

0 (0s):

All right. Good morning, arise Church. It's so good to see all of you here, especially on a camping weekend. So thank you for foregoing your camping to join us this morning. My name is Kenton Chan. Many of you may not know me and my family except maybe by name because for the last two years we have been living in North Africa and our desire has been to build a life there and to earn the opportunity to proclaim the gospel of Jesus among friends, neighbors, and coworkers who have scarcely, if ever heard the truth about our Lord.

0 (45s):

And sadly, because a civil war has broken out in this country, we will not be able to return in the foreseeable future, but regardless of where we live, our desire is to proclaim the name of Jesus because in him we can have our fullest life now and eternal life with God in the age to come. So it is my duty and honor and joy to open the Word of God with you this morning. And in this series we're learning that we are not just saved from sin and death, but that we are saved for a purpose.

0 (1m 38s):

And I've entitled this message on this Memorial Day weekend saved for freedom of speech because as Americans we love freedom, don't we? Sometimes a little too much, but we love our freedom. But it's my hope that as we look at this passage in the Book of Acts this morning, we'll see that true freedom of speech is not a constitutional protection, but a spirit filled purpose for all followers of Christ. So our passage this morning is from the book of Acts chapter four verses 23 to 31.

0 (2m 26s):

So if you have a Bible or a Bible app and would like to turn with me to Acts chapter four, verse 23. When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, Sovereign Lord who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them who through the mouth of our Father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit.

0 (3m 10s):

Why did the Gentiles rage and the people's plot in vain, the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed. For truly in this city, there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed both Herod and Poncho Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel to do whatever your hand had predestined to take place. And now, Lord look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

0 (4m 6s):

And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. So the Book of Acts gives

us a historical glimpse into the early church and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Although the author does not specifically identify himself internal evidence within the Book of Acts as well as in the gospel of Luke and early church tradition strongly suggests that the author is Luke who wrote the Gospel of Luke.

0 (4m 52s):

And in the introduction to the gospel, we are told that Luke wrote based on eyewitness accounts, in order to assure a man named Theophilus of what he had been taught regarding Jesus, the introduction to the book of Acts tells us that this second volume also written to the same man. Theophilus continues where the gospel account ends. So if Luke's gospel was meant to affirm all that Jesus began to do and teach, then the Book of Acts is about what Jesus continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit.

0 (5m 36s):

And as we work our way through the text this morning, it is my prayer that we would all learn how to speak freely and fearlessly. I even have an acrostic for you, S P E A A K spelling first, let us pray. Sovereign Lord, we're so thankful that you saw fit to reveal yourself to us through scripture, through history, through creation, and through your son Jesus. I pray that you would help us to see and hear what you have told us through this passage and through this early church that we would come to know who you are truly.

0 (6m 30s):

Father, I pray that you would help me to be faithful with the text, faithful in my words. And if anything that I say is unhelpful or untrue, may those words fall to the ground and remain there. In Jesus name we pray. Amen. So the first thing that we're going to learn today is the S in our acrostic, which is to serve others. Our passage actually comes at the end of a series of events that starts in Acts chapter three. Peter and John, who are two of Jesus's closest companions, we're going to the temple in Jerusalem.

0 (7m 15s):

A couple of months after Jesus was killed and had risen from the grave as they were going up to the temple, they encountered a lame man who was being carried to the gate of the temple in order to ask for gifts of money or other goods. And when they looked at the man, Peter and John said, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And the man stood up and began walking, even leaping and praising God. Of course, the crowd that was headed up to the temple took notice and the people were filled with wonder and amazement, just imagine for a moment what it would be like to see a lame man suddenly get up and walk.

0 (8m 10s):

And that's not normal. In case you're wondering, the people recognize this man because they saw him every day as they went up to the temple to pray, and they were filled with wonder and amazement because they knew that this was not normal and they were praising God for this good work. And when we serve others in the name of Jesus, the unbelieving will take notice. Now, the apostles told the gathering crowd that it actually was not them who had healed the man but faith in the name of the resurrected Jesus.

0 (8m 55s):

So the second thing that we need to learn today is P, to proclaim the risen Jesus. As Peter spoke to the people about the risen, Jesus imploring them to repent and turn to God. The priests, the captain of the Temple Guard and the sades converged on the two apostle, on the two apostles and in what has to be a huge understatement, were told that they were greatly annoyed that they were proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead and they arrested the two apostles.

0 (9m 37s):

The next day, the leaders all gathered together to ask Peter and John how they had healed the man. And Peter filled with the Holy Spirit repeated the same message from the previous day that this good deed was done by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they crucified and whom God raised from the dead. In Acts chapter four verse 12, Peter unequivocally proclaims, there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

0 (10m 22s):

Were told that the authorities saw the boldness of Peter and John and they perceived that they were uneducated common men, and yet they were speaking with such boldness and they recognized that they had been with Jesus and the authorities couldn't deny the visible evidence that something incredible had happened. The lame man was there walking among them. So instead they threatened Peter and John to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. And to this Peter and John replied in Acts chapter four verse 19, whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge for, we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.

0 (11m 21s):

And here we come to the heart of the gospel. What was the message that the apostles were preaching? It wasn't that they had led the man on some sort of spiritual journey that ultimately helped him find inner peace and physical healing. It wasn't a religious code of ethics and morality that they must adhere to in order to become better, more moral people. And it certainly was not a political platform. They were proclaiming the historical fact of something that had actually happened.

0 (12m 5s):

They were preaching Jesus' resurrection from the dead for the forgiveness of sins, and they were witnesses to this event that Jesus was crucified, died, was buried, and three days later rose bodily from the grave in order that all who believe in him will receive salvation as a gift from God is the very foundation of all of the Christian faith. In one Corinthians chapter 15, the apostle Paul says that if Christ does not risen, then our faith is useless and we should be pitied by all.

0 (12m 54s):

And in first John chapter one verses one through three, the Apostle John who remember was there with Peter that day at the end of his life is still proclaiming the exact same message that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have looked upon and have touched with our hands concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest. We have seen it and testified to it and proclaimed to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you so that you too may have fellowship with us.

0 (13m 43s):

And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ. So now that we know what happened, we come to our passage in verses 23 to 31 this morning. So after being threatened, Peter and John were released by the authorities and what did they do? As we already read together in verse 23, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them, they went to their community of brothers and sisters, they went to church.

0 (14m 29s):

So the third thing that we need to learn this morning is the E from our acrostic, which is to engage with a church. One essential mark of a true Christian is being in close community with and accountable to other believers. Going to church does not make you a Christian, but it is essential to the true Christian life. The Bible knows nothing of individualized Christianity that says, I don't need to go to church.

0 (15m 10s):

I have my Bible and I have my faith, so I'm good. If you are a follower of Christ, you should be engaged with a local church whenever possible. My family and I have just spent the last two years living in a country where less than 5% of people claim to be Christian and to do so often leads to being marginalized, persecuted, arrested, and even killed. Even so there are churches gathering every Sunday in spite of the dangers involved to worship, to pray together, to study the Bible and to encourage one another.

0 (16m 6s):

My family and I have been so blessed by our brothers and sisters here at Arise Church. You've prayed with us and for us over the last couple of years, and we know that no matter what we're going through, we can turn to our brothers and sisters here at Arise to encourage us to speak difficult words into our lives, to keep us accountable and to share our burdens and always to lift up your voices in praise to our God.

0 (16m 50s):

However, I also know that some of you with us today or who might be watching online claim the name of Jesus and I'm so thankful for that. But you are not committed to a local church for any number of reasons. Please hear my sincerest intentions on this and not a criticism. While I am glad that you are joining us today, occasional or virtual attendance is a poor substitute for your personal presence because even if you think that you have nothing to gain by being a part of a church, perhaps you need to consider what the body of

Christ is missing without you.

0 (17m 43s):

If you are physically able to be a part of a church, then please make it a priority to engage with a church, even if it's not this one. Live Streams, broadcast services, podcasts, these are all meant to enhance your spiritual growth and they should not replace your physical and personal contribution in the church because if Jesus's closest companions were accountable to one another, then we should be too. Now, when Peter and John reported all that had happened to them, what was the first thing that these believers did?

0 (18m 30s):

They all lifted their voices together to God in prayer. Prayer was not a last resort when all of their other efforts had failed and all hope had been lost, it was their first response. Oswald Chambers, author of one of the most beloved Christian devotionals of all time, my utmost for his highest, says this about prayer. He says, prayer does not fit us for the greater works. Prayer is the greater work. We think of prayer as a common sense exercise of our higher powers in order to prepare us for God's work in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

0 (19m 18s):

Prayer is the working of the miracle of redemption in me, which produces the miracle of redemption in others by the power of God. So in other words, prayer is not a means to help us accomplish God's work. Prayer is God's work in us. Which brings us to our next point. What was it that these believers prayed while they started by adoring the sovereign Lord? And that is the first A in our acrostic, adore the sovereign Lord as we consider their prayer in verses 24 through 28, notice that the first and longest part of this prayer talks to God about himself.

0 (20m 10s):

We see in their prayer an adoration for God's power and authority over everything. Look at how they marvel at who God is. He is sovereign Lord. In the Greek, these words translated, sovereign Lord is despot. Now, I haven't studied ancient Greek, but even I can tell you that this is where we get the English word despot. And today the word despot carries mostly negative connotations and rightfully so because when a man or woman claims absolute power and authority, it always leads to tyranny always.

0 (20m 58s):

But when absolute power and authority resides with a perfectly righteous, a perfectly just loving, merciful good God, then what is there for us to fear? He is the creator of heaven and earth and the sea and everything in them. And if God is creator, then that means he existed before everything. And as pastor and teacher HB Charles says, the one who creates a thing reigns over the thing he creates, the creator gives the created its purpose.

0 (21m 48s):

This simple statement testifies to God's eternal being and his purpose for you and me and all of creation. And he's also the revealer of truth. God is not a remote disinterested deity who set the world and its physical laws in motion and stepped back to watch. He is a personal God who has revealed himself and spoken through creation in history by scripture and ultimately in Jesus.

0 (22m 28s):

And we can know him truly through his son, his anointed one. Continuing in verse 25, the believers reveal their trust in scripture as the word of God. They say, who? Through the mouth of our Father, David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit. God spoke through David by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is the word of God given to men and women by the Holy Spirit. Through scripture, God used the personalities and circumstances of individuals to communicate to us about him.

0 (23m 16s):

This is why Peter is able to write more generally in Second Peter chapter one, that no prophecy of scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of men, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. So they believed that scripture is the word of God, and these believers then proceed to quote God's words back to God. And this quote comes from Psalm two verses one and two, and they say, why did the Gentiles rage in the people's plot?

0 (23m 56s):

In vain, the kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his anointed. And in the course of this prayer through verse 28, they offer us an interpretation of this psalm directly identifying Jesus as the Lord's anointed. And by the way, did you catch the doctrine that's revealed in this section? The king's, rulers, Gentiles, and peoples set themselves against Jesus to kill him. In the end, they only accomplished whatever God had predestined to take place.

0 (24m 42s):

People acted and God predestined free will and God's predestination are not opposed to each other. The biblical picture of free will of freedom is that we are accountable for our actions because they are our actions, but everything we do is predestined by God to accomplish whatever he purposes. And so finally, after about five verses of adoration for God, we get two verses of prayer requests and the second A and r acrostic, which is to ask for boldness to speak and for God to act.

0 (25m 34s):

In verses 29 and 30, the believers continue their prayer and they say, and now Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness while you stretch out your hand to heal and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus. So notice what they didn't ask for. They didn't ask that the persecution would stop. They didn't ask for the threats to go

away, and they didn't even ask for the hearts of their enemies to be softened to their message.

0 (26m 20s):

They asked God to look. It's as if they were saying, look upon their threats. Lord, do you see what's happening? They're not threatening us, they're threatening you. They're threatening your son Jesus. So look, grant us, let us speak boldly while you do something about your enemies through the holy name of Jesus. Is this how we pray when we hear of outright threats and persecution against Christians in other countries or when we personally face indifference or hostility from family, friends, or neighbors?

0 (27m 10s):

I think often we are tempted to ask God to stop the hostility, threats and persecution. But do we need to consider? Is that really biblical? Think about it. Hostility toward the gospel only exists when Christians speak the name of Jesus. Recall that speaking the name of the risen Jesus is what got the apostles in trouble in the first place. They weren't detained for healing. The lame man. They were detained because the authorities were annoyed by their message.

0 (27m 51s):

And today, Christians are never persecuted for serving others, for doing good, for loving their neighbors. They are persecuted for speaking the name of Jesus. So if we really want persecution to end, then are we actually praying that followers of Christ would be silent about their faith? And eventually, if no one is speaking about Jesus, how will anyone believe in Romans chapter 10 verses 14 and 17, the Apostle Paul reasons this way.

0 (28m 33s):

How then will they call on him and whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? So faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ. So these believers asked not for the removal of the threats, but for boldness to speak because of them. And we too should pray for boldness to speak into the lives of our family and our friends and our neighbors in the midst of indifference or even increasing hostility toward the name of Jesus Christ around us today.

0 (29m 22s):

And what did God do? He powerfully answered their prayer. The place was shaken, we're told, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This is actually the second time in the book of Acts that the community of believers was filled by the Holy Spirit. In the first instance in chapter two, the place where they were gathered at Pentecost was filled with the sound of a mighty rushing wind and tongues as a fire rested on each one of them. Now, the place where they were gathered was shaken. And as I was studying this passage, I couldn't help but wonder whether Luke might have been trying to point us back to one Kings chapter 19 when the Lord spoke to the prophet Elijah.

0 (30m 17s):

Do you remember this Elijah laments that he is the only prophet of the Lord who has not been killed and those who killed the other prophets are now seeking his life. And the Lord tells Elijah to go stand on the mountain as the Lord passed by. There was a strong wind in earthquake and a fire, but the Lord was not in them. Instead, he was in the sound of a low whisper. He was in the word of God. So in the same way, I wonder if Luke is showing us that though the presence of God may be most obvious to us through physical manifestations like a mighty rushing wind and an earthquake and a fire, the true power of God is in his word.

0 (31m 14s):

In Romans chapter one, the apostle Paul writes, for I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation, for everyone who believes the word of God about Jesus is the power of God. Which brings us to our final point. Keep on going. In verse 31, we're told very simply, almost casually that they continued to speak the word of God with boldness. The threats that the early church faced were not idle threats.

0 (31m 54s):

One commentator points out that the council's threats from verses 21 and 22 had set a legal precedent that allowed the council to take more drastic action for future proclamations of Jesus. And when you continue reading in Acts chapter five, you will see that that is exactly what happens as the apostles are beaten for proclaiming Jesus. And when you continue further to Acts chapter seven, Stephen is stoned to death with the approval of the authorities for speaking the name of Jesus, yet filled with the Holy Spirit, the believers continued to speak with boldness about the risen Jesus.

0 (32m 42s):

I love how the Young's literal translation handles verse 31. It says, and they having prayed the place was shaken in which they were gathered together and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and were speaking the word of God with freedom in the face of threats. They spoke with freedom. What I want us to be convinced of today is this, in the Spirit, you are free to speak fearlessly about Jesus. So are we truly convinced of the faith which we profess faith in the name of the risen Jesus Christ?

0 (33m 29s):

If it is true that he rose from the dead, then we have reasonable grounds to believe everything else that he said, including his words, that he is the way, the truth, and the life that he is, the resurrection and the life that he is the bread of life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him. If we truly believe this good news, then why are we not more freely and fearlessly proclaiming the name of Jesus every single day to lost people near and far?

0 (34m 10s):

Trust me, I am speaking to myself as much as I am speaking to anyone of you. Governments, circumstances



and social norms don't dictate our freedom to speak about Jesus. They don't. In the Spirit, we are always free to speak fearlessly about Jesus. And how do we do that? We speak. We serve others in the name of Jesus. We proclaim the risen Jesus. We engage in church.

0 (34m 51s):

We adore the sovereign Lord. We ask for boldness to speak and for God to act. And we keep going. Jesus actually told his disciples that they would face persecution because of him and that they would need to boldly endure in the Holy Spirit. I'll close with this. I don't have it up on the slide, but you can turn to it in your Bibles if you would like to. In Luke chapter 21, verses 12 through 19, Jesus tells his disciples, but before all this, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues in prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my namesake.

0 (35m 39s):

This will be your opportunity to bear witness, settle it. Therefore, in your minds not to meditate beforehand how to answer, for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and some of you they will put to death. You will be hated by all for my namesake, but not a hair of your head will perish by your endurance.

0 (36m 22s):

By your endurance, you will gain your lives so endure. Keep going for his namesake. You will gain your lives and others because of you. You see, Jesus too was threatened and he was persecuted to the point of death on a cross, though he had committed no crime and no sin. And on that cross, he bore the penalty for all of my sin, all of your sin so that you can be forgiven.

0 (37m 4s):

And on the third day, he rose from the grave displaying his power over sin and death so that you may live forever. And because he lives, when you put your trust in him, he sends you the Holy Spirit to help you follow Christ as king and to give you your fullest life today and eternal life with God forever. So if you have not given your allegiance and your adoration to Jesus, you can do so right now.

0 (37m 44s):

We're told in scripture, in the very word of God, that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. So if you are ready to declare Jesus as Lord and to follow him for the rest of your life, then repeat this prayer after me. There's nothing special about these words. It is a confession of your allegiance and adoration. And for those of you who do follow Christ, if you would repeat these words after me to perhaps give courage to someone else who has never said these words.

0 (38m 27s):

So would you bow your heads and close your eyes? Lord God, I confess that I am a sinner. I have pushed you away and demanded to go my own way. I need your forgiveness. I need your mercy. I need you. Save me. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I can live for you starting today and for the rest of my life.

0 (39m 21s):

Amen. So with your eyes still closed and your head still bowed, if you said that prayer for the first time, would you maybe have the courage to put your hand up in the air so that we might be able to celebrate with you that angels celebrate when even one lost sheep comes back to the Father? Heavenly Father, I thank you. I thank you that you have spoken to us through your scripture, That you have not left us alone in our sin and our rebellion, but that you have saved us, you have forgiven us, and that through you, we can live truly Lord, I ask that you would continue to work in the hearts of those here today who may not yet believe, and for us, your sons and daughters in Christ, in the power of your Holy Spirit.

0 (40m 36s):

Would you help us to speak boldly, the name of the risen Jesus, while you act to save? It's through the lovely, wonderful, precious name of Jesus Christ that we pray. Amen.