

ACTS 4:8-13

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, 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, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² 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." ¹³ Now 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.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

How would you like to go down in history with this description: He was an uneducated, common man?

They have brought Peter and John in to give an account. In verse 5 of Acts 4, it says that the rulers and elders and the high priest and all the whole high priestly family got together, set up a meeting, and placed Peter and John right in the middle, and said to them,

By what power or by what name did you do this?

The thing that they did was to preach the Gospel and to heal a lame man, which is what the Lord Jesus had commissioned them to do.

But standing there in the midst of all the power players of Jerusalem, that's when Peter gives his little sermon:

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Peter was speaking, the text tells us, as he was "filled with the Holy Spirit." To be filled with the Holy Spirit is not about the quantity of the Holy Spirit that you have; it means not that you have 4 quarts of the Spirit instead of only 3; it means, rather, to be made complete in the Office of the Holy Spirit, which office is to preach the Gospel and distribute the gifts of Jesus.

It's not as if you can have some Holy Spirit and then get more later on, until finally you're full. The Holy Spirit is, after all, not some liquid to be measured out, but a person.

In Peter's case, he already has the Holy Spirit.

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit. Every sinner who's heard the forgiveness of sins by the Gospel, who's received the Lord Jesus in the Body and Blood of the Sacrament, who's been cleansed in the water of Baptism *has* been given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is a person, and he comes to the sinner in love, bringing the gifts of Jesus in the Word, cleansing the sinner and bestowing grace—and that sinner may now know that he has the Holy Spirit.

But Peter is made complete in the office of the Holy Spirit, and that office is to go to sinners and proclaim to them the salvation given freely by Christ Jesus.

Peter is now in the middle of a bunch of sinners, priests and high-priest, princes and rulers of Jerusalem, and he's telling them,

This Jesus whom you crucified, God has raised up from the dead, and there is salvation in no other name, for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

And they look at Peter, these priests and princes and rulers, they look at him and say, *This is an uneducated, common man*—and they were astonished.

And they were right. Peter was a fisherman. Jesus plucked him out of the fishing boat and told him he would make him a fisher of men, that is, an Apostle. Jesus would put Peter into the Holy Spirit's office of preaching the Gospel and bringing the Sacraments to the Lord's church. And Jesus would send this fisherman out to sinners high and low, to kings and princes and to fishermen and tax collectors, to gather them into the church.

It is astonishing. Of all the people we would pick to preach the Gospel, to speak the doctrine of God before the most known men of great learning, to bring comfort to the sinner, Who among us would pick a fisherman? A philosopher, perhaps, a known scientist, maybe, a recognized scholar trained in rhetoric, a popular politician, maybe—but a fisherman?

There were, of course, great scholars to come along in the church. Paul was an accomplished scholar, Apollos was a trained in rhetoric, Augustine was the greatest philosopher of his generation—and the Lord took them all up into his use and called them to be pastors to his flock.

Peter, though, was uneducated and common. You would expect to see him buying fishing line at the hardware store or maybe delivering fish to you front door.

But the Lord took him up into his use to bring gifts to sinners, and from Peter many, including princes and rulers, would hear the Gospel, would be baptized into the holy Name, and would be counted as those belonging to the Name of Jesus.

This is the way the Lord does it. Uneducated and common is not an insult for Peter. It's a comfort for the church.

For it never did depend on Peter. Nor on any other pastor, nor on any accomplishments a teacher in the church could impress with.

It depended on the Gospel. It is always built on the fact of Christ Jesus being crucified and three days later being raised up from the dead. It all depends on our Lord bringing these gifts to us, into our lives, to justify us before his Father, to cleanse us of all sin, to build us up in faith, putting our consciences at peace.

And to do this, our Lord uses the most common means. Simple water, regular bread, common wine, words spoken from the mouths of men as common as Peter—our Lord takes these common things, binds his word to them, taking them up into his use, and through them, delivers the holy things of Heaven to us here on Earth.

Those men hearing Peter, that uneducated, common fisherman, they really were hearing words from Heaven, given by Christ Jesus to be delivered through the mouth of Peter. They really were hearing the Gospel which alone justified them, they really were being given the gift of the Name of Jesus by which the sinner must be saved.

The person being baptized, having common water poured over the head, hearing words spoken from the mouth of a common man, that person really is being given the Name of Jesus, being joined to his death on the cross and his resurrection, and really is being given all the promises of the Gospel, even as we rejoice in our Lord giving his Name to every little child brought to the Lord's gift of Baptism.

Those men and women kneeling to hear the words of Jesus saying, *Take and eat, this is my Body*, and, *Take and drink, this is my blood*, as they are eating the common bread and drinking the wine which is no different from a glass of wine we may drink at home on a given night, they really are given to know that this is bread and wine to which the Lord has bound his Word, such that he has now taken it up into his use, so that they are here receiving the very Body and the very Blood of Christ himself from Heaven, and it is all for the forgiveness of sins.

Uneducated, common—that's what they called Peter, and they were right. They were astonished. But we rejoice.

For that's the way this Lord comes to us in the Gospel.

In the church we call it, simply, the means of Grace. That is, the earthly, common means or instruments by which the Lord brings to us the holy gifts of Heaven.

It is always about justifying the sinner, about cleansing the heart, about putting the conscience at peace. It is always about

gathering sinners to the Name of Jesus, the only Name by which the sinner may be saved.

And we may be astonished. Astonished that not only is the Lord using these common means and common voices, but that he is doing it to bring his grace to those who have rebelled against him, to those priests and princes and rulers in the midst of whom he set Peter, to Peter himself, and to the other sinners he called such as Zacchaeus or Mary Magdalene, and to you and me and our families.

We may be rightly astonished at how Jesus does it and to whom he brings it, but this is our salvation, for there is no other Name under Heaven by which we must be saved.

IN THE NAME OF JESUS.