

“High Seas Expedition VBS --- Gilligan’s Galapagos’ or God’s Tour”

Acts 3:1-4:12

“And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.”

Acts 3:16

Acts 3:1-4:12

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o’clock in the afternoon.² And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.³ When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms.⁴ Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.”⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.⁶ But Peter said, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.”⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.⁸ Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God,¹⁰ and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon’s Portico, utterly astonished.¹² When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, “You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him.¹⁴ but you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you,¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.¹⁶ And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.¹⁷ “And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.¹⁸ In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,²⁰ so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus,²¹ who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets.²² Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you.²³ And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out of the people.’²⁴ And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days.²⁵ You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

4 While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them,² much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead.³ So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.⁴ But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand.⁵ The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem,⁶ with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.⁷ When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?”⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders,⁹ if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed,¹⁰ let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom

God raised from the dead. ¹¹ This Jesus is 'the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' ¹² *There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.*" ⁱ

(Note: This will be a first person sermon. The sanctuary is decorated like a sailing ship for VBS. I will be entering from the back singing "Amazing Grace" to the tune of "Gilligan's Island." My name is Captain Jack Seagull.)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...I once was lost but now am found, blind but now I see!

Oh, hello! Are you the group that's taking the tour with me? Welcome aboard the RRPC Holy Ghost High Seas Expedition. I'm Captain Jack Seagull. Relax, I've had a lot of experience on the high seas! You want to know my credentials? My great-great grandfather was Captain Jack Sparrow. Our family has been sailing the high seas for centuries. I have spent my whole life on the high seas looking for lost treasure. On one of my most famous tours I got to travel with Skipper and Gilligan and the rest of the gang on the S.S. Minnow. Maybe you heard about our little 3-hour tour on the S.S. Minnow—it shipwrecked and we were lost at sea for three years—or 98 episodes! Certainly you remember: Skipper, Gilligan, Mr. and Mrs. Howell III, Ginger, Mary Ann and the Professor? It was quite a comical tour. But...it's where I learned the song! Amazing grace—how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost---but now am found!

After being rescued with Gilligan and the crew, I set sea again for a two-day tour to the mysterious, enchanted Galapagos Islands—600 miles west of Ecuador. I made the trip a couple of years ago. Had to make the trip for myself; I didn't trust Darwin's "*Origin of the Species*" from 200 years ago. I had to experience God's creation for myself! You would not believe it: Iguanas, sea lions, albatrosses...did you know "Galapagos" means "tortoise"? You should see those turtles! And...of course, I had to see the red and blue-footed booby birds--totally amazing.

I have to tell you, Gilligan's tour was only supposed to be three hours but it ended up being three years! The Galapagos tour was only two days but I needed more like ten years to discover all of God's creation! But...this...this High Seas Expedition—I have to warn you—this trip could take the rest of your life!

I just returned from my first trip out. We had over 80 passengers, all of them little children formed into small groups: blue whales, hammerhead sharks, red crabs, ells, clown fish, and great white sharks! We also had a crew of over 50 salt-seasoned sailors. During the first cruise, they learned that God's Word is true! God's Word is comforting! God's Word is surprising! God's Word is life-changing! God's Word is for everyone!

Friends, you are going to be my second trip out to the High Seas! Ready? Set? Sail! Like I said, this High Seas Expedition is only supposed to last five days, but I think you need to know—it could last a lifetime! While we get to the high seas, let me tell you what we're going to learn. We are going to learn all about God's Word. God's Word is our compass! God's Word will give us our direction --- so my advice is that we put God's Word in our minds and hearts and we're sure to have clear sailing!

Since I have a captive audience, and the seas are pretty calm, let me tell you about another tour—about Peter and John and ten other disciples. They had just completed a 3-year tour...with Jesus, the Messiah-- Jesus, the one and only Son of God, who came to earth and lived among us. When Jesus arrived to do His work, he called together a crew of twelve ordinary men --- fishermen, a tax collector, some Zealots and others who had open hearts. For three years, this crew followed Jesus wherever He went--day and night, rain or shine, 24 hours a day, seven days a week for three years. Jesus performed miracle after miracle—while the disciples watched. He fed thousands; He healed lepers and gave sight to the blind! Jesus even took these 12 guys out on several boat tours across the Sea of Galilee. One time, the storm was so bad; the waves were crashing in and the boat was taking on water. I'm sure they thought they were going to drown—that's when they woke Jesus up! Jesus said to the winds and the waves, "*Peace, be still.*" And they were. Another time, Jesus sent the 12 of them out in a boat and told them that he'd meet them on the other side. Not long into their journey a storm comes up, waves crashing and winds blowing. Out of nowhere, comes Jesus walking on top of the water! Peter—he was the bold and daring one— hollers out, "*Lord, if it's you—let me come.*" Jesus told him to get out of the boat! And...he did!

Yep, this was quite the 3-year tour. Towards the end of it, Jesus was betrayed by one of His own. He was crucified, died and was buried in a borrowed tomb in Jerusalem. On the third day after his death, He rose... He rose ...from the dead...just like He said. Jesus stuck around for the next 40 days, talking with His disciples and followers, teaching them and telling them many things—and then He ascended into heaven—before He left, He instructed them to go to Jerusalem and wait. Ten days later, on Pentecost—when millions of people were gathered in Jerusalem—the Holy Spirit fell on the disciples—and filled them with holy boldness! My good friend, Pete, then preached his first sermon—and 3,000 became Christians that very day.

Not long after, Peter and John are on their way to the temple—to pray. They were still in Jerusalem, most likely just a few days after preaching on the steps of the temple. It's about 3 o'clock in the afternoon and this crippled guy—crippled from birth—is sitting at the Beautiful Gate, begging. This poor beggar had been taken to the temple gate all of his life. His only hope was that someone might have mercy on him and offer him a few coins so he could buy something to eat. Just think, year after year, how many people must have walked by that poor beggar!

Begging for a few coins, enough to get some bread for the day, what a life! Peter and John—now filled with the power of the Holy Spirit—had most likely walked by this beggar many times. Today is different and for the first time they stop and look straight at him. Pete hollers to the beggar, "Look at us." The crippled guy stops his clanging of the cup long enough to make eye contact with Peter. And Peter says to him, "***Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.***" Pete took him by the hand—and right before everyone's very eyes—his feet and ankles became strong...and immediately—the guy walked—and then he jumped, jumped, jumped— moved, moved, moved...and threw his hands to the roof, roof, roof! Oh, wait—I'm getting ahead of myself---you'll learn that song later this week.

It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon and all the people were gathering for prayer! Can you picture the scene? The temple, the place of worship and prayer, is filling up with people and the crippled guy is jump, jump,

jumping—move, move, moving—and raising his hands to the roof, roof, roof—praising God! The people gathered there recognized him—the old crippled guy at the Beautiful Gate! But he’s not crippled anymore! Everyone is filled with amazement and wonder. The crowd is astonished and they ask Peter, **“How can this be?”** Old Pete now gives the second sermon of his life and 5,000 men join the tour! Think about that --- 3,000 in one day and 5,000 in another—not too bad for an old fisherman whose faith got him out of the boat!

I have been thinking a lot about that three-year tour of Peter and John and the other disciples. I wonder what would happen if I got out of the boat? Would I be able to have eyes to see the poor, crippled people sitting at the gates of my church begging for the bread of life? Would I have the courage and the power to help them? What would happen if we all got out of the boat? What would happen if we really learned and believed that God’s word is true? That God’s word is comforting? That God’s word is surprising? That God’s word is life changing? That God’s word is for everyone?

So What?

So what--it looks we are getting close to our port of call! I’d better send you off with some good news!

Last week we were challenged to have our eyes and hearts open to help the poor in Ethiopia with a fresh-water well. We raised over \$3,000 dollars in one day. Once the well is built, an entire village will receive life-giving water because a group of God’s people had the faith to believe, and the eyes to see the poor beggars at the gate.

Here’s the real “so what” for today. Is your journey of faith a 3-hour tour; ship wrecked on Gilligan’s Island? Is your journey a two-day trip around the Galapagos? Where you only briefly take in all our God has created? Or...will your High Seas Expedition last a lifetime? As you all go ashore, remember that God’s word is true, God’s word is comforting, God’s word is surprising, God’s word is life changing and God’s word is for everyone!

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see...

Round Rock Presbyterian Church
Round Rock, Texas 78681
June 13, 2010 --- Vacation Bible School Sunday
Reverend David Peters

ⁱ *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. 1989 (Ac 3:1-4:12). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.