

The Gospel at Work

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- [0 : 0 0] to keep your Bibles open there to Acts chapter 3. And I thought because you had such a heavy question for your greeting time, that I'll start with a joke.
- Of course, that's never a good way to start because if it's not funny and you don't laugh, it's not really a joke. So it's a bit risky for me to say I'm starting with a joke. But anyway, I'm going to try and...
- I'll just say that actually this is a joke that Danny Yusuf kindly shared with me. And Danny was actually preaching next week, so we've been discussing our respective passages together.
- And he says that this perfect joke that fits with today's passage that I had to use, he even used it a few years ago when he was preaching, I think, on this same passage in the morning. So if you laugh at the joke, I'll still take credit for it.
- But if you don't, then, you know, I'll point the figure at Daniel instead. Anyway, here it is. In today's passage, the lame beggar asked for arms, but, wait for it, he got legs instead.
- [1 : 1 5] Thank you for laughing. That was my backup, just in case you didn't laugh.
- So you see, that was good preparation. Anyway, now that I've got that out of the way, let's look more seriously at this passage. Promise no more jokes from here on in, so let's be serious.
- Now, if we look at the first 10 verses, you can see quite clearly that it's really a recounting of the incident. And it's pretty straightforward. If you look at the outline, you'll be able to see the two points that I want to draw your attention to.
- So firstly, here I think Luke gives us an example of the signs and wonders that the apostles were able to do to demonstrate that they were accredited by God as Christ's apostles.
- We saw last week in verse 43 that everyone was filled with awe and their wonders, or these signs. So these signs, you see, serve to authenticate their message.
- [2 : 2 0] And just like the prophets of the Old Testament, they confirmed the apostles' appointment by God. It was just the same with Jesus, where the signs and wonders that he was able to do accredited him as God's Messiah.
- Now the result of it, which is not just the healing of the beggar here by Peter, but what we also see is that the beggar praises God as well. And so if you look at verse 8, he jumped to his feet and began to walk.
- Then he went up, then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. And I think there's even a kid's song with those lyrics in it.
- So probably ringing in some of your ears. But here we see an echo from last week, don't we? Because if you remember, last week we talked about the devotion of the believers and amongst other things, to breaking of bread when they ate together, and these words, praising God and enjoying the favor of all people.
- Well, we see here again that this lame beggar praised God, which means he's a believer and his worship comes to the attention of all the people.

[3 : 38] And so, notice this phrase in verse 9. When all the people, right, saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful.

And they were filled with awe or filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him. Now, secondly, the next thing I would like for you to notice is to take note of Peter's exact words in verse 6.

He says there, silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk. And so, taking him by the right hand, he helped him up and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

So, the second point to note is that it's at the command of Jesus' name that the man is healed. And it's important for us to understand what this exactly means because there will be some Christians who think that just by simply using the name of Jesus, that's all that it takes to perform the miracles.

But is this what this passage is teaching us? Or is this descriptive of Peter only? We'll discover a bit more of that as we look at Peter's sermon.

[4 : 58] But what is clear though, is that it is indeed in Jesus' name that the beggar is healed. And so, what it does is demonstrate the power of that name, of Jesus' name.

But it's not because this name is some sort of magic word, as though Peter was casting a spell and just using those words would allow him to heal.

rather, it's his relationship to Jesus that is important. He's an apostle of Christ, remember, acting under Christ's authority.

And therefore, he's able to come in and use the name of Jesus. And so, when he does that, it's as though Jesus himself was there doing the healing.

Now, this healing then is done with a purpose. It's done for a reason. And as we look at the sermon, it may surprise you to realize that actually it wasn't done solely for the benefit of the beggar.

[5 : 59] Rather, we will find out that it's much more than that, as Peter begins to teach in verse 11. So, verse 11, while the man held on to Peter and John, all the people, notice that phrase again, were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

So, this man had, with the help of Peter, walked from the temple gate called Beautiful into the temple itself to a porch called Solomon's Colonnade.

But when the people started running to see what had happened, Peter now uses this to preach the gospel to them. And so, he begins, Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you?

Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk? So first, Peter is quick to dispel the notion that this miracle was done by their own power or godliness.

No, Peter says, it's not about how good we are or how powerful we are. Rather, the power is from Jesus to show who he really is.

[7 : 05] And just as Peter did at the sermon at Pentecost, he now explains this very person, Jesus. So, verse 13, he says, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.

You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. And so, like a prosecutor in a court of law, can you see how Peter's laying out the facts one by one, evidence that's being put to them, against them, of what they've done.

You, you, you've done this to your own Messiah. But Peter also testifies as a witness, doesn't he? For he's seen God raise Jesus from the dead.

So, this very person that you put to death, thinking he was a murderer, well, God has vindicated and exonerated him. Peter, you notice, refers to God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers.

[8 : 21] What he's saying to them is that your God, our God, the one that your fathers and you worship, he's the one that has done this. And likewise, this man, Jesus, is your Messiah, because your own scriptures has foretold him.

And Peter here uses his description of Jesus very carefully. Jesus was, is God's servant. And that's a clear reference back to Isaiah, where the servant is revealed as the one who will suffer on behalf of Israel and then be glorified.

The reference to Jesus then as the holy and righteous one and the author of life all have echoes back to Isaiah 53. which Ned read for us today.

And so to just give you an example, in Isaiah 53 verse 11, we read this. After he has suffered, he will see the light of life, not quite author of life, but similar, and be satisfied.

By his knowledge, my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. So Peter clearly here, by using the label servant, not just once but twice, and even three times at the end, is connecting Jesus back to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53.

[9 : 44] Now having introduced Jesus, Peter now continues with a few more revelations in verse 16. Now first, what Peter does is reveal that it's by faith in this name that the lame beggar was healed.

So in the next verse, by faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him as you can all see.

So just a while ago, in the first ten verses, we saw the beggar was healed in Jesus' name. That was very clear. But now, Peter tells them that there is actually another important and vital ingredient.

him. The man was also healed through faith in this name. So it's not just faith in anything, you know, just belief.

No, the object of faith that is namely in the name of Jesus is important. What matters is believing in Jesus and not just believing in any old thing.

[10 : 53] Now when we go back to the incident in the first ten verses, it's not explicit. we don't have a clear description of the man's faith, but I think given what Peter says, we can go back now and see that indeed what he did, did express or show faith in Jesus.

So if you go back, you will see that firstly, he was asked to look into Peter's eyes, wasn't he? And he did that. It was an act, a response of faith.

And then as Peter held him, he stood to his feet of his own will. It's not like Peter yanked him up and carried him to his feet. No, Peter held him and he stood up on his own and strength came to his feet.

Then, of course, right after that, he responded in faith by leaping and jumping and praising God in worship. And so we see with the beggar that faith is a vital component moment in our encounter with God.

Yes, God does all the work. He's the one who gives us the power to believe, but we still need to respond in faith. This response of faith is required, not just for healing, which is what applied to the beggar, but also for salvation, which is what we'll now see applies to everyone.

[12 : 19] And so Peter now turns to the fellow Israelites in verse 17, and he says, Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders, but this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer, repent then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

The one who heals then, is the one who saves. And in fact, I dare say that the healing occurred in part so that the message of salvation could be preached to all.

For ultimately, the salvation of souls, including that of the beggar, was more important than his physical healing. All of us, everyone, needs salvation because we have all sinned.

The suffering of God's Messiah may be part of his plan, but it does not absolve the people or us of our sin. Hence, Peter calls all of them to repent and turn to God, which is just another way of saying, put your faith in Jesus' name.

The result, again, is that their sins will be wiped away, and times of refreshing may come from the Lord. Now, I think this is a reference to the spirit being poured out on them, these refreshing times, because what happens when the spirit is poured out is that they enjoy a restored relationship with God.

[13 : 56] They have communion with God, peace with God, and with that, communion with other believers as well in God's presence, which we saw last week. And so, you have to see that as much as this healing benefited the beggar, he wasn't just healed for his own benefit, was he?

healing, but to be a testimony to others as well, of Jesus' saving power for everyone. What his physical healing pointed to was a more important and deeper healing, a spiritual healing, if you like, of the soul for eternity.

It is the gift of eternal life. it is that of being back in relationship with God and enjoying these times of refreshing because our sins are forgiven.

Now, there are times, like with the beggar, where the healing of the body and the soul occur together. But there are other times when the physical healing of our bodies may only occur, will only occur, in the new creation.

But in the meantime, we are comforted to know that we can be healed and spiritually restored now, through the forgiveness of our sins, through the gift of God's spirit, so that we have a restored relationship with God.

[15 : 22] But in all cases, faith in Jesus is the necessary condition. Now, Peter speaks of salvation here in a positive way, as times are refreshing, as I've just said.

But as it goes on, it can also be seen as a rescue from impending disaster. So, we're saved for something, but we're also saved from something bad.

And this is what Peter continues now in verse 21. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

What is implied here is that judgment is coming. the phrase to restore everything is a positive one, except for those things that don't belong in that restoration.

For those things, it's actually destruction, isn't it? Or condemnation. It's a bit like when you restore a home or a house. You know, all the junk that's accumulated in the house needs to be thrown away, put in the skip, right?

[16 : 29] before the house can be brought back to its glory. You know, that ugly and worn out green carpet, for example, needs to be stripped back, thrown away, right?

To reveal the beautiful hard floor that lies underneath which you can polish. Or you may want to throw away all that Ikea furniture. Sorry to any Swedish people here, but, you know, things that you could only afford when you were a poor student, want to throw that away and replace it with stately, I don't know, Elizabethan furniture, right?

But restoration requires keeping what is good and discarding what is bad, isn't it? And the things that get thrown away get thrown in judgment, as it were.

And that's the same for us as well, isn't it? God has raised up Jesus to be that person, to save us, but then also to judge. When he comes again.

But before he does, he comes first of all to call us to respond in faith, to give us that opportunity to be part of the restoration rather than part of the destruction.

[17 : 42] And so he goes on on the next slide, for Moses said, the Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people. You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.

people. And so now that Jesus has come, he is God's appointed prophet. And he has spoken. And now that he has spoken and we have heard, the onus is for us to respond in the right way.

And the words here, to listen, is actually an active verb, isn't it? It's not just hearing and then doing nothing. It's like, you know, parents often tell their children, listen to me.

It's not telling the child, just listen to me and do nothing, right? No, when parents say listen to me, it's an instruction to hear and then obey.

And so that's the same here as well. And the consequence of not listening and obeying is to be cut off from God's people, not be part of the restoration or the times of refreshing.

[18 : 50] Of course, the flip side, you know, of that is that those who do listen have all the promises of the blessing, don't they? And the Old Testament again has promises for this.

And that's why Peter reminds them again, indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days and you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers.

He said to Abraham, through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

Peter here is talking to his fellow Israelites. And so as Jews, they are direct heirs of the promise. They are beneficiaries of the covenant with Abraham.

But the promise to Abraham was that it's true the offspring, and that's in the singular, it actually means seed, so that's only one person. It's true his offspring that all peoples will be blessed.

[19 : 54] That offspring, as I've already said, is Jesus, isn't it? God's suffering servant. Came first to save the Jews, but then also through him to bless or to bring salvation to all the peoples, to the Gentiles.

And so everyone, Jew or Gentile, all of us have to turn from our wicked ways. Or repent, in other words, and turn to God.

Now if you've been sort of been with us for the last few weeks, it almost sounds as if I keep repeating myself, don't I? And that's because all I'm simply doing is to explain the gospel, the good news of Jesus, again and again.

And I do that because that's what Peter himself has been doing, hasn't he? Day of Pentecost, now here, and then even as we go forward in Acts, we will keep hearing the same message about the good news of Jesus over and over again.

In one way, that may seem to you like it's old news and boring. But really, the reason for that is because the gospel, the good news, is an unchanging message.

[21 : 06] It applies week in, week out, day in, day out, to all of us as Christians. And the message of the gospel is not very hard, it's summarized here. It simply says that Jesus came and died because of our wicked ways, for us, but that God the Father raised him from the dead and now has given him the authority and power to save us, to save all those who repent and put their faith in him.

And it doesn't matter who you are, how long you've been a Christian, but this is the same message for all of us, that we need to hear this gospel each and every day of our lives.

Now, even the queen, who sadly died on Friday, but lived such a life of faithfulness to God, even though she was rich and powerful, that was a message for her as well, wasn't it?

And if you listen to her Christmas messages and the various things that she said in public, you would see that she has expressed this very simple faith in Jesus, hasn't she? Time and time again, throughout her entire reign.

And so, she, us, doesn't matter who it is, all of us have this same message that is given to us, that of the good news of Jesus, by which we can be saved.

[22 : 27] And so, if you're here today and you're hearing this message for the first time, then let me just say to you that this is actually the most important message you can hear in your life. And the most important message for you to respond to in your life.

This choice that you make when you hear this message is the most important thing that you can do in your life. And then, the commitment that you have to put your faith in Jesus for the rest of your life is the single most important commitment that you can make in your life.

And, you know, for a lot of us, we think we have so many decisions to make in life, you know, should I do this, should I do that, what about this, what about that. But, really, although all those decisions are important, they pale in comparison with this one question.

How will you respond to the gospel? Will you put your faith in the name of Jesus in the same way that the beggar did? Now, I want you to think a bit about what Peter actually said at the very start.

Do you think it was really true that Peter and John had no silver or gold to give? Now, perhaps, perhaps they weren't carrying, you know, big nuggets of gold in their pocket and things like that.

[23 : 48] But remember, just last week, we saw that they actually had believers selling their property and possession, didn't they? And laying it at their feet to be shared.

So, it's not like they had nothing to give the beggar, right? Even if they didn't have any gold or silver coins in their pockets, they could have gone and got some money or something to give to the beggar, right?

And also, it's true that after the beggar became a believer, he would have had access to all these shared property, wouldn't he? That the other believers, seeing him in need, would have shared with him as well.

And yet, Peter responds the way he does. He says, silver or gold, I have none. Why does he do that? Why does he say that? Well, I believe it's because Peter wanted to show the beggar that what he desired in his begging wasn't really what he needed.

And that what the apostles had was actually way, way better than silver and gold, the thing that he taught he needed. In fact, I would even say that the physical healing wasn't the most precious thing that the beggar received that day.

[25 : 03] Instead, the most precious thing that he received was found in faith, through faith in Jesus' name. And that was the forgiveness of sins leading to times of refreshing.

salvation. It was the gift of eternal life and relationship with God. that's the thing that Peter then offered to everyone else that listened to him that day, wasn't it?

And so, you may be here today, and perhaps you might be unhappy with God. You know, you might be thinking, I need more silver and gold. You know, I need more financial security. Or if only God would sort out this difficult situation in my life.

Or if he could give me healing so that I, you know, I'm stronger and I don't have this continual battle with this illness or that. That may be things that you think you need.

And I'm not saying that they are not things that God doesn't care about. But actually, think about this. Jesus has already offered you something much, much more precious than that.

[26 : 05] And that is eternal life. Forgiveness of sins. Restoration. Times of refreshing. And the gift of the Spirit. And in the same vein, you know, sometimes when we go out and we see people in need, we sometimes think it's much easier, isn't it, just to give money or food.

And we should. And I'm not saying don't be generous. But ultimately, we also should see that what they really need and what we can offer in the gospel is eternal life with Jesus by calling them to repentance and faith in Jesus, isn't it?

So just like Peter, we can help them physically. But let's also think about the opportunity we need to be seeking to have those conversations.

You know, that video there about spiritual conversations. Go to that website if you think you need help as to what to say. But we should be thinking, how can we offer them this more precious thing instead of just money or silver and gold?

And the fact of the matter is, we actually have, as I've said already back in chapter one, we already have God's spirit to help us do exactly that. Be Christ's witnesses to help them come to faith.

[27 : 26] And so you may be someone who is rich. You know, you may have lots of silver and gold in your pocket or at home. So by all means, be generous with that. I wouldn't mind some of that generosity too if you like.

But, but you don't have to give me anything, that's fine, because I have the most precious thing, don't I? I have eternal life in Jesus. And so give silver and gold. But more than that, share with them the good news of Jesus.

The one thing that they really need for eternity. Let's pray. Father, thank you that you have given us something more precious than gold. We have eternal blessing in Christ through faith in him.

Remind us when we feel poor, how rich we truly are. Help us when we seek to love others, to share these riches with them. Move all of us to repent from our wicked ways, so that times of refreshing will come in your presence.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.