

The Proclamation of Christ

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[0 : 00] The scripture reading comes from Acts chapter 3, starting from verse 1 we read. He asked to receive alms.

And Peter directed his gaze at him and did join and said, Look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up.

And immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk and enter the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

And all the people saw him walking and praising God and recognized him as the one who sat at the beautiful gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

[1 : 29] While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astonished, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people. Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us? As though by our own power or piety, we have made him walk.

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus, whom you had delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate. When he had decided to release him, but you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you.

And you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know.

And the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as is also your rulers.

[2 : 35] But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.

And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaim these days, You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers. Sing to Abraham, And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. God, having raised up his servants, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.

This is the word of God. Okay, let me pray for us before we dive into God's word.

[4 : 01] Father, we come before you. God, you are king forevermore. Your word is life, and your word is true. God, as we look into your scriptures, Father, we pray through your spirit, would you reveal the treasures that are found in here?

Would you speak to all of us, as individuals and as a church, to love you, to serve you, to give all of ourselves away to you, God, for you are worthy of it all.

And we glorify you. So God, come, be glorified in these things. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Church, if you don't know me, my name is Alan.

I'm one of the staff here at Watermark. It is such a joy to bring God's word to us this morning. If you've been with us for the past few weeks, about four weeks, we've been going through the book of Acts.

And it's a volume two written by Luke, and which basically tells us about what happened after Jesus ascended into heaven. And through the chapters, we've been seeing the pouring of the Holy Spirit, through which Peter stands up and gives incredible sermon, preaches the gospel, and you have all this crowd, about 3,000 people coming and believing and being baptized.

[5 : 23] And after which, just last week, we heard about this community that starts, a community that's formed by God, and in one short sentence, it was a community, a church, that belonged to God and belonged to one another.

It was an incredible community, a church. And apart from the people in that community devoting themselves to the teachings of the apostles, apart from them breaking bread, praying, praising God, as people come together to sell their possessions, so that anyone in their midst that were in need was given and provided for, one of the other things that we also see was that there were wonders and signs that were being done through the apostles.

So, Luke, who we know is a physician, a doctor, now seems to take out one of those wonders and signs and talk about it in chapter 3 that we just read.

Now, today, one of the questions that it's going to help us answer is a question that all of us needs to answer every day of our lives. It's a question that we as a church, as a group, needs to answer every day of our lives.

And the question is this, what matters to you most? What matters to, what matters the most to us as a church? And what we just read is that we're going to talk about the miracle that Peter does, and for the second time, he's going to stand up and explain it and talk about what is actually more important than the healing.

[7 : 01] And the healing and the miracle is almost going to act like a signpost pointing us towards that. So, if you have your Bibles, you can follow along. Let's dive into God's Word where the first thing we encounter is the sign.

We're going to look into verses 1 to 10. Now, Peter and John, they are on their way to the temple, and on the way there, they encounter this lame man. Verse 2 tells us that this man was carried there so that he could beg in a gate called the Beautiful Gate.

Since giving of alms, or giving of money to poor people or beggars were something that was good in the Jewish religion, so that means the place to sit right at the temple gate was the ideal spot.

What is more is that in the same verse, we see that this is a man that was lame from birth, which makes this miracle even more miraculous, and also chapter 4 tells us that this man is actually over 40 years old.

Now, so here is this lame man sitting at the gate, most probably shouting the same thing he has been shouting for over 40 years. And when suddenly these two strangers walk up to him, stop before him, look at him directly, and one of them, Peter, goes on to say, I have no silver and gold.

[8 : 26] And I'm sure the lame man's heart must have sank, because he believed that that was what he needed the most. And that's a terrible thing to say to a beggar. I don't have any money. But, Peter does not stop there.

I have no silver and gold, but what I do have, I give to you. And in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And the man is instantaneously healed.

Peter takes him up by his hand and raises him up, and he begins to stand, he begins to walk, he begins to leap. Maybe that's leaping as something he might have seen one of the children do in front of the gate.

For the first time in his life, he's leaping, walking, and jumping in joy. It was quite a sight to behold. Now, one of the things we see in the book of Acts is how the work of Jesus after he ascended into heaven is being continued.

Jesus came to proclaim the good news of the kingdom, which is continued by the believers that take the gospel to the ends of the earth. We see that Jesus came to draw people to himself, to create a people that belong to God, and which we saw last week, which is being done through the apostles as people are coming to be one people that belong to God.

[9 : 44] Now, in chapter 3, we just read about a healing, which is interestingly very similar to the healing that is done in Luke chapter 5. So now, the question is, is God still in the miracle business?

Does God still heal and do the supernatural things? There was a man called Lee Strobel. I'm sure most of you might have heard of him. He's a very famous, very well-known, former investigative journalist, someone who investigates news and things.

So who, when his wife became a Christian, went on this journey to investigate Christianity just to prove his wife wrong. But at the end of the journey, he finds out that there's an irrefutable evidence for Christ and resurrection, and at the end of it all, he becomes a Christian himself.

Now, later on, and he actually does another investigation. Later on, he's curious, and he says, okay, I'm going to investigate miracles. Does miracles really happen?

So for two years, he travels the world. He goes, interviews skeptics. He talks with people that have experienced miracles, travels in the places of the world where there's reportings of miracles and supernatural things, investigates it, and at the end of it all, he writes a book called A Case for Miracle.

[11:09] And from this book, here's a spoiler, here are his three conclusions. One, that actually God is still in the miracle business. Two, that there are actually more miracles happening than we think.

And three, and most of his miracles are actually more better documented than most skeptics think. I mean, my own mother had blood cancer and she was healed.

But I also know of people that are faithful, devoted Christians, dear friends of mine, that were not healed. In one of Lee Strobel's interviews, he interviews a woman called Barbara Snyder, a woman who had instantaneously been healed from a disease that was documented by well-known doctors, incredible healing.

And at the end of the interview, he stands up and goes to Barbara and says, Barbara, can I give you a hug? And then he asks her, Barbara, why you?

Why not my wife who has chronic illness and is in pain every day? Why, where is her healing? But why you? And Barbara looks at him and says, I don't know.

[12:29] I don't know. But what I do know is that our God is sovereign. That his ways and thoughts are above ours. That he sees things, he knows things that we don't.

And at the end of it all, ultimately, one day when Christ returns, all of his children will be healed. There shall be no more pain, no more suffering, no more diseases, no more death, no more sin. You see, God is still in the miracle business, but we should know that he's sovereign too. And he does what is good, even though we do not see the good in right now.

Now, I want us to note that the title of this first point is the sign. It's not healing or miracle. Because throughout the book of Acts and actually throughout the New Testament, one thing we're going to see is that wonders, miracles, and signs are actually meant to point us to something or is either meant to authenticate something.

For example, in the previous chapter, chapter 2, verse 22, Peter addresses the crowd and he says, men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you, proven to you by God with what?

[13:44] With mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst. Later in chapter 4, when Peter and John are caught by the religious leaders, the religious leaders are debating what to do with them and one of the things they find it hard is to deny the notable signs that these two men have done while the 40-year-old layman was standing right beside them.

You see, miracles and healings and signs and supernatural things are meant to either point us to something or to authenticate something or someone. So, in this chapter 3, what is this healing or sign meant to authenticate?

What is this sign pointing us towards? What was it that mattered so much more than the healing and the excitement that was building around Peter and John as people gathered and were astounded by what they were seeing here?

Well, now, Peter is going to stand up and he's going to address the crowd and he's going to explain the healing but at the same time he's going to help us answer that which leads us to our second part, the object of this sign.

Now, let's focus on verses 11 to 16. So, the crowd gathers around. They're astounded. Verse 11 tells us that. They're astounded. They're amazed by what they're seeing. I mean, here's a man that has been in the gate for 40 years, right?

[15:04] I mean, I'm sure we all go to work and there's certain things we see on our way which we get so used to. Could be our security guards and we're like, we see this person every day and one

day when he's not there we're like, where did this guy go?

Must have been the same experience. Where is this man? And suddenly you see this man is standing and leaping and jumping. They're astounded and Peter takes this opportunity as crowd gathers to see this and which is very similar to chapter 2, right?

In chapter 2 something supernatural happens and Peter stands up to explain. In chapter 3 again something supernatural happens. Now Peter's going to stand up and he's going to address the crowd and he basically begins with the caution, right?

He says, why do you wonder? Or why do you look at us as if we did it with our power or as if this happened because we are so godly people? You see, the sign of healing that was happening was them saying like, hey, he's not pointing this, this sign is not pointing you guys towards us.

He's not authenticating us nor is this power that the sign that you've seen we don't have the power to do this nor are, did we do this because we are so godly. But what it was pointing towards or what it was really authenticating was what Peter was about to say.

[16:22] And in one short sentence, what Peter was about to preach or say is this, is the gospel of Christ Jesus, is the goodness of him.

I mean, look at verse 13 with me. Verse 13, Peter says, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him.

Now that's very interesting of what Peter is doing here because Peter is saying two things at the same time. He's saying, this is who Jesus is and this is what you have done to him.

I mean, he's saying, this is Jesus, the one who our fathers chose. He's the chosen servant of the God of our fathers. But you denied him, you delivered him and denied him and killed him.

Verse 14, he's the holy and the righteous one but you denied him and asked for a murder in his place. Referring to the time when Pilate gave people a choice to either release Jesus or release this murder called Barabbas.

[17:34] Verse 15, he's the author of life but you killed him. And in the end, Peter says, and that Jesus is the one through whom this man has been healed.

Now that's a very funny or interesting way to answer the question how did this healing happen? I mean, Peter could have just gone and said, hey guys, this man was healed because of Jesus.

We prayed in the name of Jesus and we had faith in him and this man was healed. Peter could have just said that and got it over with and not gone on this long, long paragraph.

But you see, Peter is very intentional about what he's doing. Peter knows what he's saying because, you see, Peter was not interested, not just interested in telling them about the healing but he was actually more interested in telling them about the source of the healing.

He was not interested in telling them how great this healing was but he was more interested in telling the people how great the healer was. You see, when Peter was talking about Jesus here, I want us to note, he was not talking to a group of people like us who had heard about Jesus 2,000 years ago.

[18:48] He was talking to a crowd of people that had actually seen him, seen Jesus just a few months back. Maybe seen, heard Jesus teaching. Maybe this is a group of people that have seen the miracles of Jesus that have maybe some of them have been healed by Jesus themselves.

Some of them might have been shouting, crucify him. Or maybe there's people in the crowd that have actually seen Jesus died. And Peter is standing in this crowd and he's saying, yes, that's the Jesus that I am talking about.

Whom you all know, have seen, and whom you all know perfectly well that had died. But Peter is also saying, but guess what?

Jesus is not just any other man. Yes, he died, but there's more. And in verse 15, he says, yes, he died, but God raised him up from the dead to which all of us, we too, Peter and John, are witnesses. In fact, there are a lot more witnesses the fact that Jesus was risen and he's alive. So this is what Peter is saying. Yes, he's truly the chosen one.

[19:56] Yes, he's truly the glorified servant of God. He's truly the holy, the set apart, the righteous, the perfectly moral, perfect being. He's truly that Christ.

He's the author of life, the source of life. Can you think about that? Jesus is the source of life, the very air that we breathe, the very bodies that we have, the very souls that we have, the very nerves that we have.

Jesus is the one who gives us, he's the source of life, he's the author of life and he's not just dead, he's truly risen. This is Christ, this is what Peter is saying to them.

But Peter is also saying, but guys, you killed him. You denied him. You chose a murderer to be set free instead of him.

Now I'm sure among that crowd, there must have been few people that have, must have been thinking, whoa, whoa, whoa, wait Peter. I was not even in town when they killed Peter.

[20 : 53] They killed John, Jesus. I was in the other side of town preparing my family for Passover. I mean, I didn't even shout, I didn't do any of the things that you said. I mean, this guy might have did it, but I don't know, it's not me.

And beloved friends, maybe that's what we think too. Maybe we literally are in the way we live. But it is true, you see, none of us in this hall was there to nail Jesus at the cross.

None of us was there shouting crucify him. But there's an old hymn that might help us. And there's an old hymn that we do sing at Watermark and it goes like this. Behold the man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders.

Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life.

I know that it is finished. Church, it might not have been our hands that nailed Christ to the cross, but it was definitely our sin that took him and held him at the cross.

[22 : 00] 1 Peter 2.24 tells us, he, Jesus himself, bore our sin in his body at the cross.

And this could be a place where we could take a pause and think, church, how much do we ponder about that? How much do we ponder about our sin that nailed and held Christ to the cross?

You know, in my life, I'm very quick to ask for forgiveness and say, thank you, Jesus, and move on with life. Which is not bad. But there is wisdom in actually pausing and meditating over the depravity and the terrible nature of our sin.

You see, this is a quote that was taken from an article from a website called Desiring God written by a man called Greg Morse. And at the end of the article, he says this.

He says, I've watched The Passion of Christ, which is an old movie about the death of Jesus. I've watched The Passion of Christ each year for four years being moved every time to tears, which I'm sure all of us can relate.

[23 : 13] And all the while, I was not truly born again. All the while, my life was not really changed. And I thought myself better for crying as if my sins would be passed over if I had tears painted on the doorpost.

You see, it did not take a regenerate heart, a changed heart to weep over the sufferings of Jesus while our world is full of unbelievers who cry over sad things. But it did take a regenerate heart to mourn over what I rarely mourned over.

And it was my sins. Church, how much does our sin make us weep? When was the last time we fell on our knees and mourned over our sin that took our Savior to the cross?

And there is wisdom in staying there. But there is also this news that and there is also this truth that the burden of sin is something none of us can bear.

Which is why Jesus took our sin upon Himself on that cross. None of us can bear the burden and the penalty of our sin. Jesus took it on Himself on the cross.

[24 : 27] He died and rose again paying the penalty of our sin that none of us could do. Freeing us and feed us from the power of sin and ultimately one day when He returns there shall be no more sin.

Jesus did that and Peter knew that. Peter knew the people that were listening to Him could not bear the burden of sin. Which is why thankfully He continues His sermon.

Because you see the goodness of Jesus Christ the gospel does not just end there. The gospel ends in an invitation. An invitation to come invitation to come and turn away from our sin.

Which leads us to our last point. The call to turn away. Let's look at the last few verses from verse 17 to 26. Verse 17 Peter begins and says you have acted in ignorance.

Or in other words you did not know. Well God knew but you guys did not know. And that's very interesting because isn't that one of the things that sin does to us?

[25 : 34] Sin makes us blind to our own sinfulness. Sin makes us blind to our own depravity our own disgusting nature of sin that lies within.

That's what sin does and that's a very sober warning to hear this morning. Because and the question is are we blinded by our sin? so much that we are unresponsive our hearts are unresponsive to God's word and godly counsel.

That's a legit warning here. Well and Peter goes on then he says well repent turn back. he says that in verse 19 repent therefore turn back that your sins may be blotted out.

And that is what repentance is isn't it? To turn back to turn and 180 decrease turn away. And many times we think that repentance is sober and serious and many times many ways sad.

But actually if you really look at what Peter is saying he's actually very joyful. At times yes repentance is serious but at the same time repentance is also joyful and full of great celebration.

[26 : 50] I mean it's like a child that is wondering if his mother is still angry with him or not and suddenly sees a smiling face and an open arm. It's like two friends that have been quarreling for a long time and finally after a long conversation they have a reconciliation.

And in this case it's our loving father against whom we sin which brings this massive chasm between us and a holy God but instead of us paying the penalty of sin he pays it by sending his son Jesus Christ so that whoever turns to him whoever repents and looks towards him will be reconciled joyfully to the one who knows us who created us and who loves us truly I mean Jesus in Luke 15 talks about the son who returns to his father who turns back to his father and as the father sees him walking in the distance he runs to the son and in great joy embraces the son kisses him and throws him a massive feast you see repentance yes is serious but repentance is also a call to come and be reconciled to the father who loves you it's a call to come to enter into his joy

I mean let's come back to Acts 3 look at what Peter says tells the crowd verse 19 he says turn away so that why so that your sins may be blotted out the sin that kills us the sin that breaks our relationship with not only God with one another so that that sin would be blotted out verse 20 so that a time of refreshing may come verse 25 so that blessing would come through you to all nations and verse 26 so that you would be freed from wickedness this is what Peter is calling the people into to come enter into a place where you are truly freed where you are truly in joy at peace one with the one who made you and loves you the place where your souls are truly satisfied well Peter doesn't just stop there he doesn't just stop telling people to turn away he actually tells them one more thing and he says yes turn away but there's something you gotta turn towards he also tells them what to turn to now look at the end of verse 21 where he was saying about that hey

Jesus is in heaven and one day he'll return according to the words of the great prophets long ago now it seems that Peter is again switching gears right and he's switching gears to reverse he's going backwards almost and what he's saying in from verse 22 onwards he goes on to say is that hey you remember Moses the great Moses our prophet Moses he actually pointed to Jesus I mean he says in verse 22 Moses said the Lord will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers who you shall listen to him whatever he tells you and it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed I mean Peter is saying the great prophet Moses is talking about Jesus Jesus is the better Moses that came here now not only this verse 24 onwards he says guys all the prophets beginning from

Samuel actually pointed to Jesus what's more verse 25 the promise that was made to Abraham Abraham the most important person in the Jewish religion that Abraham the promise made to Abraham is actually all fulfilled in Jesus do you see what's happening here how Peter is changing gears you see Peter is not just telling them to turn away from sin towards Jesus but he's telling them to turn to Jesus who is not just Jesus but is actually someone who is unimaginably more than they think I mean just think of this whole chapter three right the healing gets Peter the healing starts and Peter stands upon among the people and he tells that the first thing he tells them is Jesus is more Jesus is holy righteous Jesus is the author of life and yes you've killed Jesus is the one that all prophets pointed towards

[31 : 29] Jesus is the one that is better Moses Jesus is the one that the promise made into Abraham is fulfilled church your life you see that is a very important question because it's going to shape the way we live the way we think the way we organize our time the way we set our priorities and if you look at chapter 3 what mattered the most in chapter 3 was not that much the healing or how the healing happened but it was how great Jesus is and how great the good news of Jesus is you see chapter 3 starts with the healing but is dominated by Peter declaring the greatness of Christ Jesus calling people to repent and again going back showing them as they turn back to him that this Christ

Jesus is much much more greater than anyone has ever imagined so what is it that matters most in our lives you see if we think or if we say that it is money then the way we think our value or other people's value is going to be shaped by how much people earn our time would be invested more in earning money versus spending time with our families or other things if we say that our reputation is more important is the most important thing in our lives then we would spend most of our lives putting on a mask being perfect by the same time suffering under the burden of being good but then but what if the thing that matters the most in our lives is the greatness of Christ Jesus and his work the gospel then how would that change our lives maybe the way we arrange our times and resources would be different maybe our relationships would be different even in times of conflict in the way we move towards reconciliation maybe this would be the source of our joy when we are pursuing relationships or when we are struggling with singleness how about for us as a church what would it look like for a church that the thing that mattered most was Christ Jesus the glory of Christ Jesus and his good news maybe it would be a church that encourages that focuses on each other encouraging one other to love Christ more to him more maybe it's a church that celebrates transformation of lives and baptisms it's a church that longs to see people know Christ in this city and so much more you see there are good things that can distract us good things that are needed like programs and events and and courses but what matters most what has to matter most is the good news of Christ Jesus who is more glorious than so church here's an invitation for us all come and see this incredibly glorious Christ Jesus here's an invitation for all of us whether we are Christians or not Christians come and see the Christ Jesus who is unimaginably more beautiful and majestic than we think be in awe of him Christ Jesus not being distracted by things good things in our lives good things but having our lives centered around the gospel the truth of God Christ Jesus and what he has done to be consumed by the glory of Christ because you see Jesus is the fulfillment of all scriptures he is the fulfillment of all promises and only in Christ Jesus is where we have reconciliation with the father who forgives our sins who blots our sins away who brings healing in our lives whether that's physical or spiritual or emotional who brings us refreshment and blessing come and be in awe of Christ