

No Other Name

✦ **Answers our questions** (vv.8-10)

✦ **Saves our souls** (vv.11-12)

In the name of Christ-crucified and risen, dear fellow redeemed, loved by God:

Who would have thought that we would have to cancel church on the 3rd SUNDAY OF EASTER because of blizzard warnings? This is springtime in Minnesota! Where are the flowers? Have you seen any birds wearing mukluks and wing coats? What frosts me is how some weather forecasters can still blame this on “global warming”! Some at least say, “Climate change,” but they contend two claims: We can predict and we can prevent. Their prediction of blizzards until 7:00 AM Sunday morning fizzled into snow flurries Saturday night. Skies were clear with only a few flakes on the Lord’s Day. Could we all have made it to church? Our Property Committee guys were standing by to clear us out. My point is that our best technology cannot predict 48 hours of local weather. How can we go global for centuries much less control the weather? Aren’t you glad “*our help is in the name of the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth*” (Psalm 124:8 NIV84)? Compared to human failure, I’m grateful there is **No Other Name**.

✦ **Answers our questions** (vv.8-10)

We have questions; God has answers. For instance, if our country were overrun by a foreign army, if you were one of the religious leaders who thought you’d rid yourself of a troublesome rabbi from Nazareth, you’d have questions. If his followers said he was alive and kept doing miracles in his name, you’d have serious questions. The power to heal a crippled beggar who had never taken a step could only come from God – then or now. He’s not stumbling around. He’s walking and leaping and praising God. You arrest those followers and put them in jail for making you look bad in public. Come the morning light, you have questions: *They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”* (Acts 4:7 NIV84)

That should have been a safe question. Only ten weeks earlier the lead disciple Peter vehemently denied even knowing Jesus. Surely this whole Jesus-incident can just go away! Shocking answer: *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel, ⁹if we are being questioned today for a kind act that was done for the lame man, as to how this man has been healed, ¹⁰let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that it was by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead!”* (EHV ¹) Peter has gone from a cursing denier of Christ to a bold confessor. Question: What could make you so bold?

Did you catch the “you” versus “God” part? Jewish religious leaders had set themselves up as enemies of God. That can’t be good. But there’s something about how Peter answers their question that wants to win them over to God’s side. The God of grace still wants them to repent and believe the Good News. The Messiah they murdered has risen from the dead in mercy for them too. Today is the day!

“The world is bound to crucify whatever is of God.” ² Yet God keeps reaching out with kindness beyond our imagination. Another Apostle named Paul will write under inspiration by the same Holy Spirit that filled Peter: “*[Jesus] was handed over to death because of our trespasses and was raised to life because of our justification.*” (Romans 4:25 EHV) Jesus not only died *for* us, He was raised *because*

¹ EHV ~ *Evangelical Heritage Version*, the Wartburg Project. Northwestern Pub. House, © 2017. Order: 800-662-6022.

² Martin Luther quoted by Rev. Ed Schuppe, in Bible Study for Missionaries Conference at Wisconsin Dells, 10/06/2003.

God justified us on the cross. Easter is God's neon sign, His spotlight on all the **answers** to our guilt and fear. God has declared a world of sinners, "Not guilty!" In all his preaching after Pentecost (Acts 3:15; 4:2,10; 10:41f) Peter left no doubt that the Lord's Christ, Israel's Messiah was raised from the dead. Peter boldly witnessed that his risen Lord could heal crippled beggars as easily as He will judge the living and the dead. Peter and other chosen witnesses ate and drank with Jesus after He rose from the dead.

Every day is a good day to recognize this reality. There is no question here: You versus God – not a healthy contest under any circumstances. In one of his model sermons Martin Luther had a great quote: "Right here let us be careful not to cheat ourselves with the false idea that salvation cannot escape us. Let it not be with us as befell the children of Israel, of whom it is said in Psalms 95:11 and Hebrews 4:3 that because of their unbelief they entered not into the rest of God. They would not accept their opportunity in the forty years wherein he gave them his Word and showed them his wonders, daily admonishing them and calling to repentance and faith. They but tempted and provoked him the more. Hence another admonition was given the people of God and a certain day appointed: *'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'* (Hebrews 4:7) [NIV84] Every day for us is *'today'* and we are permitted to hear God's voice still imploring us not to waste the time."³ There is **No Other Name** that...

✦ Saves our souls (vv.11-12)

After centuries of waiting God controlled not only the weather, but human history to keep His promise and send the world a Savior through the Jewish people. Peter is quoting from Psalm 118 to the Jewish religious leaders in their Supreme Court of the Sanhedrin. They are interrogating Peter and John for healing a lame beggar in the temple. Most likely Jesus sang Psalm 118 for the Passover with His disciples in the upper room on Maundy Thursday. He sees the cross looming, yet sings, *"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."* Then Jesus willingly gave His life to rescue us all. *"This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone."* (EHV)

Ancient builders would naturally set aside an odd shaped or oversized stone for the walls of a major building. But that might be just the stone they needed to set at the head of the corner. What we call the "cornerstone" would determine how all the other stones were lined up. Or it might be the keystone of an arch on which all the weight of the building above would rest. Scripture uses picture language for both – someone tripping over a *cornerstone*, or someone on whom the *capstone* would fall. That's Jesus.

See how the things of Jesus are lowly and despised, especially the sacred acts which He instituted as Sacraments? Water that washes away sins? Yes, when coupled with God's Word of promise. Wafer and wine that gives forgiveness of sins, new life and salvation? Yes, to all who believe Jesus when He says, *"This is my body...This is my blood."* God the Holy Spirit purposely chooses what looks so lowly and despised to human intelligence. A world of religious leaders still react like a school bus driver in our church parking lot with so many questions. But kindly pointing him to the Means of Grace only made him angry. "That's too simplistic!" he snapped, as he slammed the window and drove away.

Yet by these lowly, despised acts in **No Other Name**, Jesus powerfully graces our hearts. By this Good News God miraculously **Saves our souls**. Literally, *"Nothing exists as a way of salvation in any other..."* Peter emphasizes the absolute certainty of Christ alone by piling up negatives: *"There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved."* (EHV) The "name"-reputation of Jesus is God's *gift* that brings salvation by grace through faith alone. Christ-powered healing to a forty-year-old cripple still brings threats from religious and worldly leaders alike. We need the boldness of clear, convincing proclamation of Christ-crucified and risen. Our witness comes in words and offerings to keep our personal and congregational commitments. We too can count on such stouthearted gifts from God who promises, *"I am the Lord your God....Open wide your mouth and I will fill it."* (Psalm 81:10 NIV84) Pray, praise, give thanks for **No Other Name**. Amen.

³ Luther's *Postil*. John Nicholas Lenker, ed. Baker Book House, re-printed 1988, Vol. VIII, p. 323.