

## Take me to your leader!

- Famous SF catch-phrase!
  - aliens arrive on a strange planet, and ask the locals to "Take me to your leader!"
- For we know that **who's in charge**, who has the power, who has authority - it **matters**
- The passage we are looking at this morning is all about power:
  - indeed, all about a contest between two powers!
- On the one hand, **human and religious power**, and on the other hand **God's power** working through the disciples

## Human & Religious Power

- Remind ourselves of the human and religious power first:
  - Romans in real charge in Palestine;
  - much resented by populace, but accommodated to some degree;
  - Jewish leadership really rests in the religious leaders, the Temple priests, the Sadducees and the Pharisees
  - in particular, the Sanhedrin, the ruling council, was where decisions were taken
  - within the Sanhedrin there would be priests, Sadducees, Pharisees, hard-liners and moderates, fanatics and pragmatists...
  - religious leaders accommodated Romans, tolerated them to retain the limited autonomy they did enjoy
- Palestine volatile; revolt never far away:
  - ancient Jewish faith tolerated by the Romans, but any sects, any breakaways stamped on hard!!
  - interpreted as a more explicit threat to the authority of Rome, the name of the Emperor

### Sensitive time!!

- People in power wanting to cling on to it, to control other people!
  - this is the worst side of human, and even religious power
  - power that is rooted in fallen human hearts
  - power that issues in essentially selfish ways

## Power to Heal

- Its into this cauldron that the healing of the lame man in chapter 3, through Peter and John's ministry, comes:
  - and comes as a challenge!
  - for the healing was in the name of Jesus Christ, one who the human powers had sought to stamp out, annihilate
  - but whose disciples hadn't rolled over and given up when the leader was executed!
  - in fact, they claimed he was alive!
- These disciples come saying, "**You're power is a false power - real authority does not belong to you, but to Jesus!**"
- Demonstrably the name of Jesus has power to heal:
  - **v.10** - "stands before you healed"
  - **v.16** - "Everybody living in Jerusalem knows they have done an outstanding miracle, and we cannot deny it"
  - **v.22** - "For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old." (**ie, past it and even harder to heal!**)
- A power that the religious and human authorities did not possess

## Power to Save

- Peter goes on to make the obvious connection:
  - if Jesus' Name is able to **heal**, it is able to **save too!**
  - He is no mere wonder worker, now departed
  - He is alive and his power is still at work!
- Before Jesus died he healed, not to draw attention to himself but:
  - (a) out of compassion for those in need
  - (b) as a sign of the kingdom's arrival, a kingdom of wholeness, of compassion
- If he is still healing, that Kingdom is still present... and he is its King, the Saviour, the Messiah!
- So the one who these self-same religious authorities rejected in the most final manner, having him crucified, is the one who now bridges the gap between God and man:
  - Roman viaducts - arches - capstone holds the weight of the stone, makes the connection
  - Jesus is that capstone, that connection between God and man
- In him **alone** is the power to defeat sin, conquer death:
  - and there is no question that his power is up to the task!

## Power to Speak

- The power that was at work in Peter and John was not simply the spectacular (**healing**), or the fundamental, under the surface power to **save** them:
  - it was also a power that **transformed** the disciples;
  - they were markedly different because of their contact with Jesus
  - what stood out for the well educated religious authorities was their courage to stand before the council and speak out
  - they were unschooled, ordinary men - possibly unable to read, with very little access to anything outside their own direct experience
  - **and yet "stumping" the Sanhedrin!!**

## Conclusion

- At the end of this incident, the debate is still raging:
  - **we'll meet more of it in future weeks...**
  - the power of the Sanhedrin, or the power of Jesus?
  - who will you trust?
- Some decided one way (**v.4, many who heard the message believed**), others another (**v.2 "they were greatly disturbed"**)
  - but the challenge is on the table, decision time is coming, which way will we go?
  - will we be those who put our trust in the power of institutions, government, networking, grant awarding bodies, even the power of the people who make up a community?
  - the power of human effort...
    - **or will we be those who put our trust in the power of God, the power of God to heal, to work in the reality of a person's life, the power of God to save, to free from sin and restore relationship with God, and the power of God to transform us, here to empower to speak?**
- Take me to your leader...
  - (**v.13 "they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus"...**)