

We are working our way through the Book of Acts which tells the story of the beginning and growth of the early church after the ascension of Jesus into heaven and his pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon his followers from his place in heaven at the right hand of God. Last time we looked at the story told in the first 10 verses of chapter 3 which is the story of a miracle that Peter performed in the name of Jesus – the healing of a man who had been lame from his birth. Peter told him in the name of Jesus to stand up and walk and miraculously he did so. He is described as walking and leaping and praising God.

Our text for this evening tells us what happened next. The miracle caused quite a stir. A crowd gathered around the Peter and John and the man who had been healed. The setting is in a part of the temple. And Peter takes the opportunity to preach the gospel to the people who had gathered. The gospel is the good news about Jesus. It is the message that Jesus had commissioned his apostles, and through them the church, to bring to the whole world. In Acts 1:8 Jesus had said to his apostles, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Our text is an example of Peter being Jesus’ witness in Jerusalem. It is a summary of the message about Jesus and the implications of who Jesus is for his hearers.

This is a very important part of the message of the Bible. The Bible tells us about God and the truth about God is very relevant for every human being. God created us. He created us to love and serve him. We are responsible to God for our lives. So the truth about God central to understanding who we are as human beings. God is our creator. God is our ruler. We exist for him. We can only understand who we are in the light of who God is. And the same is true of Jesus because Jesus is God. So this message is recorded in our text is about Jesus, but it is also about what that means for his hearers. Because of who Jesus is, how we relate to Jesus is the most important issue of our lives. And that is why Peter does not only talk about Jesus. He also weaves into his message what the implications of that are for his hearers.

Now the first thing that Peter emphasizes is that the miracle of healing the lame man was not done by the apostles’ own power, but by Jesus’ power. Peter sees the people gathering because of the miraculous healing of the lame man and he says, “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?” And he continues the thought in verse 16, “And his name – by faith in his name – has made this man strong....” Peter wants to make it very clear that this man has been healed by the power of Jesus and not by the power of Peter.

Peter here is reflecting something that is a very important part of the renewal that comes when a person believes in Jesus and receives the Holy Spirit. In our fallen sinful nature, we tend to want to glorify ourselves. But when the Holy Spirit changes us, we begin to learn to glorify Jesus. We are not delivered from the desire to glorify ourselves all at once, but the more we are delivered from the power of sin in our lives, the more we have the instinct to give Jesus the credit for anything good that we may do because we come to understand that all we can really do apart from Jesus’ power in our lives is sin. The more we mature as believers the more

we do what Peter does here and that is point away from ourselves to Jesus. Not that we are ever perfect in this regard in this life but spiritual growth will always tend toward humbling ourselves and exalting Jesus.

And much of Peter's message is about Jesus. And there is a very important application here that we should consider as we work our way through this message and that is that if Peter guided by the Holy Spirit is anxious to talk about Jesus, we need to be ready to hear about Jesus. The good life as the Bible describes is it about loving and worshipping and serving God and Jesus is God. That means that we will want to know more about him and we will delight in dwelling on what the Bible says about him. This passage has a lot in it about Jesus and certainly one of its purposes is that we will savor the delightful things about Jesus that Peter is anxious to relate to his hearers.

The next thing that Peter says about Jesus is that "The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus." (Acts 3:13). Remember that Peter is speaking here to Jews. He had addressed them earlier as "men of Israel." The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was the God of the Jews – the God of the OT. Peter is saying to these Jewish people that their God had glorified his servant Jesus. Remember that the Jewish people, for the most part, had rejected Jesus. They had killed him. The people who were listening to Peter - those who were not Jesus' followers - did not accept Jesus as the Saviour whom God had sent to them. But Peter is saying that the God of Israel – the God of the OT – he had glorified his servant Jesus. That meant that they had rejected the one whom God had sent to them. That means that the Jews who rejected Jesus were at odds with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had sent Jesus and glorified him. They had rejected him and killed him.

That means that Jesus is connected to the whole OT story. The OT story is about God's plan for the salvation of the world. There are many promises concerning a Saviour who would come to deliver his people from their sins and reign over them forever. The Jews who rejected Jesus did not believe that Jesus was the one whom the OT pointed towards. Peter is saying that he was and that God had confirmed that by glorifying Jesus when he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

By calling Jesus God's servant, Peter is alluding to a number of passages in the book of Isaiah that refer to the servant of the Lord. For instance in Isaiah 42:1, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob says, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations." The servant of the Lord is also described in Isaiah 53. For example, verse 5, "But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed." But also Isaiah 52:13 "Behold, my servant shall act wisely, he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted."

So Peter is saying to his Jewish audience, "This is who Jesus is. You rejected him but he is the one of whom Isaiah spoke and God has affirmed that by "glorif[ying] his servant Jesus. The Jesus who has healed this lame

man is the one whom the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has sent into the world for the salvation of the world.”

Peter also refers to Jesus using a couple of other terms. Much of what we know about Jesus, we learn by understand the terms that are used to refer to him. In verse 14 Peter says, “[Y]ou denied the Holy and Righteous One.” There are many OT prophecies that refer to the coming deliverer as righteous. Jeremiah 23:5 says, “Behold the days are coming, declares the LORD when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.” Most of the promises of God’s coming salvation have to do with God establishing his kingdom under a righteous king who will reign in righteousness. Peter also refers to Jesus as the Holy One. This is closely related to the idea that Jesus is righteous. He is the Holy and Righteous One.

This is an important part of who Jesus is. The great problem in the world is sin. No one is perfectly righteous and holy – except Jesus. That sets Jesus apart from every other human being who ever lived. And that righteousness and holiness was an important part of what qualified him to bring salvation. Had he not been perfectly righteous and holy, he would not have been able to pay the penalty for the sins of his people since he would have been like everyone else being responsible for his own sin. But the OT passages that speak of Jesus’ righteousness focus on the fact that he will reign in righteousness and he shall execute justice and righteousness in his kingdom. Think of all the unrighteousness in the world. And then think of Jesus as the Holy and Righteousness One. We can always count on him to do what is right. And we can look forward to the time when he will bring his kingdom in its fullness and when that happens there will be no more injustice, no more unfairness, no more laws that are contrary to the Word of God.

Another term that Peter uses to refer to Jesus is “the Author of life.” Verse 15, “[Y]ou killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.” What a beautiful title for Jesus! Think of the wonder of life! What a wonderful gift just to be alive! Think of the difference between life and death. Think the richness of our experience of being alive, being able to think, being able to relate to other people, being able to do things that satisfy, being able to enjoy. But more than that think of the fullness of life that comes with salvation – to know, love and worship God – to begin to live for the glory of God – to learn to live lives of love and wholeness and purpose.

Jesus is the Author of all of that. John 1:4, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” John really emphasizes this theme. In John 11:25-26 we hear Jesus say, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” John 14:6, Jesus says, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Jesus is the author of the life of all people because he is the Creator, but he is also and especially the author of eternal life – new life in him – the life of the born again. This is life that is centered in a loving relationship with God. This is the life of being loved by

God and of loving God. This is the life of seeking to please God by flourishing as he designed us to flourish – by loving, serving, worshipping, and obeying him. Jesus is the Author of this life.

And that life is the life of Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Verse 15, "[A]nd you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead." The Author of life died to pay the penalty for the sins of his people. One of the reasons that the Son of God became a man was so that he might die and in so doing conquer death. The wages of sin is death. Jesus paid those wages. Having done that, the debt was paid. Death could no longer hold him. God was satisfied with the atonement that Jesus made and raised him from the dead. And that resurrection life he shares with all who believe in him. In Ephesians 2 Paul says that at one time we were dead in trespasses and sins, but God has "made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5).

So Peter is explaining that the lame man had been healed by the power of Jesus and in the course of that explanation he relates aspects of the glory of Christ. It is part of his gospel presentation. It is part of his witness to Jesus. There is a lot to say about Jesus. There are many different facets that can be mentioned. And for those who believe in Jesus they are all aspects of his glory – truths about Jesus that nurture our faith in Jesus and our love for Jesus.

In verse 16, Peter brings up the important role of faith in the performance of that miracle of the healing of the lame man. "And his name [Jesus' 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 your all."

So Jesus did not do this miracle apart from the faith of Peter and the faith of the man who was healed. The words of verse 16 do not make it absolutely clear whose faith Peter is talking about, but it is likely that Peter is speaking about both his own faith and the faith of the man who was healed. But what he is crystal clear about is that this miracle did not happen apart from faith. This reminds us of the story of Jesus' rejection in his hometown of Nazareth. Mark 6:5-6 say, "And he could do no mighty works there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief."

God has chosen to accomplish many of his purposes, at least, through the faith of his people. As the Book of Acts makes clear, Jesus has involved his people in a major way in his work of building his church and establishing his kingdom. Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of God. He works on earth through his Holy Spirit, but he does that work through his people and that involves faith on the part of his people.

Faith is believing in Jesus. It is trusting Jesus. It is trusting Jesus' word and his promises. So when Peter told the lame man to stand up and walk he was trusting in Jesus' power and his promise to do miracles through the apostles. But there was also faith on the part of the lame man. He had to stand up and walk. Peter's words in verse 16 make it clear that the healing power of Jesus came to this man through faith in Jesus' name.

This does not mean that if we have enough faith we can do miracles in Jesus' name or that we can be healed of our sicknesses in Jesus' name. As we have seen, the miracles that apostles' did had to do with

authenticating them and their message in the new period of salvation history that they were part of. While God may still do miracles from time to time, it is not his usual practice today and it is certainly not the case that he will heal us if we have enough faith. Faith has to do with believing God's promises, and he has not promised to do miracles if we have enough faith.

But faith is the way through which God does what he has promised to do. He promises to forgive the sins of those who believe in Jesus. He promises to grant his Holy Spirit to those who believe in Jesus. He promises eternal life to those who believe in Jesus. The gifts of salvation are given to us by faith. Faith is believing that Jesus is who he says he is and it is trusting in him to do what he says he will do.

Now interwoven with all what Peter is saying about Jesus are charges that his hearers had not recognized Jesus for who he was and is, but rather they had rejected him as the Saviour sent from God. They delivered [him] over and denied [him] in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him. They denied the Holy And Righteous One and asked for a murder to be granted to [them]. They killed the Author of Life. (Verses 13-14). There is a huge contrast between how they should have received Jesus as their Saviour and Lord and how they actually treated him. And that is a problem for these people because it matters very much whether we receive Jesus or whether we reject him. Because Jesus was sent by God – because he is God in the flesh – rejecting him is a very serious matter. It is required of all people to honor Jesus as the Son of God. It is required of all people to believe in him and submit to him and follow him.

And so in verses 17-19, Peter deals with the predicament his hearers were in because they had rejected Jesus. First he says that they had acted in ignorance. That is not an excuse, but was a mitigating factor. It would have been far worse had they rejected and killed Jesus in the full knowledge of who he was. Next Peter mentions that Jesus' suffering had been foretold by the prophets. Then he calls for repentance. Verse 19, "Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out...."

The rejection of Jesus was and continues to be a very serious matter. The most important requirement of our lives is that we acknowledge, believe in him, honor, worship and serve God and the NT makes it clear that Jesus is God and God requires that we receive him as our Saviour and Lord. There are many different words that describe how we must respond to Jesus as he is revealed in the Bible and proclaimed in the witness of the church. Here the word used is repentance and it is a common way of summing up how we are called to respond to Jesus.

Repentance is a turning from sin. It involves confession of sin. It involves acknowledgement of who Jesus is. It involves turning away from sin and turning to obedience. It involves faith as well because not believing is also a sin. Repentance is acknowledging that we are not the boss of our lives, but that Jesus is our Lord and Master. It is acknowledging that we are not free to live as we please, but we are required to submit to God's will for our lives as that is taught in the Scriptures. It involves trusting Jesus' promises and trusting that keeping his commands is the very best way to live.

Peter promises three great blessings to those who repent of their sins. First he promises that through repentance their sins will be blotted out. The image of blotting out is “to cause to disappear by wiping.” The idea is that our sins written down in a very long list and then in the way of repentance the list is wiped clear. As one commentator put it, “When God forgives he wipes the slate clean.”

The second blessing mentioned for those who repent is that the “times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord.” The refreshing mentioned here is the experience of the blessings of salvation in the here and now. They are not yet the full blessings of salvation, but what we do experience in this life is certainly refreshing. There is rest for the weary. There is peace for the guilty. There is the refreshment of soul that comes through knowing and loving and serving God. There is joy in the Lord. There is the refreshment of living to please God. And on and on it goes.

The third blessing mentioned is that God will “send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom the heaven must receive until the time for restoring all things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.” The fullness of salvation will come when Jesus returns and restores all things. That is one of the ways that the Bible refers to what God is working towards through Jesus Christ – the restoration of all things. The curse of sin will be completely removed and the creation will be restored. Paul refers to this same thing in different words in Romans 8:21 where he writes, “[T]he creation will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”

What a motivation for repentance! What a motivation for on-going repentance! Sins blotted out. Refreshment from the presence of God. And the hope of the restoration of all things. And that for people who have rejected Jesus, but have repented. That for people who have sinned in all kinds of ways, but have turned to the Lord. That is the good news of Jesus Christ.

In the last few verses Peter speaks about how all of these things have been spoken by the prophets and how Jesus is the prophet whom Moses had prophesied that God would raise up. With that comes a warning. Verses 22-23, “Moses said, ‘The Lord will raise up 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.’” Jesus was that prophet and while he spoke while he was on earth, he continued to speak through his apostles and then in the written word of God. His message is good news for those who repent. But there is always a warning for those who do not. “Every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed.”

But the last word is a word of grace. Verse 26, “God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” The message has come to the Jews first, but it then was proclaimed to the rest of the world. It is a call to repentance, but repentance is a blessing. God sent his servant to you “to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” We are called to repent, but it is God who enables us to repent so that he can be said that he turns us from our wickedness. And the

great truth implied here is that wickedness is the opposite of blessedness. It is no blessing to be left in our wickedness. It is a blessing when God turns us from our wickedness and that is why there is no salvation without repentance. This is one of the ways of summing up why Jesus came – “to bless us by turning everyone of us from our wickedness.” Let us take that to heart in thanksgiving. Let us take that to heart in turning from our own wickedness.