

V.O.C. November 2019

**November 10, 2019: Jesus is the only Name!**

Dear Listeners,

This month, in the message on The Voice of the Church, we have our focus in the book of Acts, the *Acts* of the Apostles. Last week, however, we have seen that through the *acts* of the apostles the Lord Jesus continued His work after His ascension into heaven. That's what we can see clearly when we read in chapter 3 about the healing of the lame beggar. The apostles Peter and John were going up to the temple when a lame man was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that's called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. He also asked Peter and John, and then we read, "And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them." You could easily read over it, but even three times the verbs for 'seeing' are used. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you look differently at things, at people. The miraculous healing here begins with Peter gazing consciously at the lame beggar.

The fact that the beggar is sitting there is nothing new; he was carried there day after day. The fact that Peter and John were walking to the temple wasn't something new either. They'd done that every day as well. Many, many times they must have walked past this poor man. This time however Peter and John directed their gaze at him; filled with the Holy Spirit they empathized with this man in his miserable condition. They arouse his expectation by making contact with him. When a man is filled with the Holy Spirit he will look differently, with the eyes of Jesus. Now you become sensitive to the trouble and misery in your surroundings. Conversely people around you also notice: ah, you're seeking contact, likewise, as beggar among beggars. As a result of the healing of this lame beggar, then, things started moving rapidly. Then Peter and John could tell many people about Jesus. It had started with seeing the neighbour, empathizing with their misery, and then the gospel they shared changed everything, for this man and for many others!

The outcome of this event, however, dear listeners, wasn't all good. Just because they did a good deed in the name of Jesus, Peter and John got into trouble too. That can happen today as well, that a good deed in the name of Jesus triggers opposition, resistance. Then the way you are treated may not always be fair, or just. That's what had happened to Jesus, it also happened to His apostles. Like Master, like servant! Where this resistance is coming from? Well, first of all from our own heart; believing in Jesus causes a major change in our life. The opposition could also come from the outside. That's why Luke writes in the book of Acts, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you," Peter says, addressing the people that had come out and to the rulers who arrested Peter and John because of the many people who had come out to listen to them. "This Jesus is the stone, however, that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone."

It may seem hard to understand, but it is the way it is: Peter and John were arrested because of this good deed, this healing. The rulers didn't want them to speak to the people about the Lord Jesus. Then Peter confronted the rulers and said, "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, whom God raised from the dead – by him this man is standing before you well.” They aren’t shy about it at all: for Peter and John Jesus became the one on whom they would build the house of their life. Today as well, when you believe in Jesus your life will be changed and Jesus will become the cornerstone instead of a stumbling block. Then it may happen to you, as it did to Peter and John, that your confession of faith in Jesus as your Saviour will bring a stumbling block in your relationships. Yet, with Peter and John you will then maintain your conviction: “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved!”

What happens when you experience such opposition in your life, dear listeners? This confrontation brings the believers closer together, and closer to God! Then you realize what’s happening here: as believers they’re involved in the enmity which has been there since the fall into sin in Paradise already, the enmity between the LORD and Satan! At the centre of that battle is God’s promise in Jesus Christ! Since His ascension into heaven there is but one choice in this life: the choice for or against Jesus! That’s what the believers, the followers of Peter and John, came to realize after this incident with the healing of the lame beggar. The same hatred and enmity Jesus experienced from the leaders, the rulers, the same resistance and opposition that brought Jesus on the cross! When these believers have come together with Peter and John, however, they did not want to seek ways to escape this battle. Rather, they pray for the courage and confidence to profess the name of Jesus! They know, come what may, whatever the opposition may bring, but it is and remains the only name given under heaven by which anyone can be saved!

How would that be today, dear listeners? Do we see a similar battle raging today? Well, in some countries the resistance does result in persecution of Christians indeed. In our western world, however, Satan’s tactics may have changed. The danger in our society is that it seems like more a response of indifference rather than open hostility. That’s dangerous indeed, because it could lead to a lukewarm life among believers, church people. Perhaps among you, listeners, there might be those who have strayed from the Lord Jesus and from the church due to a lackadaisical and lukewarm life as believer. If so, it’s time to return to the Lord and to His people and to the proclamation of His Word. However, then it might also happen that due to a deeper faith, due to being filled more deeply by His Holy Spirit, you will experience this battle again too. Then your life in Jesus, your profession of the name of Jesus as your only Saviour, might bring on a battle, in your own heart (because repentance and conversion cut into your flesh!), or in your surroundings, your relationships at home or at work.

Then it is very important to see how the people, the believers, in Peter’s days dealt with this opposition and hostility: they came together and they prayed! They came together in the name of Jesus and they prayed to Him, knowing and believing that He was involved with them, engaged in their battle as well, and that He was there with them as He had promised! That’s the way this message of the Voice of the Church wants to call you too, to Jesus, to His people in the church, and to prayer by faith in Jesus! His is the only name by which you can be saved!

