



"This week we kick off a new sermon series. The early church faces persecution for preaching about what they've seen and heard. In this series we will look at what the response of the disciples was as well as focus on what we've seen and heard and how we might be encouraged to bear witness to that reality in our day-to-day lives."

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY:

God Encounters: Share some way you saw God interact in your life this week.

MEMORY VERSE:

Acts 4:19b-20

"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 about what we have seen and heard."

SCRIPTURE READING:

Acts 4:13-31

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. 14 But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. 15 But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, 16 saying, "What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. 17 But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name." 18 So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. 19 But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, 20 for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." 21 And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. 22 For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.

23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 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, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,

*“Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?*

*26 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’ —*

27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” 31 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.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Read through the entirety of the section we are going to be covering over the next several weeks. Answer the question: What stands out to you?
2. Read Acts 1:8 when Jesus gives a title, an identity, to His disciples as He prepares to ascend to be with the Father. What is that identity? What does it mean to be a witness? What comes to mind? What does a witness do? Does Jesus give instructions for His expectations for a witness?
3. In Acts 4, the disciples begin to live as witnesses to the world. How does the world receive it? Why do you think that is? (Consider the cultural/historical context)
4. Have you ever shared about Jesus and it gone poorly? Share a story.
5. Theologian Francis of Assisi is credited with saying, “Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary,” but in fact, he never said that. What he said was, “Proclaiming the Gospel by example is more virtuous than actually proclaiming it with voice.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? What does it look like to proclaim the Gospel by example?
6. Have you ever thought about sharing the Gospel as being merely sharing what you’ve seen and heard? How does that impact your view/understanding of evangelism?

CLOSING PRAYER ACTIVITY:

Invite someone to close the group in prayer.