

FROM FEAR TO COURAGE

THE LESSON: JOHN 20, ACTS 4

“Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection.”

– John Stott

The four Gospels in the New Testament tell us the story of Jesus’ birth, ministry, passion, death and resurrection. But while the Gospels are teaching us about Jesus, we also get to meet his disciples and see how their encounters with him changed them from ordinary people into bold witnesses.

In St. John’s Gospel, we get a peek into what the disciples were doing after Jesus had been crucified and how they were feeling. Then, in the Book of Acts (which St. Luke wrote as a sequel to his Gospel), we read the story of what took place after Jesus had been raised from the dead, appeared to the disciples and ascended into heaven.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow the rule of prayer that you created for yourself.

(If you didn’t make one, try saying the morning and evening prayers from the “Forms of Prayer to be used in Families,” which begins on page 728 of the BCP. If you don’t have a copy, you can look it up here: <http://prayerbook.ca/resources/bcponline/family-prayer>.)

Spend some time bringing your personal fears before God and asking him to give you the courage to overcome them. Ask God to show you any things in your life that he wants you to change. Close with this prayer from Psalm 25:5:
“Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.”

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this prayer, pausing to reflect after each phrase.

Almighty God, who by thy Son Jesus Christ didst give commandment to the Apostles that they should go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature: Grant to us whom thou hast called into thy Church, a ready will to obey thy Word; and fill us with a hearty desire to make thy way known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (PRAYER FOR THE EXTENSION OF THE CHURCH, BCP PAGE 41)

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JOHN 20, ACTS 4: **SOMETHING CHANGED THEM**

(JOHN 20): ¹⁹On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” ²²And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

(ACTS 4): ¹And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ²greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand. ⁵On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷And when they had set them in the 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, ⁹if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰let 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, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹²And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

¹³Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

¹⁷But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But 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, ²⁰for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” ²¹And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²²For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

²³When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them ²⁹...look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”