

**“Potency”** Sermon for April 22, 2018,  
Acts 4:5-12, Psalm 23, John 10:17-18

strength, influence, effectiveness: force, power  
b: the quality or state of being potent

One of the greatest comedy teams in early American movies were two men who couldn't have been more different: Englishman Stan Laurel and American, Oliver Hardy - "Laurel and Hardy". For almost 30 years these two provided powerful slapstick comedy.

One of Laurel and Hardy's trademark lines was Ollie saying to Stanley - "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten me into." We can imagine John looking at the Apostle Peter and saying those same words - "Well, here's another nice mess you've gotten us into." Perhaps we may have thought or projected, "Well, God, here's another mess our discipleship has created for us."

Peter and John encountered a crippled man in front of the temple. He was reduced to begging on the streets. Powerless, he had fallen through the cracks. However, instead of giving him a handout, the disciples gave him something greater, a “hand-up.” Like them he needed a gift, a freedom from his physical oppression, just as Christ’s resurrection had given them freedom from what had limited their lives. For this potent demonstration of power, the authorities had Peter and John arrested. Like Laurel and Hardy, found themselves in “another nice mess.”

The “Way of Christ” was growing and expanding. It had potency-real lasting power. It had the ability to change things, to stir things up, to attract thousands of people and to generate enthusiasm around Jesus as the Christ. This potency was the result of the resurrection, of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Over 3,000 were baptized all around the Temple that day alone. It was for this that they were arrested.

*St. Luke tells us in verse 8, ...Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit" said to them ....12 Salvation is found in no one else; there is no other name under heaven given to humans by which we must be saved.*

Peter did not attack his audience nor did he attempt to proclaim his innocence. He did exactly what

Jesus had told his disciples in Matthew 10:19-20:

*But when they hand you over, don't worry about how to respond or what to say. In that hour, you will be given what to say. For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

When Jesus said that His Holy Spirit would teach us, lead us and guide us, he really meant that the Holy Spirit would be a powerful force in our lives, that God's potency, not our weakness would prevail.

Peter's message here as not one of exclusivity, denying the power and faith of other religious ideas. Certainly, Peter believed as a Jew that "salvation

was of the Jews.” Nevertheless, he was saying to the Sanhedrin Council of theological liberals (the Sadducees), evangelicals (the Pharisees) and fundamentalists, (the scribes), that salvation was not about keeping the law of Moses or the religious rituals of Judaism. It was not in understanding the futuristic ideas of the prophets. Salvation was not to be found in David or Abraham or Jacob or Joshua, nor was it to be found in the mystical allegorical meanings of Jewish writings. Salvation was to be experienced in the encounter of powerlessness with power, of weakness with God’s strength, of sickness with healing, of loneliness and separation with acceptance and love. This is our power. God has made us potent to raise up a new heaven and a new earth. We are the potency to give life to all. Amen.