“Bold in the LORD”

John 2:13-22

December 18, 2016

How many of you have, at some time, been unwilling to do something because you were afraid you might make a mistake? Or you were afraid you might be judged, criticized, or laughed at? Or simply that we were very concerned about what someone might think of you?

Now, everyone, I’m sure, would that this is living with the fear? Well, if this has ever been you, today’s sermon will be a blessing and a help. I’ve titled it. “Bold in the LORD.” Shall we pray?

If you are one of those who finds himself or herself or is you know someone who is in need of boldness, please open your Bible with me to the lives of Peter and John in Acts chapter four where you’ll see boldness exhibited in the face of criticism; Acts 4:5 and please follow as I read.

Acts 4:5 *“And it came to pass on the morrow, that their rulers, and elders, and scribes, (6) And Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. (7) And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, by what power, or by what name, have ye done this?*

*(8) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel, (9) If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole;*

*(10) Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. (11) This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.*

*(12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (13) Now when they saw* ***the boldness of Peter and John****, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*

Now, if you want to join the ranks of the bold, consider this. Here are just a few individuals who everyone counts as bold:

1. William Tyndale – translated the Bible into English in an age when it was forbidden to own your personal copy of the Bible.
2. William Wilberforce – spoke against slavery in Great Britain and led the way to the passage of the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.
3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer – spoke against Nazism when it wasn’t politically correct to do so. He was imprisoned for doing so.
4. Martin Luther King – spoke against racial discrimination. He too was imprisoned for doing so.
5. Winston Churchill – one of the few men who stood against Nazi Germany.
6. Abraham Lincoln – spoke out against slavery in the United States and united a nation that had been split by a Civil War.

Then there’s Moses and Joshua and Daniel and now we find Peter and John.

What does it mean? What does boldness mean? When you read and study your Bible, it’s always a good idea to look closely at what the Bible is saying. Here’s Acts 4:13 “*Now when they saw* ***the boldness of Peter and John****, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*

The term original term here is παρρησιας. It’s translated as “confidence” and “plainly.” But here’s the basic definition “the opposite of silence.” And, in every place where it’s found in the Bible, it means “plain speech.”

For example when the Apostle Paul is referring to his own communications, he calls it “plainness of speech.” II Corinthians 3:12 *“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:…”* The Biblical definition of boldness is “plainness of speech.”

Everyone here has been in a situation where we thought “I need to speak up about the LORD.” And, then we said to ourselves “on second thought, maybe I shouldn’t say anything.” And we missed out on an opportunity to bring the message of Christ to someone.

What I found in the Book of Acts is that in every case in when someone “spoke plainly” about Christ, it’s the exact same word “boldness.” Here’s what we read.

Acts 9:27 *“But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how* ***he had preached boldly*** *at Damascus in the name of Jesus.*

*(28) And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem. (29) And* ***he spake boldly*** *in the name of the Lord Jesus,…”*

Acts 13:46 *“Then Paul and Barnabas* ***waxed bold****, and said,…”*

Acts 14:3 *“Long time therefore abode they* ***speaking boldly*** *in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace,…”*

Acts 18:26 *“And he began to* ***speak boldly*** *in the synagogue:…”*

Acts 19:8 *“And he went into the synagogue, and* ***spake boldly*** *for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God.”*

And when Paul was standing before the Roman King of Judea named Agrippa, he said this. Acts 26:26 *“For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I* ***speak freely****: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*”

And just more thing on the meaning of the word here. There is one more English word that comes from this original Greek word. And it’s translated this way: “confidence.” Acts 28:31 *“****Preaching*** *the kingdom of God, and* ***teaching*** *those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ,* ***with all confidence****, no man forbidding him.”*

Now, folks, I’m just exactly like you. I pray. And I want to tell people around the Good News that Jesus has died for their sins. And yes, the opportunities to tell that message are everywhere. But, let the word of God speak to your heart on this matter. Hasn’t the LORD called you to speak plainly about Him? Hasn’t He called you to speak confidently about Him? Hasn’t He called you to speak boldly the message of the Gospel?

That’s what you find the Early Church doing. And that’s what you and I have been saved to do. Now, you aren’t called to, as one man puts it “shove the Gospel down someone’s throat.” But you are called to speak plainly. And everyone here can do that.

Today I want you to look with me at just a couple of ways you can be bold. Here are five things that are true of bold people. They’re all right here in Acts 4. What we should say about boldness is this.

First, bold people speak up.

Look with me at Peter and John. Cf. Acts 4:11. *“This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. (12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*

*(13) Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*

If you aren’t going to speak up, how will the world know that you are a Christian?

I’m sure you’ve noticed that people around you are bold about a whole range of things. They speak up about what they believe. They’re bold about, for example, not believing in God. They’re bold about drinking alcohol; taking drugs; lying to their boss. They’re bold about sex and lots of other sins. They’re bold about immorality. They’re bold about their favorite sports idols. They’re bold about what they believe about immigration. They’re bold about who they think should be president of the United States. Bold about the clothing they wear; their hair; even their makeup. They’re bold about almost anything.

And, to be honest with you, most people would prefer you were bold about what you believe. By the way, have you noticed how easy it is for you to not be bold, to not speak plainly to someone because you are afraid you might offend them?

When Peter and John “spoke plainly” about Jesus to the people who were there that day, the Jewish leaders saw their boldness.

Think about how often you are in conversation with people; sometimes with people you just met standing in line at the Post Office. Or, how often have you been in conversation with someone at work and they were speaking up about what they believed. You and I are called by the LORD to speak plainly. Tell the Gospel plainly. When you do that, you are bold.

Here’s verse twenty again. Acts 4:13 *“Now when* ***they saw the boldness of Peter and John****, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”*

First, bold people speak up.

Second, bold Christians tell the truth.

And what did Peter and John say? They said that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

Acts 4:10 *“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.*

*(11) This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. (12) Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

They said that the Jews were the ones who had crucified Jesus. They said that Jesus had died and rose again. They said that the lame man was healed because of the power in Jesus’ name. And they said that there is no salvation apart from the Person of Christ.

Folks, all you need to do is to tell people the truth. That’s being bold. That’ speaking plainly. That’s speaking with confidence.

I am quite sure that you would like to be known as someone who tells the truth. So, do you? Do you tell the truth to friends and family? Do you tell them plainly that Jesus Christ died for their sins and rose from the dead so that they could have God’s life inside them?

Someone wisely said “stop being nice.” What they meant was this. If being nice means not telling them the truth, then stop being nice to people. You are not called to make people like you. And since most people would rather you said what you think and believe, then say it.

And think about what you really believe. Do you believe the truth? Is the Bible the truth? Is the Gospel true? Does Jesus call Himself the truth? Isn’t the truth the one thing that sets a person free? Doesn’t everyone need to know the truth? Is there truly only one way for a person to be saved?

Imagine, for just a moment, that you’ve been falsely accused? Suppose someone has a video of you (or, what appears to be you) breaking into your neighbor’s home and stealing their valuables. And the person in the video looks exactly like you.

Now, you’ve been accused. You have no alibi for the day and time your neighbor’s home was broken into. And you are now on trial; a trial by jury.

Would you or would you not speak the truth as plainly as you could in that courtroom? And wouldn’t you speak it with a lot of conviction? Wouldn’t you say as clearly as possible “that’s not me”? Of course, you would.

When a Christian really believes that what he or she believes is the truth, you want the truth to be told; plainly. That’s what happens when you speak out on behalf of the truth of the Gospel.

We’ve got dozens of tracts out in our lobby. They’re meant for you and me to take to the lost. Charles Spurgeon, said to be the greatest Baptist preacher said this about Christian’s handing out tracts. *“When preaching and private talk are not available, you need to have a tract ready….Get good striking tracts, or none at all. But a touching gospel tract may be the seed of eternal life. Therefore, do not go out without your tracts…*

*I well remember distributing them in a town in England where tracts had never been distributed before, and going from house to house, and telling in humble language the things of the kingdom of God. I might have done nothing, if I had not been encouraged by finding myself able to do something …*

*[Tracts are] adapted to those persons who have but little power and little ability, but nevertheless, wish to do something for Christ. They have not the tongue of the eloquent, but they may have the hand of the diligent. They cannot stand and preach, but they can stand and distribute here and there these silent preachers … They may buy their thousand tracts, and these they can distribute broadcast.”* [Found on ww.evangelismcoach.org].

And there’s one other thing that falls under this category of bold people telling the truth. Ask yourself this question; “what’s the worst thing that could happen if you spoke plainly to a friend of a family member about Christ?” The worst thing that could happen is that someone might get upset with you. Well, actually, the worst thing that might happen is they could take your life. And then; you’d be in Heaven. So, that’s not really the worst thing, is it?

And very likely you will not experience the kind of things Peter and John went through. Might you get rejected? Yes. Might someone mock you or laugh at you? Yes. But isn’t that worth it to speak up for the truth?

First, bold people speak up.

Second, bold Christians tell the truth.

Third, expect that some people will disagree with you.

Acts 4:17 *“But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. (18) And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.*

*(19) But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. (20) For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*

*(21) So when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them, because of the people: for all men glorified God for that which was done.”*

How do you handle it when someone disagrees with you? People disagree with almost everything today. In many cases, especially with family or even neighbors, they already disagree with you. You can’t live in today’s society without someone disagreeing with you. But, does that mean you should not speak up for the name of Christ?

Now, that doesn’t mean the LORD is calling you to be disagreeable. That’s a whole different thing. But, folks, it’s natural that people will disagree with you. But so what! I can’t state it any more plainly. People will disagree with you. Expect it.

First, bold people speak up.

Second, bold people tell the truth.

Third, expect some people to disagree with you.

Fourth, bold people have a support system.

What did Peter and John do after they were threatened by the Jewish leaders? Acts 4:23 *“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.”*

You have a support group right here at EBC. And what would we all say to you if you were rejected or reproached for speaking the name of Jesus? We’d rejoice with you. We’d encourage and comfort you. We’d build you up. Wed stand with you.

First, bold people speak up.

Second, bold people tell the truth.

Third, expect some people to disagree with you.

Fourth, bold people have a support system.

And fifth and finally, bold people pray.

But look with me at what they pray for. Here’s what these plain speaking men prayed for. Acts 4:29 *“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, (30) By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.*

*(31) And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness.”*

They asked God for boldness and the LORD sent His boldness into them.

Let me close with an illustration from the life of Martin Luther. Luther was a Roman Catholic monk and lecturer from the 16th century. He was also a man who could find no peace with God as a Roman Catholic monk. Here’s how he puts it.

“I greatly longed to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans and nothing stood in the way but that one expres-sion, “the justice of God,” because I took it to mean that justice whereby God is just and deals justly in punishing the unjust.

My situation was that, although an impeccable monk, I stood before God as a sinner troubled in conscience, and I had no confidence that my merit would assuage him. There-fore I did not love a just and angry God, but rather hated and murmured against him.

Yet I clung to the dear Paul and had a great yearning to know what he meant. Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that “the just shall live by his faith.”

Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteous-ness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise.

The whole of Scripture took on new meaning, and whereas before the “justice of God” had filled me with hate, now it became to me inexpressibly sweet in greater love. This passage of Paul became to me a gate to heaven. [From Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther by Roland Bainton, page 49.]

You have great hope. So, be bold. II Corinthians 3:12 *“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:…”*

So, speak the Gospel with confidence. Speak plainly to someone this week about the LORD Jesus. Be bold about who you are in Christ Jesus. Because if you aren’t bold, then you are allowing yourself to be molded into the shape of the world.

And last, folks, your boldness is really the boldness of Christ in you. We all need boldness to get the Gospel out to our families and friends and neighbors.

*“LORD, please give Emmanuel Baptist Church the boldness we need to deliver Your Word to our neighbors and friends and family.”*

Shall we pray?

Please find with me hymn number # \_\_\_\_ “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”