



# SERMON OF THE WEEK

## First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

### October 27, 2013

### "Is Jesus Your Plumb Line?" — Acts 4:1-31

### Karen Makishima

I thought that it might be fun to start off with the "Top 10 Reasons Why the Children's Director is Preaching the Sermon Today" David Letterman style. So here we go...

10. Because I won the first ever Senior Management Team Log Rolling Competition against Pastor Dan!

9. Because Halloween's around the corner and its time for something scary!!!

8. Are you kidding, the World Series is happening! Need I say more?

7. Every now and then we need a pretty face in the pulpit.

6. Because Pastor Drew randomly sneaks in a picture of his grandkids during his sermon and now it is my turn!

5. I actually volunteered to preach next week, but the elders were afraid that I would switch animal crackers and cheerios for the communion wafers.

4. Surfs up and Pastor Tim and his board have been mysteriously missing all week.

3. Pastor Dan wanted an early start on getting to Ko'olau Kitchen.

2. It's a lot easier to preach a sermon than to run a children's ministry.

And the #1 reason why the Children's Director is bringing today's message is:

1. Sometimes God's biggest blessings are little ones! (photo of children).

Seriously though, I am very honored to be able to bring God's Word to you this morning. If you have your Bible with you, please open it to the book of Acts chapter four.

If you have been with us over the past three weeks, you know that we have been digging into the powerful book of Acts. A lot of firsts are happening here. We are witnessing the beginnings of the first church, the first sharing of the gospel, the first persecutions, and the first sermon. Power abounds in this book.

But take note of this warning: More than likely whenever you see God's supernatural power, you will also see spiritual warfare happening. Today's passage will prove this to be true and will show us that when our Cornerstone is Jesus Christ, our foundation will remain firm in the midst of this warfare.

Through last week's scripture passage, we discovered that Peter and John were two ordinary guys, fishermen from Galilee, who were unschooled. They were at the

temple and healed a man who had been lame for over 40 years. This is where our passage today begins. But before we begin, would you pray with me?

Lord, quiet every voice but Yours. Help us to see this passage of scripture how You intended us to. Show us who You are. Show us Your incredible power. Show us just how much You love us—for we tend to forget. Lord I pray that as we allow Peter and John (just two ordinary guys) to mentor us that we would leave this place changed people—people who have chosen to make You as our cornerstone and people that choose to bring You glory. In Jesus' most powerful name we pray, Amen.

In chapter 4 of the book of Acts, verses 1-4, we find Peter and John (these are the same guys who healed the lame man) standing before the Sanhedrin, which is the Jewish Council.

*While Peter and John [a] 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.*

**T**he setting of this event is the temple in Jerusalem. The people have just been wowed by this supernatural healing of this man from their community whom they have seen for 40 years sitting at the temple gates begging for money. This man is no longer on the dusty ground. He's healed! The crowd is so intrigued, for the men who had performed this miracle were just ordinary fishermen. They had no formal education.

So at the temple we have the crowd and then we have the people who conduct the business of the temple. We have the priests and the captain of the temple guard, who is the right hand man to the high priest. This would be our Gary Toh to Pastor Dan. Their job was to provide oversight and to maintain order in the temple. The Sadducees were also present.

These wealthy religious liberals had tremendous influence in their community. They did not believe in the supernatural, which included the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Sadducees did not believe in the immortality of the soul, or the existence of a world to come. To quote an over-used pastor joke, "That is why they were sad, you see?"

Peter and John were proclaiming the hope of the world found in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Sadducees would have nothing to do with it. They rejected the hope of the world. They did believe that morality was important for civic order and that they needed to maintain this order so that they did not lose their power and wealth with the Roman government. They had no intent of bringing God glory. Their intent was to maintain their own powerful political status. To maintain order, they put John and Peter in jail until they could be tried the next day.

*5 The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, [b] and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family.*

These rulers are meeting together in a court called the Sanhedrin. So imagine with me the Sanhedrin Court, which is the Supreme Court of the Jews. It is made up of (71) members; the High Priest, who is the President; the Sadducees; (remember, these guys were priests with their own political agenda, scribes who were experts in the traditional law); Pharisees; (fanatics for the law, they too did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus but did believe in a resurrection to come in the future); Elders and Chief Priests (they basically had nothing in common except the demise of the Gospel). By the way, this is the same court that condemned Jesus to death.

*7 When they had made the prisoners [c] stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"*

Now remember, Peter and John are common fishermen and they are standing (with courage and confidence I might add) before the most wealthy, the most intellectual and the most powerful men in their community. (Tim Keller)

This powerhouse wants to know, "Who do you guys think you are?" You are nobodies. Where is this security and confidence coming from, they must be thinking. You see this Jewish Council's security was found in their intellect and now their intellect is proven to be inadequate.

*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, [d] whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead.*

Now this is frightening! Peter realizes what's at stake here. He can be thrown into prison. All of his possessions can be taken from him. He can be separated from those he loves. He can lose his freedom. He can even lose his life. But how can this happen to someone who is being so faithful to Jesus?

Aaaahhhh...but the apostles are experiencing what Christ had promised in Matthew 10.

*19 When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; 20 for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Peter continues by saying, *11 This Jesus [e] is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders; it has become the cornerstone.' [f] 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 want to camp out on these verses for just a minute. A cornerstone is used as a standard to ensure that everything is straight and level and is the foundation for which buildings and structures are firm.

Would you go back with me to the Old Testament for a moment?

**W**hen King Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem the stones for building the foundation could not be cut on the premise. He did not want the sound of tools to be heard for this place was holy and sacred. The workmen would take the exact measurement needed for the stone and shape it to the desired size in the quarry and bring the stones to the temple and then place them in the foundation.

Jewish legend tells of the builders searching for that one perfect stone to be used as the cornerstone for their temple. This stone had to be perfect. It needed to be one that would not crumble when it was exposed to the elements of weather. This stone had to be the right size and shape and bear the weight of the foundation. One stone was brought before the builders and it was rejected and tossed to the side for years being exposed to all the elements of the weather. As time went on this stone was pushed aside because it was in the way.

When the foundation was near completion there was one stone missing, the main stone, the cornerstone. They searched and searched until they found the rejected stone. They saw that this stone was strong and could bear the weight of the foundation and not crumble under pressure. This stone had endured the weather. As they measured and sized up the stone they realized that the stone that they had previously rejected was the cornerstone they needed. The stone fit!

The Bible uses the cornerstone as a symbol of Christ. We as God's chosen people become the stones of the living temple and Jesus becomes our cornerstone—our foundation. He bears the weight of our sins and gives us strength and confidence to face the pressures of the world. He connects us to God our Creator.

When we really know Jesus, He really does fit. He is like the missing piece that we all have been longing for. He fits!

Now a plumb line determines if a wall is perfectly vertical and was used by ancient builders.

Have you ever experienced a time in your life where you knew that your plumb line was out of alignment and Jesus Christ was not your cornerstone?

I remember a period in my life where I just couldn't figure life out. The circumstances that I was living in seemed sad and hopeless. When I was newly married I was very insecure as a new bride. I did not know how to feel and receive love and value from my husband. I would seek my security in my image.

I believed that if I could just lose ten pounds that my husband would love me more and then I would be secure with who I was, even though at the time the Body Mass Index Chart said that I was within the normal range. (Just a reminder. I'm not talking about now but when I was younger—38 years ago). I would become obsessed with every calorie that I consumed.

I continued to search and try all the newest diets to fix my current situation but I was left empty and sad. It was all based on my performance, which sometimes wasn't that great (especially if there was ice cream in the freezer). I found myself in territory that was shaky. I needed direction and security. I desired value and purpose. I needed to define a lens to use in how I viewed the world around me as well as how I viewed myself. The world with its values was telling me and pulling me one way that just didn't seem right. I needed help to put it all in

perspective because it all seemed so overwhelming and senseless.

I read Stephen Covey's book, "7 Habits for Highly Effective People". This book gave me strategies to define a personal mission statement so that no matter what circumstances were happening in my life, I was certain of whom I was and *whose* I was. I decided that I needed an anchor, something strong; something that wasn't going to bail when the going got tough; something that was going to keep me grounded when everything important could be taken away from me; something reliable. I wanted Jesus Christ as my cornerstone.

Covey states, "Whatever is at the center of our life will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom and power."

He continues to share that, "Our security represents our sense of worth, our identity, our emotional anchorage, our self-esteem, our basic personal strength or lack of it."

You see we are all builders in this life. Every person has a cornerstone that determines our confidence, our security, and where we get our wisdom. Some of us have been found guilty of building our cornerstone on good things such as relationships, education, employment, wealth or even political issues. But each of these avenues will leave us feeling disappointed because it is not the ultimate thing.

Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. The gospels point to these other things and say that it's inadequate. Maybe today the Holy Spirit is saying to us that the cornerstone we have been using is inadequate.

It's like a carpenter who did not use the right plumb line when putting up siding on a house. The carpenter had good intentions & good siding but the results are out of alignment and basically they end up with a mess.

But here is the good news, folks. The character of God is love and it is this God who desires to be in relationship with us. He sent Jesus Christ to meet us where we are at in this mess. His grace gives us the courage to tear it all off and to begin again—this time using Jesus as our plumb line. He desires to be our cornerstone. When Jesus Christ is our cornerstone He gives life to all good things.

*13 Now when they (Sanhedrin Court) saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus.*

Not only had they been with Jesus, but Jesus was their cornerstone no matter what circumstance they were encountering. I love that later on in this chapter we hear how Peter and John didn't ask for God to change their circumstance around them, but prayed for boldness and courage to with stand it and walk through it!

Now remember, that this same Peter was the coward who denied Christ three times. But what happened? What changed? They had been with Jesus for three years, but it wasn't until they experienced Jesus' resurrection that they had His power through the Holy Spirit. They now have Christ within themselves.

In John 16:7 Jesus is speaking and he says, *"Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate (which is the Holy Spirit) will not come to you; but if I go, I will*

*send him to you. <sup>8</sup> And when he comes, he will prove the world wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment:*

The book of Acts is all about how the Holy Spirit gives us direction. Maybe some of us have been living on our own power not recognizing Jesus for who He is. The power of the Holy Spirit gives us strength in the midst of sorrow, wisdom to know what to do when we are at a cross road, and joy to know whose we are.

We too, like Peter and John, can have fearless confidence when our cornerstone is Jesus Christ no matter what circumstance we have in our lives.

Maybe we are here today realizing that we need to realign our plumb line to have Jesus Christ as our cornerstone.

Maybe wealth has been our cornerstone and we have built our business on profit. What would our business' look like if we built it on Christ? How would we treat our customers?

Maybe our cornerstone has been politics. What would it look like if we were compelled to stand up for justice and righteousness in the world through the political arena but with Jesus Christ as our cornerstone? What would our words sound like and what would our actions be?

Maybe we have made education our cornerstone and we are passing this on to our children and grandchildren stressing over the importance of high achievement. How would our families be different if we built our life on Jesus Christ and we were dedicated to assisting the Holy Spirit in building our children's lives to have Christ as their cornerstone?

There is nothing wrong with wealth, education, and having a political voice. All these things are good things but they are not the ultimate thing.

In closing please hear this gospel message of Hope. God's big plan is that He sent His one and only Son into the world to become our cornerstone. Because of His love for us by enduring the cross for our salvation, our confidence, our identity and our security are found in Him. When we allow the Holy Spirit to live within ourselves we too, like Peter, have Christ within us. Christ within us is COURAGE! Christ within us is WISDOM! Christ within us is POWER! Christ within us is our cornerstone!

Let's pray. God, we are your chosen people. Fill us with fearless confidence through Your powerful gift of the Holy Spirit who transforms us from being cowards to people of courage. Give us the wisdom and discernment to recognize and ward off Satan's strong holds on our lives for He desires to thwart this fearless power. Lord, as a community of believers help us to encourage each other to turn to Your big plan when our circumstances seem overwhelming by putting You as our cornerstone. As we leave Your house today, we pray that we would be a light into our community by glorifying You! We love You, Lord. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

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*Note: Karen Makishima is an Elder and the Director of Children's Ministries of First Presbyterian Church of Hon. Sunday sermon texts are also found at [fpchawaii.org](http://fpchawaii.org). The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes or [fpc.posterous.com](http://fpc.posterous.com). It can also be sent to you by e-mail by request at: [fpchkoolau@gmail.com](mailto:fpchkoolau@gmail.com)*