

Choosing the Way of God  
Acts 5:27-32  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
April 27, 2025  
Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

Chris Dorsey, President of Disciples Home Missions, one of our denomination's general ministries, recently wrote this, "The message of hope that Easter brings is eternal and it is also concretely woven into our actions as Christians. We are Easter People! We sing about the resurrection and the new life that comes with our faith in Jesus Christ. But the resurrection also inspires us to go forth in mission, caring for those in need, and being part of God's plan to transform the world toward greater justice and mercy. We have the power and the responsibility to make a difference; to give of our resources as we can, and to act to help others who are in need. May we continue to be the Easter people that God calls us to be, in this season of resurrection! (Chris Dorsey, in "President's Letter," Disciples Home Missions April Newsletter, April 21, 2025)

So, here's our first reminder. Easter is not a day, but a season. In fact, Easter is a season that goes for seven weeks as we journey toward Pentecost. And this seven weeks is an opportunity for us to continue to practice resurrection, to continue to do the things that bring life, that offer love, that nurture wholeness. It is an opportunity for us to use our power...not just for ourselves, but for all.

So, throughout the season of Easter we are going to be reading passages from the book of Acts. You might remember that the book of Acts, understood to be a sequel to the Gospel of Luke, authored by the same person, is a book that tells the story of the early church. So, in reading Acts, we are reading stories of those early followers having to figure out what distinguishes them, what it means to be followers of The Way, what it means to live and act on behalf of Jesus.

So, what's going on in the passage we read today?

Well, this story really begins earlier in the chapter, back in verse 12. We find the apostles gathering, gaining attention, and attracting new people to the Jesus movement. Additionally, people were being healed...and what is more attractive than that?

So, that sounds good, right? We have been known to cheer on the early church whenever we read that more people are being attracted to it.

However, those in power around the Jesus movement - those with both political and religious power - they weren't so sure.

After all, gatherings could be dangerous. People listening to the apostles...that could be dangerous, too. Another movement, especially one embracing Jesus' radical ideas - remember those ideas got him killed - that could be a lot to control.

So, here is this movement, gaining attention, making a difference in people's lives, *and* disrupting the systems. We should not be surprised when, in verse 18, the apostles were put in prison.

Of course if you go back and read the whole story, you will discover that Luke tells us the earthly powers put them in prison, but an angel of the Lord let them out. And so soon, the apostles were again gathering and preaching and gaining attention.

Now, if you can be sympathetic to the authorities, then it is no wonder they were frustrated.

So, this story culminates in the reading we heard today. It's a conversation between those in the official seats of power and the apostles who were living and teaching about the power of Jesus.

And it comes down to these words from Peter and the other apostles: *We must obey God rather than any human authority* (Acts 5:29, NRSVUE).

Again, we are in the Easter season. And we are reminded that resurrection is not just about a promise of heaven after our death. Resurrection is a claim that God's ways are more powerful than the ways of any earthly power. It is a claim that we are called to keep living each day in the ways of Jesus as we work to bring about God's kin-dom. It is a claim that we can make a difference in our world, in both big and small ways, as we practice resurrection.

Political historian Heather Cox Richardson spoke just over a week ago at Boston's Old North Church where lanterns lit in the church steeple 250 years ago resulted in the beginning of the Revolutionary War. In telling that story she said, "The work of Newman and Pulling to light the lanterns...[doesn't sound heroic]. They agreed to cross through town to light two lanterns in a church steeple. It sounds like such a very little thing to do, and yet by doing it, they risked imprisonment or even death. It was such a little thing - but it was everything" (<https://www.facebook.com/heathercoxrichardson>, April 18, 2025 post)

I wonder when that might be said of us as we live out our faith.

I wonder what the "little things" we are called to do are.

I wonder how choices we make in our daily lives have the potential to make a difference for others.

I wonder how, when we listen to the heart of God, we can use our power to make systems more just and more compassionate.

Marilyn McEntyre, in a lectionary blog for *The Christian Century* writes this, "In this week's passage from Acts, the disciples are hauled up before a council of men whose

collective authority would likely have intimidated most of their peers. I am struck by the peace, simplicity and boldness of the disciples' quiet disobedience.

She goes on saying, "It seems a timely example for those who believe we have a role in resisting abuses of power in government, media, multinational corporations, schools, churches, families. Jesus calls us to live in paradox, to lose our lives to save them, to recognize when 'no' is the only way to say 'yes.' The disciples' courage seems to come not only from their sure and certain love, but also from their absolute clarity. 'We must' is a simple statement of fact spoken, I imagine, without a fist in the air but rather with the deep calm that can come only from peace that passes understanding ([A subversive message of peace: Marilyn McEntyre blogs the lectionary | The Christian Century](#)).

Friends, the early followers of Jesus weren't the only ones who were called to choose the way of God. We, too, in a million different ways have the opportunity to do so.

So, how is God calling you?

Where are you asked to use your power to make a difference for others?

What little acts might you do that will bend the arc of history toward justice?

When are the times when the heart of God asks you to stand in confident resistance even if it means risk to yourself?

How are you listening to God so that you know when you must say "no" and in doing so, say "yes" to resurrection?

From one moment to another our answers may differ. Choosing love over fear, rest over productivity, truth over lies, kindness over suspicion, resistance over submission...these and many others may be the choices that we face. The challenge for us, as Easter people, is to be listening so that with the deep confidence of the disciples we, too, may say, "I will choose the way of God." May it be so.