

## The Fullness of Christ

Psalm 148  
Acts 4:8-22

April 22, 2018  
Faith Community

Shortly before today's New Testament reading Peter and John are used by God to bring healing to a man who, up to that point, had been a lifelong paralytic. Now, thanks to God's abundance, he was ***Walking and jumping and praising God*** (Acts 3:8), as Scripture tells us.

Word about this spreads quickly, a crowd gathers, and Peter preaches his second impromptu sermon, and yet again God uses his eloquent poverty to lead 2,000 more people to faith. So far, early in the book of Acts, 5,000 have come to faith altogether through Peter's leadership.

What does he get for his efforts? He gets in trouble; that's what he gets.

Friends, the spectacular, transforming faith that's been passed on to us has also been tragically domesticated as the generations have gone by. It's become a typical part of a typical life, take it or leave it.

The Fullness of Christ can sometimes have inconvenient, even painful consequences. That's my first point for you today. The fullness of Christ can sometimes have inconvenient, even painful consequences. An authentic encounter with the life giving God can get you in trouble.

Abraham would tell you that, as would Moses, Jeremiah, and so many more.

In fact, shortly after the birth of Christ himself, a God honoring man said this to his mother:

***This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel....And a sword will pierce your own soul too.*** (Luke 2:34-35, TNIV) He said that to a brand new mother as she presented her firstborn to God.

Mary wouldn't be the only one to feel that sword.

Those of us who are parents can say the same thing. Once those little ones have been given to us, we can be hurt in more ways than we ever imagined, but we wouldn't have it any other way. We willingly pay the price of love. And so it is with the Christ filled life.

Today's passage in the book of Acts depicts the first of many imprisonments for Peter, John, and so many others, because of the very faith that made them new.

Countless people have experienced the same thing over the years, but every one of them will tell you that the benefits far outweigh whatever costs there may be.

The Fullness of Christ can sometimes have inconvenient, even painful consequences. It takes a toll, friends, but you don't think twice, because you're energized in the process.

If the Fullness of Christ can sometimes be a painful thing, my second point is that endless opportunities await the person who opens him or herself to the Christ filled life. Endless opportunities await the person who opens himself or herself to the Christ filled life.

Peter gets taken into custody by the church leaders of his day, go figure, and in response to their accusation preaches yet again, and in the process focuses attention not on himself but on the living Christ who had filled him. In other words, the very thing that had gotten him in trouble the first time did it again.

***Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.*** (v. 12)

He said this to people who had the power of life and death over him, but so transformed had he become that he couldn't respond in any other way. I want to have that kind of courage, don't you?

It always comes back to God, friends. Always.

Don't ever lose sight of this. Life, your life, depends on it.

If the Fullness of Christ can sometimes be a painful thing, and if endless opportunities await the person who opens himself or herself to the Christ filled life, the logical conclusion is, and this is my third point, that this applies to you as much as it does to anyone else.

One of the most liberating and empowering verses of Scripture is included in this passage. The church leaders felt helpless against courage like this. In reality, Peter proved his own point.

***When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*** (v. 13)

Educated, powerful people were amazed at the unschooled, ordinary people who stood before them and articulately declared the faith by which they'd been transformed.

Something had happened in the lives of these two ambassadors of good news, and the authorities were helpless in the face of its expression. And the only thing they had going for them was that they had been with Jesus.

Watch this, friends. Pay attention here.

Psalm 148, a classic Psalm of praise, tells us what it is. Everything in earth and heaven itself is called to give glory to God, and then we're told why:

***He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his faithful servants, of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the Lord.*** (Psalm 148:14)

The Hebrew word for 'horn' refers to a strong one, even a king, and over the generations scholars and people of faith have understood it as referring to the person of Christ.

- The Fullness of Christ can sometimes be a painful thing.
- Endless opportunities await the person who opens him or herself to the Christ filled life.
- This applies to you as much as it does to anyone else.