

WEEKLY REFLECTION

One of the core principles of the Christian faith is the transformation that happens as we go to Jesus. He demands our everything—He should *become our everything*. This week's passage of Acts 4:1-31 gives us an example as the Sadducees confront Peter and John. Annas, Caiaphas, and the rest of the high-priestly family arrest them for their proclamations of Jesus' resurrection (v.1-3), which the Sadducees denied as they focused instead on the present and on accumulating social and political power.

Despite this first taste of persecution, Peter—brash, impulsive, and cowardly Peter—steps up to declare the life-saving and resurrecting power of Jesus Christ. (v.8-10) This Jesus, whom the religious leaders had put to death, is the only name by which anyone can be saved. (v.12) This doesn't go well with the Sadducees at all, but their only course of action is to issue a formal warning. (v.18) In response, Peter and John assert that they "cannot but speak of what [they] have seen and heard." (v.20)

Church, when we truly encounter Jesus, He becomes our everything. He is our all. He supersedes any interest in anything else; He alone turns our faults and weaknesses into boldness and holy audacity for His name. He transforms us: in Acts 2:14, Peter gives a sermon that leads to 3000 being baptized. We witness Peter's transformation again in Acts 4:1-31 as he refuses to be cowed by the Sadducees. Where he previously denied Jesus three times, church tradition holds that he was ultimately crucified for his faith.

Peter was unapologetic in sharing the uncensored gospel with others. Are we? Jesus was the epitome of compassion and grace, but He never watered down the offensiveness of His message. He is the only One who saves. As we follow Christ and become increasingly transformed by Him, are we also faithful to Him by proclaiming the fullness of His message and Kingdom, not hiding or censoring any of it?

QUESTIONS

QUESTION ONE:

Have you ever had to give a defense of yourself and your faith? If yes, what was the experience like? What did you say? If no, how confident are you in your ability to do so? Would you stand firm in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, or would you share something else instead?

QUESTION TWO:

We see in the Gospels that Jesus lived a life full of grace, compassion, and mercy. He sought always to love the people around Him. At the same time, His message remained uncensored and offensive. Much like Hong Kong, ancient Greco-Roman society was one of pluralistic faith, yet the early church braved the threat of persecution to preach the narrow path of Jesus and His Kingdom.

How can we follow the examples of Jesus and the early church in sharing the gospel with those around us? How can we embody grace, compassion, and mercy, yet stand firm to the exclusivity of our faith within our morally pluralistic society?

QUESTION THREE:

After Peter and John's release, the church responded to the sharing of their encounter with prayer for boldness and courage. They didn't ask for an end to the threat of persecution, but asked instead for God's help to speak His word with all boldness. (v.29-30)

How does their prayer compare to yours? What encouragement can you draw from this week's passage as you continue to travel the narrow path of Christ? How can you remain faithful and obedient to God in following or doing whatever He asks of you?