

Someone in Bible Study this week said, “**This is the most powerful Sunday of the year for us as Christians, because now (with this lectionary reading a week after Easter) it’s up to us!**”

It’s up to us now to channel the divine as Jesus did, and we begin, too, at *ground level*. I actually believe it’s required. It’s required that we find ourselves on the dirt floor of the prisons of our lives before we really *can* understand the necessity of surrendering our will and allowing only God’s will to *be* the only Will. (Together, here, we certainly have come close.)

And for Peter and John it doesn’t get any more surrendering or ground level than their dirt floor of an ancient prison.

Peter and John have now taken over as teachers of channeling the spiritual energy of God; healing the unclean spirits of those who came simply hoping to just reside in Peter’s shadow. And if the member of our Bible Study is right, today, centuries later, we are called to do the same, without excuse. We can’t get away with stating that we’re not qualified...given who Peter was, *we’re qualified!*

Channeling the spiritual energy of God...

“Is not a matter of education; Peter had none.

It’s not a matter of talent or genius; Peter had little.

It’s not a matter of moral achievement; Peter had little to boast of when *his* record was examined.

It’s not a matter of power or prestige; Peter was a workingman just out of jail.”

(I.B. Acts pg. 80)

We are all qualified to be Christ’s disciples (to channel the spiritual energy of God) **just as we are**...to be empowered by the Holy Spirit and then sit back and watch what happens. Look what happened when Peter and John *sat back* on their dirt prison floor unable to “do” anything about it. Verse 19 tells us an Angel unlocks the door unbeknownst to the guards and once again we see one of God’s *grand escapes* in action.

Our Bible Study came up with several scripture-escape-stories showing God's **routine act of liberation**. There was, of course, \*the Exodus,  
\*Daniel's friends who were thrown into the fiery furnace b/c of refusing to obey the king (much like Peter and John today),  
\*Daniel and the lion's den is another great OT escape story,  
\*Jeremiah escapes from the bottom of a well,  
\*Jonah escapes from the mouth of the whale,  
\*and of course Jesus escapes from death, from the tomb having been given new life.

Our Christian heritage is filled with God's stories of liberation and escape. And all those escape stories were the **proper prelude** for prophets (including Jesus), for the prophets to then **go on** to glorify God's holy name and holy purpose for all people—*for those prophets, it became all about God*.

For example, once Peter and John were freed they immediately went back to the Temple (Solomon's Portico) to preach. And it's important to take note on *what* they preached. Their focus was only of God's resurrection in Jesus Christ. And there's where you know they *must* have been filled with the Holy Spirit in order to **not** have their preaching be of \*moral nagging or telling people what to do, **nor**, and **especially** not focused on the people that condemned Jesus and killed him. Never did they give one ounce of attention or condemnation to those who were guilty or attention to the crucifixion. They remembered: Jesus came into the world not to condemn the world but to save it. *We are those prophets today*.

Now in the third part of the story we would all want to be a little lizard in the bushes *slapping our knee with laughter* as the prison guards are ordered to go and remove the prisoners from jail and bring them to the council (or Sanhedrin). And of course when they get there the prison cell is empty. (Didn't we just go through this with the resurrection?!...it seems resurrection is all around us—Hallelujah!)

Now, it's important to think about these two apostles and their *courage* in that moment of escape. They're freed from prison—gifted with one of God's great escape stories—and they don't run away! Instead they run to the Temple to preach! Disregarding their own lives, their own safety, their own comfort levels, for God's Word and God's Will. They cannot contain themselves.

Of course the Sanhedrin catches up with them, just as they did with Jesus, and orders them to stop. “We told you not to do it!... You’ll only make us look bad, blaming us for his death.” (Well, if the shoe fits...)

But Peter can’t stop...he cannot NOT preach! It’s not about him wanting to or not, *he must!* He has made room, now, for the Holy Spirit to fully fill his heart and mind...he has given up his will and agenda for God’s Will. He can now only BE God’s obedient vessel—There is no longer a choice for him. He has returned...he has remembered WHO he is and WHOSE he is. No longer will his agenda-for-life be in conflict with God’s, for there is no longer **an** agenda. It’s all about God’s Will. *We are this prophet today.*

John and Peter and their community of believers had become empowered by the Holy Spirit. They have gone from self-centered to self-sacrificing. *God’s Will has taken priority.* And today the same is true for us. Every church, from St. Peter’s all the way to the other side of the world is potentially a *resurrection center* where people have *moved* from \*chaos to creativity, \*from death to life, \*from their will to God’s Will, \*from crucifixion to resurrection, \*from judgment to mercy, \*from prison to escape...we are a resurrection center, because we are an Easter people.

This truth, this truth of Who we are and Whose we are *is* uncontainable. It *must* be shouted from the roof tops and soap boxes of our lives. We are a resurrection center, may it be so.

Let us pray: Holiest God, we place ourselves as individuals and as your church into your hands. Hold us boldly that we may venture our voices in proclaiming your glorious name as we remain comforted and protected rooted in you. We pray for your Holy Spirit to *seep into* and *out of* our hearts and minds as we seek to give witness to your love for all people and witness to your resurrection in Jesus Christ. In Jesus precious and holy name we join voices as we pray that prayer he taught us: Our Father...