Acts 4:24 When they heard this, with one mind they raised their voices to God…

There is no doubt we need a bit of background to understand all that is going on here. Actually for the past few Sundays you have heard portions of what has happened but let’s refresh our knowledge. Peter and John were heading into the temple at around 3 in the afternoon. They ran across this lame man whose relatives or friends brought him every day to the Temple that he might beg for money. Everyone knew the man and everyone knew the man had been born lame.

So Peter and John, in the name of Jesus, proceed to heal this man. Literally, they tell him to get up and walk in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Scripture records: **“Immediately the man’s feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk. He enter the temple courts with them, walking, jumping and praising God.”**

Needless to say the miracle caused quite a stir. Everyone who was there realized it was the man born lame who was jumping, walking and praising God. A crowd gathered and Peter and John boldly proclaimed the name of Jesus and the salvation that Jesus had won for all who would believe. They call on the crowd to repent and have their sins forgiven in Jesus’ name. They call on the crowd that **“every one of you turn away from your wicked ways.”** As a result of this we are told that 2,000 souls came to faith on this day.

But, here is also what happened. The priests, the temple guards and the Sadducees approached Peter and John. They were upset because they were teaching people and proclaiming the resurrection from the dead in connection to Jesus. Scripture simply records this: **“They arrested them and put them in jail until the next day because it was already evening.”** Peter and John sat in jail overnight because an act of mercy and love was done and because the name of Jesus as Savior was proclaimed.

The next morning they are brought to trial. You might recognize some of the names of the prominent men who tried them: **“Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and all the rest of the high priest’s family.”** In other words, the very same group of men who had condemned Jesus are now trying the disciples of Jesus. Peter, guided by the Holy Spirit boldly confesses the name of Jesus and even makes it clear: **“There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved.”**

The end result of all of this is that the Jewish leaders and Sanhedrin ordered them **“not to speak any longer to anyone in this name.”** In other words, “Stop talking about Jesus! Stop proclaiming life and salvation. Stop this kindness and love and any message connected to Jesus.” The response of Peter and John: **“Decide whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God. For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”** Remember, these were the men who had overseen the death of Jesus and that the disciples were initially hiding from. The disciples are bold. They are different men than before. Different because they have seen, touched, talked with, eaten with and learned from the resurrected Jesus. They had seen Jesus ascend into heaven with the promise to return one day. These men had the Holy Spirit poured upon them at Pentecost. They were different men.

The result is this: verses 21-22 of Acts 4: **“After they had threatened them further, they let them go. They found no way to punish them because all the people were praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this miraculous sign of healing was performed was over forth years old.”** Isn’t it awesome? God is protecting his children and making it possible to preach and proclaim Jesus! That’s what God wanted done now and so that is what will happen.

This is where our text picks up. Peter and John get back to their friends and fellow believers and report everything that had happened. I can tell you there was fear, concern, worry and discussion as to what to do. The believers recognized the threats were against them all, against the name of Jesus and that in truth, these were now very dangerous times. What did they do? Verse 24 says: **“With one mind they raised their voices to God.”** That will cue our theme for today: **BELIEVERS TURN TO GOD.**

What an awesome thing it is to grasp what has happened and what is being done. Here is a threat, here is danger and turmoil and no doubt fear among of these believers of Jesus. But as these troubles present themselves, as these believers have to decide what it is they will do I rejoice in their example. They don’t consult the experts in behavior. They don’t seek out lawyers to find out what their rights and freedoms really are. They don’t begin to plot and set up defenses. What happens is that **“with one mind they raised their voices to God.”** They seek out the Lord. They bring him their fears and troubles, their concerns and questions. They seek the Lord and his great love.

We are given their prayer. It starts: **“Master,” you are the God who made heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them.”** This prayer is directed to God. Not just any God but the God of creation who is responsible for everything. What is most interesting is the name of God used here. We translate “Master” but the Greek word itself is “despota.” It is a word that refers to one with absolute and authoritative power. These believers recognize the majesty, power and dominion of God. These believers are ready and willing to put their lives, their souls, their very world into the hand of their Sovereign Lord, their Master. They appeal to the God who is over all and in all and through all, and they do so without hesitation or worry that God can or will hear them. They are people who believe.

Notice the next thing in their prayer. The next thing is a portion of Psalm 2. I love this. By the use of this Psalm they are telling us that they understand that their situation is covered by God’s Word. Have a problem, check God’s Word and what He reveals to you. Your problem is probably covered and direction is given. In this case, by citing the words of Psalm 2 these believers are first showing their confidence in God’s Word and second, are aware of the fact that what was happening was exactly what they could expect from the world in regard to God and Jesus. Here is what they quote: **“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.”**

I have no doubt that these men remembered the words of Jesus too. Jesus, on the night of Maundy Thursday had told them: **“If the world hates you, you know that it hated me first. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. However, because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of it, for that very reason the world hates you. Remember the saying I told you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will persecute you too.”** The lesson is clear. The world and the people of the world are the enemies of God, his Son and his truth found in the Scripture. The world will oppose and hate what is of God and that includes not only the disciples but even you and me in today’s world. The world would like nothing better than that all the teaching of Jesus and his salvation be stopped.

The next part of that prayer is interesting too. In that section the believers speak of Herod, Pilate, the gentiles and the people of Israel and how they fulfilled the words of Psalm 2. But notice that last line of the section, verse 28: **“They did whatever your hand and your plan had decided beforehand had happened.”**

That is a wonderful line grasping a veritable truth of God. We learn that truth a bit more clearly in wrestling with the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer. That petition says: **“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”** It is Luther’s beginning explanation that says so much: “***God’s good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.”*** Do you catch the point? God’s will, God’s plan and purpose is always and exactly carried out the way God wants it done. Jesus was to be crucified for the sins of the world. God carried out that plan by utilizing the evil of men to his purpose. God does not cause the evil but God certainly used that wickedness to carry out his will. God’s will is always done. You can’t change or alter what God wills. You can’t make God change his plans because of our prayer or because of your love or because of whatever it is that you think is going to make God do what you want. God’s will is always done. We pray that we recognize God’s will and that God’s will be done among us, that is, that whatever happens to us and around us is for the good, the eternal plan and purpose, of the believers of the world. It is what happened in Jesus day and it is what will be in our day too!

I am always saddened by people who think it is their duty, their right to pray to God and tell him what they think He should do. You know what I am talking about. “Lord, heal so and so, give me this or that, make sure so and so gets elected or unelected, make our nation this or that”…this list of what people demand from God is pretty extensive. And I chuckle even more when you have people praying for stuff like this and then they try and get hundreds or even thousands to pray the same with them, sometimes called “prayer warriors” as if hundreds or thousands will help to change God’s will. What does Jesus tell us in Matthew 6? **“Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by people…But whenever you pray, go into your private room, close your door, and pray to your Father who is unseen…And whenever you pray, do not babble like the heathen, since they think that they will be heard because of their many words.”** The simple prayer of believers is that God’s will is done. That God carry out his wise, purposeful and saving will to the good of his children and believers. And please, don’t forget that most of the people involved in the prayer of our text will probably end up dying for the name of Jesus. God’s will be done!

That is ultimately what they pray for. Verses 29-30: **“Now Lord, look at their threats and give your servants the ability to keep on speaking your word with all boldness as you stretch out your hand to heal and as signs and wonders take place through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”** Do note they don’t ask God to remove the threats…man will just bring on more…they ask God to give them strength to boldly proclaim Jesus, in spite of the threat and danger. Lord strengthen us! Give us your help to proclaim Jesus. To be preachers of the gospel message, servants of your Holy Christian Church, those who are ready to face the threat for the sake of God’s wonder and truth.

Is that how we are? Asking God for his strength and wisdom to help us be his servants and children who glorify his name in what we do? I wonder? I see believers work harder for their politician than for Jesus. I see believers doing this or that and it is not Jesus who shines forth in their doings. And we always seem to have an excuse. Have you ever noticed how the excuses to ignore God seem to center on man? I don’t go to church because Mom and Dad made me go. I don’t go to church because the Pastor made me work in Catechism class to learn things. My personal favorite, heard when I was still a single pastor, “I don’t go to church because I think the pastor likes me!” Let’s be honest here people, you don’t go to church, you don’t keep God’s Word and wonder in your life because you don’t believe in Jesus!! You have rejected God’s will in your life. I love that this church of our text prays: God, let your will be done.

Now, here is where I am a bit jealous. Oh, if after every prayer we uttered, God would grant what he does here. Verse 31: **“After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken.”** Those believers were given a direct sign from the Lord that He had heard them and was at work. I believe God does that for them because as I mentioned earlier, many of them involved in this prayer right now, will end up dying for the name of the Lord. This was God’s way of reassuring them He was with them.

Today God still lets us know He is with us. He does so with His promises and in His Holy Word. He still carries out the next line for us: **“Everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit, and they continued to speak the word of God with boldness.”** God still sends His Holy Spirit among us. How do I know? You are sitting here listening to God’s Word. You have opened your mouths to sing his praise and glory in song. You will be partaking of his Holy Supper because you still believe and cling to His promise that it is His body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. You are moved to give of your time, talent and treasures to the work of God. None of that, none of that happens without God’s Holy Spirit among us strengthening our faith and granting us His wisdom, love and faith in Jesus. The Church doesn’t grow or die, thrive or stall, remain faithful or become weak without the will of God being done

The next time you face a difficulty, take it to the Lord. Take it to the Lord and ask that His will be done. Ask that His grace and mercy shine forth in your life. Ask for that gift of faith that lets you proclaim his name and be his servant. Ask, as a believer in prayer, that God’s good and gracious will be done. Amen.