit filled preaching & faith filled praying look like today. Head to verse 8.

While you are getting there let me summarize the scene.

- Last week: Peter & John just healed a guy who couldn't walk. Then preached about how it was the name of Jesus that did that.
- Some religious leaders are mad at them for preaching about Jesus. This is important. They are angry not so

much with the miracle, They are angry that Peter and John are claiming Jesus is the only way of salvation.

- So they throw Peter & John into Prison and then hold a hearing the next day. AND GOD MOVED AGAIN. 5000 Men believed. And they say “By what power did you do this?”

8 Then Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (Catch that, we are coming back to it in a minute) and said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders: 9 If we are being examined today about a good deed done to a disabled man, by what means he was healed,

Wait...are we on trial for healing this guy? If that’s what is happening here...

10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead — by him this man is standing here before you healthy.

Here they go again! Right out of the gate. Talking about Jesus. If you want to know who to give credit to for this man’s health...his name is Jesus. I long for the day where the best criticism the culture can throw at us is “these Christians are so generous.” I hope we get BLAMED for the generosity that God uses to change the lives of the hurting and marginalized in our community. If we get put on trial for a dramatic decrease in child trafficking & child homelessness then by all means let it be known that by the name of Jesus these children are alive & well. WE’VE SEEN GOD MOVE! AND HE GETS THE CREDIT!

11 This Jesus is the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone.

12 There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”

There it is. Peter finishes with that offensive and seemingly exclusive faith claim. That there is salvation in no one else. In no other name. Listen that is the gospel message. And your baptism is actually a visible sermon that says what Peter is saying. That each one of us has run from God and sinned in some way or another. And the consequence of that sin is separation from God. And the only way to be saved from your separation from God...to be brought back...is through Jesus. THIS IS HOW GOD MOVES IN YOUR LIFE! HE BEGINS WITH A RESCUE FROM YOUR SIN. AND ALL OF US CHRISTIANS ARE SAYING...WE’VE SEEN IT! We are going to talk about this more in a minute but it’s a bold claim. Baptism is this statement that I believe I was lost without Jesus and through what he did for me I am now accepted. HE HAS MOVED IN ME! I BELIEVE!

13 When they observed the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed and recognized that they had been with Jesus. Peter and John weren’t educated men. They were fishermen. How are guys with no training in rhetoric speaking so boldly and eloquently? They were amazed. And they recognized...these guys had been with Jesus. Another ‘commoner’ who spoke with authority from heaven.

14 And since they saw the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in opposition.

It's just really hard to argue with them when this guy is leaping around the room smiling and inviting them to go on a run with him.

18 So they called for them and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

Which had to have been an interesting showdown moment. We know where the power came from. But we can't control this. So...let's tell them to stop it. But WHAT can they threaten?

- We'll kill you – like you did Jesus? He came back
- We'll take your stuff – We gave away our stuff in Acts 2
- We'll put you in Jail – again? Good. We've got some letters to write. (Water Bear?)

19 Peter and John answered them, "Whether it's right in the sight of God for us to listen to you rather than to God, you decide; 20 for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

I LOVE THIS! I told you there were two responses to this objection and the first is a spirit filled testimony. And I use that word because that's what it is. Think about someone on the witness stand. They speak about what they've seen and heard. THEY SAW GOD MOVE!

Isn't this who we want to be church? A group of people who have experienced such an awakening in our lives, such an absolute transformation that we are unable to stop speaking about what God has done in our lives. Is this where you are

right now? HAS GOD MOVED IN YOUR LIFE!? HAS HE MOVED IN YOUR FAMILY!?

GOD MOVED IN ME AT 12 YEARS OLD & SAVED ME. Since then I'VE seen him save 6 yr olds and I've seen him save 83 year olds. I've personally seen him save White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian Americans. And I've seen him save Cuban and Chinese people. I've seen him save devout athiests and I've seen him save people so steeped in cultural Christianity they didn't realize they were lost. I've seen him save 750 people in 3 days. I've seen him save 75 people in one worship service a few years ago. And we baptized every one of them THAT DAY. We were there til 2pm and my should hurt. I've seen him save boring marriages & dead marriages. I've seen him save drug addicts & work addicts. I saw him save the guy on my hall I was praying for. I've seen him heal victims and restore sinners. I've seen him provide buildings, pastors, and funding for his work. I saw him save my wife Courtney, I saw him save my 2 sons and I see him moving in my two daughters. I HAVE SEEN GOD MOVE! IT'S MY LIFE'S JOY AND NOBODY WILL SHUT ME UP ABOUT IT!

HAVE YOU SEEN GOD MOVE!? It sparks engagement joy x100. im pregnant joy x100. It's I got my acceptance letter joy x100. You are simply unable to keep it to yourself. This is the kind of joy that sparks an awakening in a city. I gotta tell everybody I know about this. I SAW GOD MOVE! AND I BELIEVE IT WASN'T A ONE TIME EVENT. DOES GOD stir your soul like that?

Look before I go into what they did next, let me pause and make a couple of important comments on how they shared

their testimony.¹ Hopefully this will help you. Like I said earlier this was a troubling message not really because the apostles believed it, but because they had convinced some 8,000 other people to believe it and because they were telling everyone who disagrees with them that they were dead wrong about Jesus and will be held accountable to God for it, and that there's no other name under heaven by which you can be saved.

That's offensive in a pluralistic world like they lived in and like we live in. It's seen as arrogant. How could you believe YOU are right and everyone else is wrong? I want you to see a couple of things about Peter's testimony that I hope will help you with this objection. Whether you are skeptical and this is a claim you have or maybe you are a Christian trying to figure out how to share your testimony. I think these will help

1. Peter wasn't claiming to be smarter

In fact, Luke goes out of his way to make sure we know they aren't smart.

13 When they observed.... that they were uneducated and untrained men,

Luke, the educated & trained physician chooses to make sure we know that these two guys were not summa cum anything. In fact the word untrained is "idiotes" where we get our word idiot. Which is even funnier when you think about the fact that Peter & John were his friends. Did Peter read this later and say "Luke...is this necessary?"

¹ I'm borrowing the 2 comments about Peter not claiming superiority from J.D. Greear's message "The inclusive exclusivity" on this part of Acts 4.

It is because Luke wants us to know there is no presumption of superior intelligence here. It's the opposite. It's just 20 for we are unable to stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

WE SAW GOD MOVE! We can't stop talking about it. Salvation has nothing to do with education! The pharisees had all the degrees on the wall, but at the end of the day Jesus got out of the grave. And Peter and John are saying if we have to choose between degrees on a wall and the guy who said he would get out of the grave after he died and then...HE DID IT, we are going with the resurrected guy. Is it arrogant to believe Jesus is who he says he is? No. In fact it might be more arrogant to say he isn't.

You guys heard the elephant parable? Famous Indian parable about truth I'm pretty sure I've shared before that goes simply like this:

A group of blind men heard that a strange animal called an elephant was brought to town and so they said we must go inspect it by touch to know what it is. And so they each approached. One touched the side and said – An elephant is like a wall, large & wide. Another touched the ear and says an elephant is like a fan. The one who touch the trunk says its like a thick snake. The one who touched the leg said its like a pillar. They then get into arguments and even a big fist fight because of how certain they are that THEY know. And the moral is that it is arrogant to claim absolute truth based on your limited subjective experience.

Leslie Newbigin, a Christian missionary to India for a number of years, said there are two huge problems with this parable: **1) Who sees the whole elephant?** The person narrating the story. Do you see the real arrogance here? That the narrator is doing what he won't let the rest of us do? You say our view of God is incomplete because YOU can see the whole picture. That's actually way more arrogant than what Christians are doing.

2) What if the elephant spoke? And said "Well hello, I'm an elephant. Let me tell you about myself" Wouldn't that change things? Because essentially that is what Christians are saying. That God spoke in Jesus and verified who he is through prophecies, through miracles, and most importantly through his resurrection. To believe that is not arrogant. You may think it's silly, but it's not arrogant.

Believing in Christ is, to me, actually a humble claim because it says we aren't smart enough to figure truth out on our own so God came and told us.

Also, and this is important, **Peter is not claiming moral superiority** here either. Last week we saw Peter heal the lame man which started this whole situation. And Peter said **Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness? -- Acts 3:12** GOD DIDN'T HEAL THE MAN because they were more moral than others. GOD MOVED BECAUSE HE MOVES THROUGH HIS PEOPLE. It was entirely the grace and power of Jesus. I mean it wasn't that long ago that Peter denied Jesus 3 times. Peter is well aware he is not the best model for how to follow Jesus. Doesn't have the greatest track record. Jesus called him Satan.

Peter saying that "Jesus is the only way" isn't a claim to intellectual or moral superiority. And if your response is that you don't like anything that excludes people... Well, I have to tell you all religious claims are exclusive. If you think all good people from every religion go to heaven... you've just excluded all bad people. And you have to define bad. And who made you the all mighty judge over what constitutes "bad?" Plus what if those bad people feel bad about their badness? Do you have to be bad but sad about your bad? What if you aren't sad about your bad? Seems like you are the narrator looking at an elephant and you still can't describe it.

Everyone has a line for who is in or out. Even atheists. The difference is, Christianity offers acceptance NOT based on what we do. Not our moral performance, our intellect, our political affiliation... not on any of that. Christianity says salvation is a gift God offers to us. IT SAYS... WE heard God moved FOR US. He went to the Cross... FOR US. AND all we HAD to do is RECEIVE IT! WE WERE THE LAME MAN

stuck outside the temple. Forbidden entrance by Levitical law.. Unable to enter God's presence. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. And Yet Christ picks us up and says because of me, come in. Take my hand. That's what Christ's death and resurrection are. An invitation to take his hand. Let him heal you and then walk into the presence of the Lord with him. THERE IS NO GREATER MOVE OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE THAN HIS FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SIN AND HIM MAKING YOU INTO A NEW CREATION.

- When we baptize you we lay you down like the lame man, into water like a grave, and then we pull you

back up as the announcement that Christ has washed you & made you whole. And you stand & we all celebrate. Because we are all just a bunch of lame people God has made whole through Christ.

But Baptism is just the first of many, many times we share our testimony. Christian...You don't have to be the smartest or holiest to share what Christ has done. In fact, God often uses people where there is no mistaking that it must be the power of God at work. So if you think...I've got this one person in my life. I wish they had the joy I did. I WANT TO SEE GOD MOVE THERE. They are far from God but close to me...I wish they knew Jesus. But I'm no good at this. They KNOW me too well, seen my sin. And I'm not able to communicate. Excellent! You are exactly who God can use. Go testify about what you've seen and heard. I'VE SEEN GOD MOVE! Need the power to do that? It's already with you in God's Holy Spirit. That whole thing Peter & John did...it started with "and they were filled with the spirit." That Spirit is with you and wants to fill you for the task ahead.

Ask him! Which leads right to the second response the church had when culture objected to the gospel. They prayed together. THEY WENT TO GOD AND SAID...WE BELIEVE YOU CAN DO IT AGAIN! Peter & John are released, they go to the believers & share what happened. Let me walk through this prayer & in doing so give you words you can pray.

24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together to God and said, "Master,

- "God you are in control and you are the authority in my life"

you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, and the sea, and everything in them.

- "You created everything"

25 You said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David your servant:

Why do the Gentiles rage and the peoples plot futile things?

26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers assemble together against the Lord and against his Messiah.

- "You've always known that some will reject you."

27 "For, in fact, in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, 28 to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place.

- Even the death and resurrection of Jesus was planned by you to bring us salvation.

29 And now, Lord, consider their threats, and grant that your servants may speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand for healing, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

- God you see this moment...give your servants boldness to speak the gospel. And fill us with the Spirit for the works you want to perform through the name of your holy servant Jesus. GOD WE BELIEVE YOU WILL

MOVE AGAIN. PAST GRACE IS A PROMISE OF FUTURE GRACE. YOU ARE NOT DONE YET. LET'S GO!

31 When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

Let me summarize this prayer for you:

God you have done great things and I believe you will do them again.

1. You've done great things – Creation, Sovereignty, Gospel. YOU SAVED ME!
2. DO IT AGAIN! – Pour your spirit out. BRING AN AWAKENING TO OUR CITY BECAUSE YOU CAN!

We are going to let this be a model for us as we get together and pray as a church in a couple of weeks on Wednesday OCTOBER _____. You take that whole day and you fast. Then let's get together and ask God to move through us.

This is the church. WE'VE SEEN GOD MOVE & WE BELIEVE HE WILL DO IT AGAIN. I told you I want to give you the chance to give your testimony today in baptism. TO SAY: GOD I BELIEVE! In just a moment we are going to celebrate the act of baptism. Baptism is a picture of the gospel, and we do it to remind one another of the gospel when we gather together. There is nothing special about this water. It is not what saves you, but it is an outward sign of the inward work that Christ has completed for us, and the way an individual publicly identifies themselves as a believer in Jesus Christ as

Lord and Savior. The act of baptism is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, as well as our own death to sin and resurrection to new life. So every baptism is a celebration of salvation. GOD HAS MOVED AGAIN!"

Now I imagine some of you thinking about doing this may have some objections rising up. Let me speak to those for just a second

- **Objection: "I'm not ready"** *If you have trusted Christ, you are ready. Baptism is only the public profession of the inward reality, declaring to everyone watching, "I know that I'm a sinner and that I need Jesus. I'm ready to publicly proclaim that He is my Savior." If you say you've accepted Him as Lord, you need to be ready to go public with that profession.*
- **Objection: "It's not that important..."** *If God calls baptism important, it should be important to you. If you are not willing to obey God's first command to you by taking this one small step, why do you think you'll obey God in the other areas of your life? Disobedience is a terrible way to start your Christian life - the way to start your walk with Jesus is not by postponing what he's clearly told you to do.*
- **Objection: "I was baptized as a baby."** *Baptism as a baby was not really a profession of your faith, but a profession of your parents' faith. And praise God for that! But you need to profess your own faith, which is why baptism is always presented in the Bible as a decision you make. Your parents baptized you as a*

baby and it's time to ratify their decision and declare your own faith in Jesus!

- **Objection: “Well, it’s really inconvenient.”** Please hear me in love, but that’s not really a factor once you grow to understand the Christian faith. Jesus himself said that to follow him was to take up a cross and die. Inconvenience isn’t a category you can bring to this decision.
- **Objection: “But I don’t have a change of clothes!”** Don’t worry, we have them for you! We’ve got all sizes, dark-colored T-shirts, towels and hairdryers - we thought of everything to allow you to take this step of faith.
- **Objection: “But I came with people... they’re going to want to go eat after this.”** may not realize it, but the people you came with have been praying that you would take this step of professing faith in Jesus. I think they’ll wait! Or even better, ask them to come forward with you. Even if they won’t wait, I want to remind you of the importance of starting your walk with Jesus by obeying what he tells you to do right away. We’ll figure out how to get you home, it’s that important.

Ok, I’m going to pray. Then I’m going to stand everyone up and we are going to begin singing. As we stand you make your way out of the row. IF YOU JUST NEED TO GO TO THE RESTROOM, in love let me ask you to hold it on behalf of everybody else.

But, if you need to take this step, please step out into the aisle when we stand and go to the back of the room where our team members will be waiting with lanyards on to show you where to go next.