

**Sunday, April 22, 2018 – 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter/Full of Faith IV**  
**“Urgent!”**

Acts 4: 1-12

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Frame and Refrain Structure

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

This message is marked “Urgent.” Literally, it’s the name of this sermon! We’re continuing in a sermon series that started on Easter Sunday, four weeks ago called Full of Faith – what it looks like to live in the joy and confidence of this truth – Jesus, who is God, is risen, lives and is coming again – that gives our lives some meaning, purpose and hope beyond ourselves. Today we’re zeroing in on the centrality of God’s mission and what we’re all about, and it’s summed up well in the last verse from that reading in the book of Acts – in those first weeks after Jesus resurrection we have Peter, one of Jesus’ disciples, talking to some angry religious leaders who arrested him and are asking them to stop telling people that Jesus is God: “And there is salvation found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

And what we need to understand is that this mission – God’s mission, sending out His people to tell the world about God’s love and that Jesus is the only name by which we can be saved is the very reason that we are here. For people who are already connected to the Church, it’s to continue to pour out God’s gifts of forgiveness, encouragement and hope day in and day out. For our larger community, it’s that we’re here to let northwest Las Vegas know that truth. Everything that happens around here is orbiting that one central purpose, and I think it’s good to harp on that, to the point of everyone saying, “Yes, we know!”

I know today we have many preschool families with us in worship. Many of you have churches where you worship already – that’s awesome. There are a ton of reasons why you may have chosen to enroll your child here – good word of mouth. Liked the teachers. Like the educational philosophy. Feeder school to Faith Middle School and High School. Close to home, close to work. Or maybe you like that there is a religious, or at least moral underpinning to what is going on here. No matter the reason we’re glad you’re here and we get the responsibility that we have in your entrusting your children to our care and we’re glad that you’re here, and we love you and your family, no matter what.

Know this, too – the whole reason Mountain View exists, church and school all-inclusive is that we want people to know that salvation is found in no one else other than Jesus. That’s what motivates Miss Donna and the preschool staff, and it’s what motivates Mr. Schneider and the elementary staff

and it's what motivates me and our congregation. It's the whole reason we have a school at all – we're here to connect with your kids, and your family so that you will know Jesus as the only way to be saved.

I might have offended by saying that, please understand I'm not trying to offend or be provocative, but I really believe that, and the high stakes and priority of God's mission compels me to speak that urgent word, at risk to ourselves and our reputation and our enrollment or church attendance, because we believe that connection with Jesus is THE single most vital thing in the world – more than food and water and air.

I think most of the grownups in here know Penn Jillette, Penn of Penn & Teller, the magic show duo at the Rio. In addition to being a long running entertainment piece on the Strip, Penn is also outspoken in his atheism. In a video you'll see in just a second, he describes an interaction with a very sincere, respectful fan after the show who gave him a Bible. Now it didn't do anything to convince Penn of the validity of Jesus' divinity or His resurrection, but Penn did have deep respect for the gesture. Listen to this: **\*Penn Jillette video\***

So if I offended you earlier, please get this: How much would I have to hate you not to share that news! I think that's chilling and convicting for any Christian who has ever felt embarrassed or didn't want to bother someone to tell them about Jesus and to live on God's mission.

The call, with risk and healthy recklessness is to turn toward the people in love with urgent news even when it seems that it seems like offense or rejection or even harm might be in the offering, because we believe **“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

So this is something we take seriously at Mountain View. One big move that we're making is to create more interpersonal spaces for people to get together around the Bible and rub shoulders with some other people in a venue that gives you a chance to talk, get to know each other, open up, because when you have a couple hundred people in the room that doesn't work. Twice a year we have a group that meets called the On-Ramp, that covers some basic teachings of Christianity – it's meant as a place to dig in, explore, get to know some people – I hope you'll come join us. A new group for people in their 20s and 30s started this last week on Wednesday nights at 7. We're also moving into small groups that are meeting in people's homes over a little food and reading a book

together or watching a video series together tackling some spiritual questions. In fact a major focus of the new pastor search that we're doing is to start a new model of discipleship called Rooted at our church – these are small groups that are intended to be a safe place for people from every walk, whether you were raised in a Christian home and know your Bible front and back or whether you're searching and exploring – but the idea is that we're not just sitting around getting to know each other, we're developing disciplines to read our Bible, we're talking about deep stuff, we're active in loving our community and being on mission, we're growing in prayer life.

So too, piggybacking on last week's message about a life Full of Faith in God coming first in all things, including our finances, this is something we live out. 10% of the money collected in our worship through the offering plates or EasyTithe goes to support our various mission partners. Most of that is local – our Mission Society that supports new ministries here in Las Vegas, Faith Middle School and High School, Concordia in Irvine, CA, as well as partnerships with a young man named Michael Ersland, who lives in Ghana and is helping translate the Bible into a language that has never had the Scriptures in their language. And when emergencies come up like at 1 October or for disaster relief in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico there's that, too, above and beyond that 10%.

But God's mission is bigger than Mountain View and bigger than congregations and what they plan and organize. It applies to us personally and to our families, too. Parents – your children are part of God's mission, and you – not the pastor, not the church, not confirmation when they get older, not letting them choose what feels right to them – you are the one God has entrusted with that mission to share the urgent news that salvation is found in no one other than Jesus. It is not only your responsibility, it is your main responsibility – before their being well adjusted, or academics or responsible citizens or sports leagues.

You don't have to go anywhere to be on God's mission. Did you know that only two other countries, China and India, have more people who do not believe in Jesus than the United States? We are the third most unchurched country in the world. We are also in a borderland region of cultural spheres. The West Coast of the United States is the northern border of the Global South. Immigrant communities from Latin America, Africa and southeast Asia are infusing the Church in North America with vital life and energy. At the same time we are the eastern border of Asia. All you have to do to

interact with global cultures is step outside your door. **“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”**

And know this, too: God’s mission is needed by everyone. If you’re older and grew up in the church, your concept was probably “sending missionaries to Africa.” Well, that was very successful. So much so that Africa and the rest of the Global South is increasingly a leader not only numerically but also in leadership in global Christianity. Just among Lutherans, there are more Lutherans in Ethiopia than in the United States. In the next couple of decades, a majority of world Lutherans are expected to be African. On a global scale, there have never been more Christians than there are today. Now, more missionaries are coming this way than “going there,” especially pastors and evangelists targeted at immigrant peoples from their countries of origin.

These are voices worth not only hearing but learning from. Let’s be students and learn from these brothers and sisters. This new discipleship model called Rooted actually comes out of Nairobi, Kenya – here we often start with the head before we extend our hand and then we can reach the heart – let’s change up that order – hand, heart, then people will be receptive to the head. We’re changing absolutely nothing about how we believe and teach, but this is a mission field and we need to understand our culture. How will someone trust you to be propositional with them before they know that they’re welcome and wanted and they know you and trust you?

When you come down to it, theirs is no one that God’s mission doesn’t apply to – His mission is for everyone to know Jesus. If you know Jesus and you receive His gifts in Word and Sacrament, that mission is working for you and guarantees you salvation. If you don’t know Jesus, let’s talk! Let’s have some conversation. It’s what we’re here for – there’s absolutely nothing more important that we have to do than share about Jesus with you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.