

Let's pray. Father in Heaven, here we are. We just listened to a very thoughtful and beautiful song about You. Our hearts are longing to hear a message from Heaven. We are praying Heavenly Father for a miraculous experience. We ask that You would be the One who speaks, You would be the One who teaches, You would be the One who gives impressions upon our heart and mind. We pray Heavenly Father for a great, and miraculous, mighty and powerful work to take place. We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We moved to a small town in the Upper Peninsula, Michigan in between my 9<sup>th</sup> grade and 10<sup>th</sup> grade year of High School. That summer my brother and I became acquainted with Pixy Nelson. He was this guy that lived there, our age, and he came from a large family, so there were actually a lot of people in his family our age. And we discovered that up there, in that small town in the Upper Peninsula Michigan, surrounded by miles and miles and miles of woods, and all kind of critters out there in the woods that being out door was normal and natural to those folks. Many of the men earned their living by cutting timber. Others worked in the open mine, some worked out on the Lake Michigan, fishing for the white fish that were there. So being outside was second nature. And so when we arrived and became friends with Pixy and some of the other kids, we discovered that what the kids liked to do is sleep outside during the summer. They would sleep outside in back yards. And the parents thought that it's normal, they encouraged it, they were happy to have it happen, and so we began to that.

And it's kind of interesting phenomena. We would take a plastic, lay it down, just take your sleeping bag and a pillow and lay it there and watch the stars. Until you were convinced, your parents were a sleep. And then that town took on a whole life on its own. Because not only were some guys sleeping out at the Nelson's, but across town at the Martin's there were another group of guys, and over here another group of guys, and we all knew where each other were, and we all knew when to get together, and so forth and so on, and you kind of creped through the shadows of the night so nobody would know. And they always wondered why we were so tired the next day.

Well on this particular night, we wanted to pay a call at Pam's house. She and the group of girls were sleeping out. And we knew that, they made us aware of it. And so about 2 in the morning, we went over there. And we had visited with them, and carried on and had fun for a little while until they got tired of us and ran us off. There were 4 of us. I don't know why the guy did this, but the guy in the front, as we were running past the house, he started screaming at the top of his lungs, ah yaw, yaw, yaw, yaw, aye! Wasn't smart! What I understand even less is why I was the last guy, and I did it? So I am running, and "Ah, yaw, yaw, yaw, aye!" and screaming at the top of our lungs, and we hit the road, and we are running back to the Nelson's and, oh man, that was fun.

I heard the sound of feet behind me. I turned around just in time to see Pam's father. I could tell from the look on his face, this wasn't going to be a warm greeting. He grabbed me and we began to wrestle. And he says: "Au I yaw, yaw you," and he said something

about my mother. (☺) And we are struggling like this, and I am trying to get away from him, and he is a big, strong guy, and you know he's got a hold of me. My jacket is, fortunately it was kind of big, and so I am working my way out of jacket until the sleeves are completely inside out, and I am free, and I take off running. He is not going to catch me then because I had motivation. And I ran back to the Nelson's as fast as could, and I didn't know the neighborhood that well. Nobody told me about that wire that ran across between his yard and the neighbor's yard. I hit it, I don't know what note it made, but it was a high sound. And I was in a lot of pain.

You know, interesting thing about that night? It was the same night, it was the same event, but for Pam's father, and for me, it was an entirely different experience. And I'd like to study that with you today. Please turn in your Bibles to Acts chapter 4. We are going to continue our series in the book of Acts. We will be looking at 4 verses today. Acts, chapter 4 verses 1-4. "Now as they spoke to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being greatly disturbed that they taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand."

Well who are they? Some of you have been with us through the series and you know it's Peter and John. And you know what's happened on this particular day. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the time for prayer, Peter and John had it up towards the temple, and as they got near the gate called, Beautiful, there sat a man who had been lame from birth. He was begging. He was asking for alms. He asked for money, and as Peter and John came by, Peter says: "Silver and gold have I not, but in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Peter reaches down, grabs the man, picks him up, it says, his ankles are healed, he gets excited, he goes walking, and leaping and praising God. Well, it says in chapter 3 verse 11 that a crowd gathered. "Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's greatly amazed."

So here are Peter and John, the lame man, big crowd gathered around, and Peter begins the sermon, and he preaches. He is a powerful preacher, he preaches from verse 12 all the way to the end of the chapter there in chapter 3. And while he is preaching away, the Sadducees, the priests, the captain of the temple come upon them, those three, and they arrest them. They are put in jail. And they are awaiting a trial in the morning. Now these priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees, they know who Peter and John are; they know what's going on. In fact, it says there in verse 2, "They are greatly disturbed," greatly disturbed that they thought the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. They are upset! They are mad!

You see, just two months before, they had taken down Jesus. They had Him arrested. They brought Him before themselves and they condemned Him to death, and they took him to Pilot. And Pilot sent Him to Herod, and Herod sent Him back to Pilot, and Pilot was going to let Him go, but they said, "No, crucify Him" and they take Jesus down!

Then Friday He died. They did away with Christ. And so they thought the problem was over, but not so. These guys are talking about the resurrection of the dead, and the Sadducees don't even believe in the resurrection of the dead. And they are saying, Jesus rose from the dead, and then they heal this man in the name of Jesus, and these folks are upset. What are they going to do? They arrest them. But because it's late at night, they decide they'll have the trial in the morning.

Now, I want to ask you a question. They put Peter and John, and the lame man in prison. Now you may ask, well how do I know the lame man is in the prison with them? Well, look at chapter 4 verse 5: "And it came to pass, on the next day, that their rulers, elders, and scribes, as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the family of the high priest, were gathered together at Jerusalem. And when they had set them in the midst, they asked," "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Now go to verse 14: "And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it." You see, so the lame man was brought to court with them, he was sent to prison with them as well.

Now this is a fascinating thing to think about. Here you have the leaders, the spiritual leaders of the nation of Israel. They've arrested followers of Jesus; followers that had been involved in a miracle that none can argue against. This fellow had been lame for 40 years. All Jerusalem was in a stir if you will. What are they going to do? And I want you to go with me, in your mind, to their houses, and to think about that night when they are waiting for the trial, the court scene the next day. What would those Sadducees, priests, and captain of the temple, what would they think about? Look at Matthew chapter 2. They would think about this I am sure. Matthew 2, verses 1-5. "Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea."

They would remember that. That happened only 31 or 32 years before they arrested Peter and John and the lame man. They would remember that. They would remember that prior to that, they are in Bethlehem where they had sheep, these men had sheep who had been raised by shepherds, and those were the sheep that they would bring to the temple for the money changing and to have to purchase an offering. It was their business, their profits, they would remember that the shepherds said, "Wow, we saw a bunch of angels, all through the sky, and we went and worshiped this baby." They would remember that, and then some time after that, these men, these magi from the East showed up, these gentiles showed up inquiring as to where is the Christ? Herod ordered them into his palace, and they said, well he would be born in Bethlehem.

You see the Sadducees, the chief priests who are called in there, were offended by the men who are non Jews, who came to talk about their Messiah. They were offended! They didn't like what God was doing, or what somebody claimed God was doing. It was not

their concept of God, therefore they began to resist. Later, they would remember this. This only happened about 4 years prior to arresting Peter, John, and the lame man. Look at Matthew chapter 3. “In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,” and men, did he make a splash! People came out to hear him by the thousands. He was a national event! And he said, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” “For this is He who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah.”

Look at verse 7: “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father. “ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.” Who is this John? Who does he think he is? You sent out a delegation from the temple and they come back and tell us, “Hey, he said we are a bunch of snakes, and don’t worry about being the descendants of Abraham, that God can raise up people from stones to be the descendants of Abraham.” There were offended! Offended at John, offended at his teaching, offended at this concept of God, it wasn’t theirs. And they were protecting what they believed to be right.

They would remember that. They would remember the incident in John chapter 2. It happened just 3 and ½ years prior to arresting Peter, John and the lame man. In John chapter 2 Jesus came to town. It says, “Now, the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.” That’s them! That’s their business, that’s what they do! When Jesus had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changer’s money and overturned the tables, and Jesus said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

Well, they question Him! And Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” What!? It took 46 years for us to build this thing, what are you going to do in three days? But Jesus was talking about, Himself. They would think about that. They are not sleeping the night before the trial. They are not able to sleep. They maybe even sitting up in a chair, pondering these ideas, but you can’t run from your mind. You can’t run from yourself. And you can’t run from the convictions that God is bringing upon you. And there they sit, offended at the cleansing of the temple. They are offended by the men of the East, offended by John the Baptist, offended by the cleansing of the temple. They were also offended just a few months before, arresting John and Peter. If you go to Matthew chapter 21, this is fascinating! They had no limits to their offense.

In Matthew 21 verse 12, Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple. He cleansed the temple again! He cleanses it again; He says, “My house should be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.” Then notice what they get upset about. In verse 15 it says, “When the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that Jesus did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant.” They were angry, and said to Jesus, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them,

“Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?’” They are upset because Jesus has children singing in church. Imagine! They are praising Him, they are calling Him, or they are saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Which is an expression, “Save us, Son of David, save us Son of David!” They were offended at the children singing.

That night was a long night. That night was a dark night. That night was a horrible fear filled night. Because they remembered that after they had the deed done and Jesus died and He was buried, they went to Pilot. And they said, “Look, this guy said that He was coming out of that tomb, we got to sat a watch!” They remembered doing that! And they remember, you can read about it in Matthew 28, we will not be turning there, but soldiers, after Jesus is raised from the dead ran to the chief priest! And they tell them everything that had happened! “We saw an angel come down, we felt an earthquake, the angel opened the door, Jesus came out, some women came up, and they are all gone!” And these chief priests say, “Ah, look, look, here is what we want you to do. Here is some money, don’t ever say that to anybody, here is the money; what we want you to say is that you were sleeping, and while you were sleeping, His own followers came and took the body.”

“What about Pilate?” “Don’t worry about him, we’ll buy him off too. He doesn’t want this around anymore than you do.” And Matthew even says, by the time he writes his Gospel, years later he says, and some to this day still circulate this story that Jesus’ disciples took the body away. They remember that. This is just two months after that. This is a dark night. This is a night that is horrible and filled with fear. What are they going to do with the followers of Jesus? You know they thought it was over. But what they hadn’t learned is what one person wrote: “You can arrest the followers of Christ, but you can’t arrest the Gospel.” It’s the power of God in the salvation, and God won’t allow it to be stopped.

But what about Peter and John; what kind of night was it for Peter and John? What kind of night is it for believers when it’s a dark night and they are facing court in the morning? Called into court, they’ll have a trial. Let me ask you something? These are the very same people that Jesus stood in front of just a few months before. Do you think they are expecting justice? Do you think they are expecting people to be happy to see them? No, they are not! They are contemplating these things, and I believe they would think about some of the things Jesus taught them. Perhaps, in Matthew 10, please turn there. In Matthew chapter 10 Jesus had prophesied the vary thing.

You see what is happening now? Acts chapter 4 Peter and John and this lame man are the first arrest of any Christians because they are Christians. Persecution is beginning. Chapter 5 we’ll have the story of Ananias and Sapphira, but, you’ll also have Peter arrested again. Chapter 6 you’ll have Stephen in the discussion with some folks, and they’ll create lies about him, he is arrested. Chapter 7 is his defense, chapter 8 it will say the persecution was so bad; they had to flee Jerusalem. Persecution is beginning. They know it. They don’t know exactly how far it’s going to go, but I think they would have thought of this. Look at chapter 10 verse 16 of Matthew. Jesus is speaking, Jesus says:

“Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, therefore be as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. But beware of men for they will deliver you up to counsels and scourge you in their synagogues.” They got to be thinking about that.

It’s about to happen. “You’ll be brought before governors and kings for my sake, as a testimony to them and to the gentiles.” But notice this, “But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak, for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.” It is amazing what happens and I can’t wait until the next week sermon. Because these unlearned men, as the chief priests would call them, will stand before this court and they’ll say, “By what authority or by what name did you do this?” Peter, who ran, skied away from the face of a woman, will stand in front of these people and will say, “Look, you killed Him, God raised Him, we serve Him, His name is Jesus.” God speaks through him, powerfully, mightily. And I think on that dark night, they are thinking of these things.

You continue in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus says in verse 28, “Do not fear those who killed the body but can not kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body.” Verse 30, “The vary hears of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, you have more value than many sparrows.” Now verse 32, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, Him I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven.” So as they are there on that dark night, facing a trial, called into court, they must be thinking about the words of Jesus. They must be contemplating that Jesus said, “I’ll be with you!” They must be getting some hope that “He is going to tell us what to say. Our job is to confess Him before men. That’s what we’ll do. We’ll leave the rest to Him.”

Now the story takes a little bit of a strange twist when you think of a healed man, the man who was lame. Think of him! For 40 yrs. he’s been lame. Who knows for how many years he sat at this spot, probably decades? And it’s just another day. And he is asking for just another offering, more alms. And as he sits there, these two guys come walking by, ordinary looking guys. So he asks them for some money, and they say, “We don’t have any money, silver and gold have we not, but in the name of Jesus, rise up and walk.” I read an interesting comment about that verse. And some of you ministerial students, I want you to warp this and come up with a powerful sermon for us. Thomas Aquinas was called in to talk to the Pope, I believe it was Pope Innocent? And this is around 1200. And while he was in the presence of Pope, the Pope has money, he is counting money. And he looks up, and he says to Aquinas, “They can no longer say the church has no silver and gold.” And Aquinas said, “True, but they can also no longer say, rise up and walk.” Pretty powerful; that would be a great sermon, I hope to preach it some day. Man!

But here is this guy, he just wants some money. Next thing he knows, he is healed. Wahoo, he is leaping around and praising God, next thing he knows, he is hauled off into prison. “What did I do?” “You are going too!” So how dark of a night is this for him? “Man, I was just yesterday a poor cripple, and I now I am a prisoner.” I tell you, it’s the best thing that ever happened to him. Why? Think about it. You are sitting in a cell with Peter and John, all of you think you are going to die the next day, you’ve just been healed

in the name of Christ, what is your conversation going to be about? You are going to be asking all kinds of questions. Tell me about Jesus, tell me more stories, tell me about Him, what did He do here, why did He do that, you know, on and on and on. All through the night their hearts have been warmed by the thoughts, and the teachings and the actions of Jesus. And the idea that He is risen from the dead and He is coming back again, I tell you brothers and sisters, on that dark night the best thing that could happen to Peter and John was that lame man. And the best thing that could ever happen to that lame man is Peter and John. Because that lame man asking questions became a full fledged believer that night. And Peter and John answering questions became disciples that night, and their hearts were warmed again by the actions and the promises of God. And I will tell you in the dark nights that we face recall the promises of God, seek out somebody that you can share God with and you will be strengthened to face your trial the next day. You see that?

So the next day, these three men are called into court. We'll study next week what all takes place. I wrote a couple of questions here. Where do you turn on your sleepless nights? We all have them. You can't escape them in life. If you have children, you will have sleepless nights. What goes through your mind when tomorrow is stressing you? I encourage you brothers and sisters, think of the mercies and the goodness of God. In the dark of that night, a group of men laid awake, fearful, fretting, justifying themselves and their opposition to Christ. In the dark of that night, a group of men laid awake, speaking of the goodness, mercies and the love of God, committing themselves in the service to Christ.

One night, one event, two different experiences! Do you realize that's where we are today? All of us fit into this story. I know right now some of you have been fighting God. I know that. You haven't appreciated what He did and did not do in your life, or you just don't trust Him enough to commit your life to Him, so you are fighting Him. And you are seeking to justify your opposition to Him. And there are others of you, who aren't fighting Him, but hey, life is hard, and you have trials, you have darkness. Well for the first group, I want to encourage you, don't fight God. There is only one thing God is trying to do, do you know that? He is just trying to love you. Let God love you, you'll never regret it. And for those of you who are facing trials, and difficulties and pains, remember the promises of God. Remember His mercies in your life. Find someone to share God with, and when morning comes, you'll be ready. You'll be ready!

So, today, if you would like to accept Jesus as your Savior or if you would like to strengthen your experience in Christ, I am going to ask you to stand right where you are at.

Father in Heaven, here we are, same day, same place, and by Your grace, same experience. All of us, with Christ in our heart, we ask Him in at this time. We thank You and pray in His name, Amen.

