

Series: How Jesus Acts through Us Today; *Sermon:* **What Do You Do when Things Go Wrong?** delivered by **Josh Moody**, senior pastor, on June 28, 2020

Bible text explored: Acts 12:1–25

¹About that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. ²He killed James the brother of John with the sword, ³and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. ⁴And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. ⁵So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

⁶Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison. ⁷And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, “Get up quickly.” And the chains fell off his hands. ⁸And the angel said to him, “Dress yourself and put on your sandals.” And he did so. And he said to him, “Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.” ⁹And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. ¹¹When Peter came to himself, he said, “Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.”

¹²When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl named Rhoda came to answer. ¹⁴Recognizing Peter’s voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. ¹⁵They said to her, “You are out of your mind.” But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, “It is his angel!” ¹⁶But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. ¹⁷But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, “Tell these things to James and to the brothers.” Then he departed and went to another place.

¹⁸Now when day came, there was no little disturbance among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹And after Herod searched for him and did not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and spent time there.

²⁰Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king’s country for food. ²¹On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. ²²And the people were shouting, “The voice of a god, and not of a man!” ²³Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last.

²⁴But the word of God increased and multiplied.

²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had completed their service, bringing with them John, whose other name was Mark. [ESV]

Review and application:

Up to this point, the followers of The Way have been attacked only by the Judean religious authorities. Now, for the first time since Jesus' death, the Roman authorities violently enter the fray.

1. Things *did* go wrong (*verses 1-5a*). Since the Fall, everyone may expect to suffer. But James was executed while Peter was rescued. What, in God's providence, accounts for this apparently random distribution of pain?
Why is there no necessarily direct connection between our conduct and the suffering experienced? (Consider *Job*. See also *Matthew 5:45* and *Luke 13:1-4*.)
Why should we not blame ourselves? Why may we not blame others?
2. What was the one essential thing (*verses 5b* and *12*) the church did?
Do you see this as a primary quality of our church?
(See *James 4:2*; *Philemon 1:22*; *2 Corinthians 1:11*.)
What mistaken assumptions (*verses 13-17*) in their "mustard seed" faith (*Matthew 17:20*.) was God willing to overlook?
3. What (*verse 24*) is the summary description of what God did in answering the church's prayers?
How is this thrust maintained throughout the *Acts* narrative?
(See *Acts 28:30-31*.)
How (*verses 6-11*) did God rescue Peter?
How (*verses 18-19*) did he thwart the Roman offensive?
4. How (*verses 20-23*) did God test King Herod's pride?
What sources of praise tempt *us* to accept glory reserved for God alone?
5. How can achieving these qualities help us pass this test:
 - . . . Modesty? (as demonstrated by U. S. General George C. Marshall)
 - . . . Thankfulness? ("Thankfulness is a soil in which pride cannot easily grow." —Michael Ramsey. Archbishop of Canterbury.)
 - . . . Saturation in Scripture? (See *Deuteronomy 17:18-20*.)