

Greeting in the name of name of Jesus Christ,

SCRIPTURE:

Acts 4:31 (NIV) – Larger reading: Acts 4:23-31

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.”

STORY:

Robert Louis Stevenson told the story of a ship at sea in a time of storm. The passengers were in great distress. After a time one of them, against orders, went up on deck and made his way to the pilot. The seaman was at his post of duty at the wheel. When he saw the man was greatly frightened he gave him a reassuring smile. Then the man turned and went back to the other passengers with such words of comfort as these: “I have seen the face of the pilot and he smiled. All is well.”

OBSERVATION:

Contemplating the worship service this Sunday and the sacred responsibility of the pastor to “break the bread of life” sharing a good word from God, my mind drifted to Acts 4:31 and the phrase, “... spoke the word of God boldly”. In The Message it reads: “... continued to speak God's Word with fearless confidence.” And there you have it ... “boldly” ... “fearless confidence” and I pray that would be true.

I really like those words – “fearless confidence” and “bold” or “holy boldness” as in empowered by God’s Spirit they spoke without reservation and with abandonment not looking at their own well-being or safety nor at how they would be perceived by others.

There are many individuals who come to mind, but two in particular stand out. The Reverends Newt Wise and Smokey Stover. Both of them were some of the most unique individuals I have ever encountered in the Kingdom of God.

Newt, rest his soul, came across as a country bumpkin – accent and all. It was a perception that served him well as the regional representative for the American Bible Society or in serving many churches throughout the state of Florida. He would wear some of the most outlandish clothes and blame it on “Miss Fannie” who just happened to be his wife. What most of his fellow clergy didn’t know about him was his massive intellect. He actually wore out several sets of The Interpreters Bible – a 12-volume commentary on the Bible.

Newt was very bold about his faith and he went out of his way to include everyone in his declaration. There were about eight clergy who had gathered at a South Miami restaurant for lunch one day. When the food arrived Newt stood up and announced to everyone in the crowded dining room that he was going to say grace over what he was about to receive and spoke of the assurance that they would like their meals blessed as well ... and then he began to offer a powerful prayer. Newt had a “fearless confidence”

which resulted in a Holy Boldness unlike anything that I had ever witnessed to that point in my spiritual journey.

The other individual was Smokey Stover, may God rest his soul as well. Smokey felt his faith as deeply as Newt. Unfortunately, I didn't know Smokey as well as I knew Newt, but "Smokey stories" were well known throughout Florida. His favorite line was ... "Glory" ... not a quite, timid, softly spoken glory, but shake the rafters, rattle the windows, fearless, bold GLORY! It didn't matter if it was at a Denny's or Wal-Mart or CVS ... whenever the spirit came over him or he witnessed a spirit-filled event the GLORY would break forth from him and heads would turn. As I heard him say on several occasions, "My heart was just filled to overflowing and it had to just come out."

Is either one of these particular "style" of fearless boldness right for any of us? Probably not, but it did fit their personalities. This one thing is clear though – we didn't receive the Spirit of God simply to continue to live with timidity. 2 Timothy 1:7 expresses it this way, "God doesn't want us to be shy with his gifts, but bold and loving and sensible." (MSG) The only conclusion that I can arrive at is that each of us must look within to discover the uniqueness of our own relationship with God and the distinctive style of fearless boldness. Failing to do just that means that the world wins as it stifles our witness and silences our spirit. That boldness is the ability to "smile" as the storm (Covid-19) rages around us and threatens to swamp our "boat" (aka our life).

"Fearless confidence" ... "Holy boldness" ... may it happen throughout the pulpits and pews in American and beyond ... may it break forth wherever men and women stand to proclaim a good word from God ... may it be heard whenever scripture is read and stories told ... may it happen in your church and in mine ... may it happen today and every day wherever two or three are gathered in his name ... may it happen not because of us, but in spite of us ... may it happen because we anticipate it happening ... May the Glory of God breakout wherever the Spirit of God determines that it would be a good and holy thing to have happen. I like to pray at the beginning of a worship service, "Like unto Pentecost may God's Spirit fill this place today and touch each of us with the Power from on High."

QUOTE:

"Prayer in private results in boldness in public." - Edwin Louis Cole

PRAYER:

Send your Holy Spirit. Send your power. Send the mighty Holy Ghost upon us all. Capture our hearts with the true sense of the "holy boldness" which moves the church ever forward and transforms people's lives. In the name of Jesus. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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In-person worship begins this Sunday at 10:30 (following the guidelines). It will still be posted on our Facebook page, but since it is not being pre-recorded there will be a slight delay. Art tells me it could take between 1 to 3 hours, depending on the Internet speed. So don't start looking for it until at least 1:30 or later. I appreciate Art's willingness to do this for us. I just didn't want you to start looking for the service Sunday morning like you would normally do. The service will be forthcoming. And by the way, the word is getting out about our awesome music. This past week, as of Friday morning, we reached 1,142 people and 257 of them watched the entire service. That my friends is a real Praise the Lord reality!