

- ***Read Acts 4:1-13*** This account of John and Peter follows directly after they had healed the lame man and their second sermon to the masses concerning the resurrection and kingship of Jesus. The response, again, was fantastic. Many, many souls were added to the Body, and things seemed to be looking good until the Jewish leadership shows up. They take Peter and John into custody because of their teaching about Jesus being raised from the dead, and they stand before the Jewish leadership having to explain themselves. After Peter speaks up concerning the healing of this man and the power of Jesus, those surrounding them begin to recognize something very peculiar and special about these men. It wasn't that they were educated or trained in speaking or reasoning...but they recognized them as having been with Jesus.
- As this year draws to an end, many of us will stop for some reflection on how this year has gone for us. We will probably think about our family's growth, our job status, and maybe even check out the bank account. All of these things are reasonable, but I truly hope that we take some time to reflect on how our faith has progressed over this past year. We talked this morning about our focus and goals for next year, so hopefully this time next year we will have seen our service to God increased, but what about this year? We have focused a lot on glorifying God. Have we found ourselves more focused on giving effort to glorify God in all that we do? I surely hope that's the case, but I also hope that it can be said about each of us that others can tell that we have been with Jesus, just as that was said about Peter and John. That idea is just awesome! For others to see us and think, "Wow, that person seems as if they have been around Jesus." That was a reality for Peter and John here in Acts 4:13. I'd like for us to think about this idea for our study this evening as we reflect on this past year and see if it can be said of us that we have been with Jesus.

I. Often, Jesus and His Apostles were recognized as being different.

- A. The actions of Jesus and His Apostles caused others to take notice on a regular basis.
 1. Early on in Jesus' life, people were amazed by His knowledge and understanding. **(Luke 2:41-47)**
 2. As He grew older, people continued to be amazed by the authority with which He taught. **(Matt. 7:28,29)**
 3. Time and time again, He was questioned about the manner in which He taught. **(Matt. 21:23-27)**
 4. Jesus' Apostles were also questioned often because of their actions. They were questioned for picking heads of grain on the Sabbath **(Matt. 12:1,2)** and for not washing their hands before they ate. **(Matt. 15:1-3)**
 5. They were quickly recognized by their actions because they were different than those around them.
- B. Their time with Jesus, and the influence of the Holy Spirit were huge factors in the growth of the Apostles.
 1. They were emboldened to speak out for the Lord, and they did so on multiple occasions. **(Acts 2, 3, 4:20-31, ect.)**
 2. They were not scared of consequences, and they continued to preach and teach of Jesus being resurrected. **(Acts 5:33ff)**

II. The longer we walk with Jesus, the more we ought to be like Him.

- A. While we cannot literally walk with Jesus as His Apostles did, we can still "walk" with our Lord, daily.
 1. We spend time with our God in prayer.
 2. We spend time with our God in Bible study & meditation.
 3. We spend time focused on God & Jesus when we are engaged in spiritual discussions.
 4. We are focused on our God when we gather together to worship Him.
 5. These are the same things that the Apostles would have been doing with Jesus on a daily basis.
- B. Our walking with Jesus should have an influence on us.
 1. Truth is, we are normally influenced by whoever it is that we walk with daily. Those we are closest to have the greatest influence on us.
 2. There was a reason that Paul reminded the Corinthians of the proverb about bad company. **(I Cor. 15:33)**
 3. If we are constantly surrounding ourselves with those who don't care for Jesus or righteousness then they are not going to influence us to those things.
 4. But, if we are constantly in God's Word, engaged in prayer, or discussing those things that would be found in **Philippians 4:8,9**, then we will be on our way to living up to the character that Jesus expects for us to have.....that character is like that of Himself. **(Eph. 4:13)**

III. Others should be able to tell that we have spent time with Jesus.

- A. Our walking with Jesus should render similar results to that of the Apostles.
 1. Our actions and words should reflect the fact that Christ is living through us. **(Matt. 5:16)**
 2. While the rest of the world is interested in themselves and any and every pleasure possible, we are focused on those things that are right, pure, and holy.
 3. We will be able to respond to difficulties differently than the world because we live with an eternal focus. Others may focus on the here and now, but we focus on those things that will come for us later if we remain strong and faithful to God. We press on like the Apostle Paul. **(Phil. 3:13,14)**
 4. We will also be willing to confidently talk with others about our faith and those truths of God's Word. Our prayer, study, and meditation will instill us with confidence because we are sure of what we believe and when we are sure of those things, we will be willing to discuss with others.
 5. These are things that the Apostles were willing to do after walking with Jesus, and they are things that we can do just the same.
- B. If we are not recognized as with being like Jesus, then we must ask why that isn't the case.
 1. If we do some honest introspection and recognize that we are no different than the person in the world, then we must ask ourselves "Why?"
 2. It might be that we haven't been committed to prayer, study, meditation, spiritual discussion, or worship. We can't expect to be like our Lord if we are never engaged in those things concerning Him. Prayer, study, meditation, & worship are the life bloods of the Christian, and a lack of these things will do nothing but hurt our spiritual strength.
 3. It might be that we engage in these good things, but they are nothing more than a front. We might do these things, but our hearts might be somewhere else completely. This was the problem with the Jewish leadership of Jesus' day. They should've been the strongest of people spiritually, but they did these things with an absent heart. **(Matt. 15:8)**
 4. Something similar could be said about Judas, the Apostle who betrayed Jesus. He was with Jesus just like Peter and John, but there was no room for Jesus' influence because he was too focused on greed and personal gain. **(John 12:1-6)**
 5. If we want to avoid being like the Jewish leadership and Judas, then we need to be engaged in these things of Jesus, and we need to allow them to influence us as they should. **(Titus 2:11-14)**

This time of the year brings us to a place where we sit back and reflect. As we reflect on our year spiritually, I hope that we can all say that it has been a year where we have been with Jesus and that it shows in the way we act, speak, & think. A pure heart will be influenced by the grace of Jesus. May we be a type of person who long to be influenced by Jesus, and may God help us to be a people who seem as if they have been walking with Jesus each and every day.