

*Pastor Shaun Arndt*  
*January 23, 2022*  
*Sermon Text: Acts 4:23-31*  
*Just as Foretold*

*Praise be to the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. Amen.*

*Dear Friends in Christ,*

*This wasn't the way things were supposed to go! Nothing was happening the way Jesus' followers had expected.*

One of their own number betrays the Master. An armed mob seizes their dear Lord. They disappoint themselves, running away in fear and shame instead of boldly staying with Jesus like they had all claimed they would.

Can you feel the stinging remorse as Peter bitterly weeps after denying Jesus? Or the lump in John's throat as he stands at the foot of the cross watching His dear Friend and Teacher dying on the cross? Tears roll down cheeks as the women gather spices for a funeral. Dread squeezes their hearts as the apostles cower behind locked doors.

It's like the whole world was against them! Their own people of Israel, the rulers of the land—Herod and the Roman Governor, the **Gentile** soldiers, their own hearts, far more weak and treacherous than they had ever imagined, all **gathered** against their Lord and against His people.

Did God not care? Was He powerless?

Looking back on these very things months later, Peter, John and the other believers now knew better. More importantly, listening carefully to God's Word, they realized things had gone exactly the way God said they would! **Just as Foretold.**

And so they prayed the words of the Second Psalm: **Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers are gathered together against the Lord and against his Anointed One.**

A thousand years earlier, the Holy Spirit spoke these things through the **mouth of King David**, and now it had all happened **Just as Foretold**.

And so their prayer continued: **In this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did whatever your hand and your plan had decided beforehand should happen.**

God had not forgotten His promises. He did care, so much about saving sinners that the Lord had allowed all these things to happen *at his own expense!* God is indeed powerful, so powerful that He even uses the wicked and rebellious actions of sinful humans to serve His good and perfect **plan** to show mercy to the world and rescue His people!

And so the Lord took all the **raging** and **plotting** of the devil and the Jewish leaders, He took the failure of **Herod** and **Pontius Pilate** to show justice, He took the abuse of the Gentile **Roman Soldiers** and with His wise and powerful **hand** He shaped these things to bring Jesus to the cross to pay for the sins of the world.

Their **rage** and **plotting** only brought about what God had designed: the death of God the Son, Jesus Christ upon the cross, the event God used to break down the doors of death and hell to set captive sinners free! All their evil **plots** were in **vain**, forced to serve God's good **plan** of mercy meant for all people!

Another verse from the same Psalm the believers quote in our lesson says this: **The one who is seated in heaven laughs... I have installed my King on Zion, my holy mountain.**

The **nations raged, the peoples plotted...** and Jesus followers wept and tremble.

But then God **laughed** His Easter laugh and tearful women and timid disciples sang alleluias in the joy and confidence of the living Savior! The enemies rejected Christ, but God proved He is the **Anointed Savior King** when Jesus smashed death's power, **Just as foretold**. And still He lives to give all who trust in Him true and endless peace beyond the sorrows and limitations of fallen world **just** as God's Word promises!

Now there's a reason why Peter, John and the other believers were recalling these events that had happened **Just as Foretold**. They were gathered together in prayer because once again the world was against them.

Peter and John had just been released from prison. The same Jewish leaders who worked so hard to put Jesus to death had put them on trial and made dreadful threats commanding that the apostles stop speaking and teaching about Jesus.

Once again **rulers were gathered together** against the **Lord** and therefore against His people. Naturally the devil stood behind this, working with all his might to stop the good news of Jesus' victory from going into the world. Certainly the disciples knew their own weakness, sins and fears that had tripped them up so many times before. No doubt they remembered Jesus had told them that trouble, rejection and persecution would not be the exception, but the rule for Christ's church in this sin ruined world.

So what did they do? They remembered what the Lord spoke in His Word. That His people can find strength and encouragement by gathering together as believers in worship and prayer, and Jesus himself will be with them in a special way, even if there was only two or three of them gathered (Mt 18)!

They took comfort together in His Word that foretold both trouble and attack, but also that no matter how dark things may look to human eyes, God will laugh and win the ultimate victory for His people.

They remembered the promises God has attached to pray and asked him for the help that only He could give to forgive their sins and overcome their weakness and fears. They trusted **the God who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them** was more powerful than their enemies and mightier than their own weakness.

And what did they ask for? **Now Lord, look at their threats and give to your servants the ability to keep on speaking your word with all boldness.**

They didn't pray for a life and ministry free from trouble and struggle, for they knew God has promised no such thing while we remain on this side of heaven. Therefore they prayed God would make them exactly what Jesus said they going to be. In Acts 1, He had said: **You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earths** (Acts 1:8).

And once again, God laughed His Easter Laugh, and through His Word the Holy Spirit **filled them... and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness.**

Once more God used troubles for the good of His **plan**. Instead of silencing the Church, the enemies' **threats** only drove the believers to the Word and prayer where God gave them strength to teach, preach and baptize all the more boldly! And so the Lord's **hand** took the enemies' **raging** and **plotting** and made it serve His own plan to make the saving message of Jesus ring out across the world and down through the centuries all the way to you and me this very day!

In other it words, it was all **Just as Foretold**, exactly the way Jesus said it would be in Luke 24: **This is what is written and so it must be: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.**

Dear friends in Christ, followers of Jesus in 2022, what makes you feel like the whole world is against you this day? Is it the personal troubles at work, home, school, relationship, health, finances? The heavy weight of guilt and shame?

Or The troubles in our world, society, division and fighting, crime and rumors of war? The troubles of the pandemic? Crushing fears and worries?

Or The troubles of the Church? The ever increasing hostility to Christian truth? The decreasing of Biblical knowledge? The ever growing mission field and never enough workers for the harvest field?

Maybe it's a little bit of all of these things telling you the world is against the Lord and His Church?

We really shouldn't be surprised we face such things. After all, Jesus has told us to expect such things. He said: **In this world you are going to have trouble** (John 16:33). His word foretells what we observe all around in our world: **But know this: In the last days there will be terrible times** (1 Tim 3:1).

But remember He has also said this: **I have told you these things, so that you may have peace in me** (John 16:32). His word foretells how He will still turn the raging and plotting of spiritual enemies out for the good of His plan: **We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to his purpose** (Romans 8:28). Jesus still declares to us in His Church today: **You will be my witnesses.**

And so you know what to do. Don't stop gathering together with your church family. Instead, come here to be encouraged by and to encourage your church family in worship, just as His Word teaches.

Take comfort in the Words of His Bible that assure us He will keep every promise—forgiving our sins, strengthening our faith, making us bold through His love for us to empower us to live for him. Remember how He has promised in His Word to be by our side and give us strength in every trouble.

Rely upon His strength, wisdom and help as you turn to Him in prayer. Ask him to give us the ability to **spea k the word of God with boldness** in our homes and lives and through our prayers, offerings and work in the Church.

Yes, there will still be trouble, grief, and tears, even the darkness of death as spiritual enemies **rage** and **plot** all around.

But then you will hear it with your own ears, when God once again laughs His Easter Laugh, when the Son of God, Jesus Christ our **Anointed** Savior King will speak the word and every grave will open. He will raise His people up to life unending and **make all things new** (Rev 21)!

Then with every tear wiped away, gathered together in perfect friendship with the whole family of God in the delight and wonder of the Lord's presence, we too will join in that Easter laugh in joy that will never diminish but only but grow and endure forever... you know... **Just as Foretold.** Amen.

*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people... (just) as he said through his holy prophets of long ago. Amen.*

*We confess our faith in Christ our Savior Lord who came down to save us using the Nicene Creed on page 11 of the worship folder.*