

Scripture Reading:

Acts 3: “11 Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed. 12 So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people:

"Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities.'"

"Peter Preaches in the Temple"

We are continuing on in our study of the Book of Acts: The second part of Luke's orderly account written for his friend Theophilus. The Gospel of Luke ended with the ascension of Jesus into heaven to the right hand of power and this is reviewed at the beginning of Acts. Just before being taken up Jesus told the disciples, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." We saw the Spirit come in power at Pentecost and now Luke is showing how this last command of Jesus is being carried out as the Spirit glorifies the Son and builds His Church:

- We see here in Acts chapter three that Peter and John are witnesses for Jesus at the heart of Jerusalem, at the Temple itself.

Last week we studied the great miracle that occurred at the gate of the Temple and now it has drawn a large crowd.

- Peter takes the opportunity to preach the Gospel and this should be a reminder to us all that we must be ready always to give an answer for the faith.
- There are often times where a crowd might gather or interest is high because of some event or discussion that takes place.

-- We considered the earthquake a few weeks ago

-- There might be a death in a family

-- A heated discussion might erupt over my 22nd grandchild being on the way in this over-populated world!

-- There was a story this week in the Bee about a BIG pile of dinosaur bones in China ☺

- We must learn to see all of these types of opportunities as Gospel opportunities!

So Peter gives a second great sermon here at the Temple and I might be tempted to think it might be best to just read it as my sermon...

- After all, what can I add?

Of course one could argue that as being true for any passage of Scripture because it is never my job to improve on what God has revealed! God uses this time in the divine worship service to instruct us from His Word, using it as the two-edged sword that prepares us to be acceptable and pleasing sacrifices in the presence of God.

The first thing we should see is a lesson that many modern preachers, and those of us who find ourselves in those discussions, need to learn from Peter's example...

- We should be straightforward in presenting the Gospel
- Peter is bold and brutal
- Peter is also very Jewish for his Jewish audience.

Later in the Book of Acts we will see Paul give great sermons to the Gentiles as he did at Athens. When Paul does so, he will be very Greek in his presentation, even quoting their prophets.

- But Paul is no less bold and brutal in the challenge he lays before those on Mars Hill.

There is a big difference between being relevant and being accommodating. Peter and Paul used the language of their hearers and spoke in ways they could understand to make sure they could communicate the truth of the Gospel,

- Their goal was NOT to make their hearers feel comfortable with what they were saying.

If being seeker friendly means taking the opportunity to share the Gospel when it arises and doing so in language our hearers can understand then we are all for it!

- If on the other hand being seeker friendly requires us to tone down what the Gospel has to say, for example not mentioning sin, then it is an abomination!

If someone comes to visit Church of the King, I hope we don't count how many tattoos and piercings they have or make a big deal out of how they are dressed. We should go out of our way to make them feel welcome and to discern what their needs really are... This does not mean bringing a youth band to sing love songs to Jesus so they would feel comfortable.

IF we are to be the Church the Spirit has birthed here in Acts they will hear the Gospel clearly presented and see the Gospel being lived out!

With that in mind let us consider what Peter shared with those who gathered around the man who was lame from birth who is now walking and leaping and praising God! First we must remember how Luke describes the gathered crowd: They are astounded because of the miracle...

- This should bring back to our minds all those discussions we have had about those who came for the show!

Peter knows they are mostly gathering for all the wrong reasons, so he begins to set them straight and gives a straightforward call for repentance.

12 “So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

- **The focus is never to be on US, but rather on Jesus!**
- **People may gather because of what they see God doing in our midst, but we must resist the sin of pride in saying ‘well yes God has done this and this and this for us’**
- **We must humbly point out, as Peter does, that all that happens in our walk with God is a result of His grace in our lives, individually or collectively!**
- **Peter then appeals to his fellow Jews, God’s covenant people:**

13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus...”

- **God is their covenant God!**
- **And God is our covenant God: We must remind our children of who they are!**
- **We must also, and ALWAYS, remind them of who Jesus is: God’s servant, the great Messiah who came as the suffering Savior to save His people from their sins!**

13 “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go.”

- **Again, this would not seem very seeker friendly by today’s standards**
- **Peter is proclaiming to them what John says in the first chapter of his Gospel: The Word came unto His own and His own people did not receive Him.”**
- **Peter reminds them that even Pilate knew Jesus was innocent!**

14 “But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.”

- **What a stark contrast Peter makes: God sent His Son, the author of life... They not only had Him killed, but wanted a murderer in exchange.**
- **As we studied a few weeks ago, those who hate God love death!**
- **Jesus IS the author of life as the creator of all things!**
- **And now through His death, burial and resurrection He is to author of the new life that we have in Him! The New Adam**

16 “And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.”

- **The evidence of the new life is standing right in front of them...**
- **Faith in the Jesus they rejected has made this man whole!**

17 “Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.”

- God had used Judas, the Jewish leaders, the Jewish crowds and even Pilate to accomplish His mighty end: Jesus would be the great sacrifice for sin and God's people would be forgiven!
- The prophets foretold what would happen and now God has fulfilled what was foretold.
- Peter now calls on his hearers to respond to the miracle and to the truth it revealed:

19 "Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began."

As you can imagine, the commentators struggle to explain what Peter means here with several of the comments that he makes at this point in his sermon.

First we should see that what he says is basically the same message Peter proclaimed at Pentecost:

- Repent and be baptized for the remission of sin and you will be filled with the Spirit.
- They, as all sinners must, need to repent, to turn around and change direction!

Conversion in this context would be these Jews being baptized in the name of Jesus, becoming a part of the New Creation before the Old Creation passes away!

Next, we must not limit the "time of refreshment" to any one point:

- Yes, it is what those who come to Christ experience when they find forgiveness.
- Yes, it is what all of us, especially our covenant children should know each week as we hear the forgiveness of sins proclaimed during our Covenant Renewal Worship
- And yes, it is certainly what we will all know at the end of time when we are freed from the power of sin at the Second Coming of Jesus after death has been defeated!

The entire Christian life should be seen as a time of refreshment!

There is similar confusion over what Peter means about the sending of Jesus...

- Is Peter referring to His coming to individuals who are saved?
- Is it His coming in judgment to the City of Jerusalem in AD 70?
- Is it His coming in judgment at the end of time?

Again, I think the simple answer is all of the above!

We will come back to His being in heaven when we gather at the Table in a few moments.

- Peter's final appeal is to Moses, the great leader of Israel who they should heed:

22 "For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.'"

- Jesus is the greater Moses who has come to give them life: They can repent and live or they can refuse to hear Him and die

We will study the various responses to Peter's message next week!

- Peter wants them to understand that it is not just Moses who calls them to Jesus...

24 "Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days."

Again, the commentators tend to struggle here with why Peter talks about Samuel as a prophet and who those who follow are...

- **They just need to listen to more of Jamie Sole's music!**

I think most of our children know the song, "These are They Which Speak of Me"... The ABC's of the Bible.

- **Jamie's point is that everything in the Bible reveals Jesus...**

As Jesus Himself told the religious leaders, "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."

- **Peter now reminds them of who they are and why it is so important that they come to faith...**

25 "You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

- **The Gospel has come first to the Jews, as God had promised and as Jesus had instructed His disciples.**
- **Next week we will see the response of those present at the Temple: The sheep hearing the voice of the shepherd and the goats hardening their hearts.**

Again our lesson for today is that the response is not our responsibility: Sharing the Good News is! We must learn to be bold in our presentations and ready always to give an answer. As Paul told the Corinthians, you will get various reactions...

"4 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. 16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? 17 For we are not, as so many, peddling the Word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ."

We must never think that we have 'arrived' in this area: We will spend whatever time the Lord gives us on this earth learning to better serve Christ as His ambassador of the Good News.

- **Yes, we must learn to confess those times when we miss opportunities**
- **Yes, we must learn to confess those times where we mess up those opportunities**

Our growing desire should be to share the Good News whenever we can in an appropriate way, learning to follow the Spirit's leading more & more

- **Sharing the Good News that will be accepted by some with great joy**
- **Sharing the Good News that will be rejected by others as if we had handed them a dead rat!**

The Gospel is offensive to the natural man, but we must take care that we are not being offensive in the way we present the Good News!

We should not launch into a thirty minute presentation during a five minute coffee break...

- **Better to suggest a long cup of coffee after work or have them over for dinner.**

We must properly discern the state of our hearers and how the message should be presented.

- **We cannot speak to a typical young person today as if they have vast knowledge of the Bible...**
- **A more typical situation would be expecting them to say “who was Jesus?”**

We must continually pray that God give us the opportunities to share His Good News and then we must be faithful...

Our pray must be that we be those workers that the Lord of the Harvest requires for the great harvest that He has prepared for His Son.

Communion Meditation: Acts 3:

“Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.”