

World Upside Down: The Book of Acts

Acts 4:23-37

1. How we doing?

2. Faced with chaos, the Christian community collects in prayer (vv. 23-24).

[4] Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. [5] Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; [6] do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [7] And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (ESV)

- Philippians 4:4-7

Collect (<i>Berekah</i>) Element	Verse
Address	"Sovereign Lord..." (v. 24)
Rationale	"...who made the heaven & the earth..." (vv. 24-28)
Petition	"...grant to your servants...boldness..." (v. 29)
[Benefit]	N/A
Conclusion	"...through the name of your holy servant Jesus" (v. 30)

[23] In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.

- John 16:23

[20] For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

- 2 Corinthians 1:20

3. The Old Testament is interpreted through a Jesus-shaped lens (vv. 25-28).

“Anointed” = *Christos/M’shiach*

[44] Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” [45] Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, [46] and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

- Jesus, in Luke 24:44-47

4. Free & fearless confidence (*parresia*) is a corollary to faith in Christ (v. 29).

- Repeated theme in Acts: 4.13, 9.27, 14.3, 19.28, etc.

In [Him] we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

- Ephesians 3.12:

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

- Hebrews 4.16

By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.

- 1 John 4:17

“Our Father who art in heaven.” *What does this mean?*

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that He is our true Father and that we are His true children, so that with all

boldness and confidence we may ask Him as dear children ask their dear father.

- Small Catechism III.1

5. Witness flows from worship (v. 31).

“In the rhythm of action and speech, witness and worship, the church discovers the source of its life.”

- William Willimon

6. The church is a jubilee community (vv. 32-37).

You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. [11] For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’

- Deuteronomy 15:10–11:

[13] For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness [14] your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. [15] As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”

- 2 Corinthians 8:13–15

“Freely you have received; freely give.”

- Jesus, in Matthew 10.8

7. The congregation is the hermeneutic of the good news.

Great grace » Great power

“How is it possible that the gospel should be credible, that people should come to believe that the power which has the last word in human affairs is represented by a man hanging on a cross? I am suggesting that the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of men and women who believe it and live by it... Insofar as the local congregation is true to its calling, it becomes the place where men and women and children find that the gospel gives them the framework of understanding, the ‘lenses’ through which they are able to understand and cope with the world.”

- Leslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*