

THE KINGDOM AMONG US

ACTS 3



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A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Kingdom among Us: Acts 3
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Introduction to Acts 3

The book of Acts is an excellent place to begin the study of historical theology, which focuses on the ongoing work of Christ as He builds His Church and advances His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

We have looked at the coming of the Kingdom and the beginning of its expansion on earth. In Acts 3 a second theme of historical theology emerges, the impact of Christianity on its world. As we shall see, God intends that impact to be one of healing, restoration, and reconciliation.

The story of Peter and John and the healing of the lame man is a microcosm of the power of the Kingdom as it impacts a world wracked with sin and pervaded by unbelief. In this story we will see how the risen Christ brings healing to the world through the proclamation of His Kingdom and the loving work of His servants.

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We hope you find this study of Acts instructive and helpful to equip you for your walk with and work for the Lord. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Kingdom Basics

Pray Psalm 55.16-19.

As for me, I will call upon God,
And the LORD shall save me.
Evening and morning and at noon
I will pray, and cry aloud,
And He shall hear my voice.
He has redeemed my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me,
For there were many against me.
God will hear, and afflict them,
Even He who abides from of old.
Selah

Sing Psalm 55.16-19.

(Bread of Life: [Break Thou the Bread of Life](#))
Lord, I will call on You, answer and save!
Morning and evening too, my voice I raise.
Grant me Your peace, O Lord; answer my foes!
All who reject God's Word He overthrows.

Read and meditate on Acts 3.1.

Preparation

1. The Kingdom has come; everything has changed. What are Peter and John going to do in this verse?
2. When do they go to do this?

Meditation

I know this seems like a very slight portion of Scripture for an entire day's meditation. But there's much here to ponder, especially when it comes to understanding the ongoing work of Christ as He is supplanting the kingdom of darkness with the Kingdom of Light. What Luke describes in this verse is a single event, one of many he might have chosen, but one that gives us insight to the work of the Kingdom.

We might translate the verb here something like “would go up” or “used to go up.” Luke's choice of the imperfect verb form, ἀνέβαινον (*anebainon*), to describe Peter's and John's *going up* to the temple, suggests this was a *habitual* practice on their parts. They weren't just going up to the temple at this moment. They were *in the habit* or *had embraced the discipline* of going up to the temple like this.

But why were they going up to the temple? Luke explains that it was “the hour of prayer.” As we saw in Acts 1, the Apostles followed the Old Testament practice of praying the psalms. They also followed the Old Testament practice of observing *set hours of prayer* during the day. Whether the *hours of prayer* were two, three, or seven is not clear. But this much is clear: The Apostles drew aside at certain hours of the day to join with other believers – or to retreat by themselves (Acts 10.9) – for prayer.

The Kingdom of God comes not only by proclamation, but by prayer (Matt. 6.10). Prayer is basic to the coming of the Kingdom, life in the New Community, and the ongoing work of Christ.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

While checking to see if *a* or *an* is the more appropriate article to attend habitual, I read the clarifying sentence. Look at what they used: He was found to be a habitual drug abuser. FYI, *a* is now the preferred article. And in their opinion, habitual drug abuse is the best example for it.

That strikes me as sad. Wouldn't it be wonderful if Christians were so known for habitual prayer that Merriam-Webster used us as an example?

Here are just a few Biblical references showing how to become habitual:

"Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed [that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except the king], he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days" (Dan. 6.10). Courageous and consistent prayer.

"As for me, I will call upon God, and the LORD shall save me. Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice" (Ps. 55.16, 17). Persistent prayer.

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you..." (Matt. 5.44). Difficult prayer.

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who *is* in the secret *place*; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6.6) Private prayer.

"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak" (Matt. 26.41). Protective prayer.

"...pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5.17). Continuous prayer.

"Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray" (Jms. 5.13). Practical prayer.

"...pray for one another, that you may be healed" (Jms. 5.16). Healing prayer.

"The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jms. 5.16). Productive prayer.

Truly, if we were performing this Kingdom Basic, we would be the ultimate example of habitual.

Courageous, consistent, persistent, difficult, private, public, protective, practical, healing, and productive prayer—"golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints" (Rev. 5.8).

For reflection

1. Most Christians wish they had a better prayer life. Why do you suppose that is?
2. How about your own prayer life? Which of the words in the last paragraph of the *Treasure* section would you like to have describing your prayer life?
3. Why is prayer *the* Kingdom Basic for the ongoing work of Christ?

The Jews had appointed two hours for prayer, one in the morning and one in the evening. During morning prayer they sacrificed the burnt offering; during evening prayer the evening offering. Now since by the ancients the day was divided into just twelve hours, this ninth hour is around evening, when we Christians hold vespers. This is when Peter and John entered the temple to pray...
Johann Spangenberg (1484-1550), *Brief Exegetis of Acts 3:1-2.1*

Pray Psalm 55.1-8.

Ask God to remove from you all fear of being His witness. Pray that He will fill you with His heavenly Dove so that you can do the work of the Kingdom for today.

Sing Psalm 55.1-8.

(Bread of Life: [*Break Thou the Bread of Life*](#))

Hear now my prayer, O Lord, hide not from me.

Answer me by Your Word and set me free!

Wicked men sore oppress; restless am I.

Lord, ease my soul's distress and hear my cry!

My heart in fear abides; terror descends.

Horror with me resides and knows no end.

I would escape from here, flee like a dove.

Rescue me from my fear with shelt'ring love.

2 Rise Up!

Pray Psalm 142.1, 2, 5, 6.

I cry out to the LORD with my voice;
With my voice to the LORD I make my supplication.
I pour out my complaint before Him;
I declare before Him my trouble...
I cried out to You, O LORD:
I said, “You *are* my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.
Attend to my cry,
For I am brought very low;
Deliver me from my persecutors,
For they are stronger than I.

Sing Psalm 142.1, 2, 5, 6.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

With my voice, O Lord, I cry – hear my plea for mercy, Lord!
My complaint mounts up on high, bringing You my troubled word:

Refrain *vv.* 5, 6

Lord, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

Read Acts 3.1-8; meditate on verses 2-8.

Preparation

1. What was this man’s condition when Peter and John encountered him?
2. What did Peter do for him?

Meditation

This is truly a “beautiful” story, and not just because of where it takes place. Luke uses that location to highlight the beauty of the story and make a point about the Kingdom and its impact.

This man was going about his usual business, seeking alms from passersby, hoping merely for enough to survive. He had no prospects of anything more, having been lame from birth. He was without hope or prospects, in a body that was crippled and dying.

We note the power of grace here: Even when this man looked at Peter, he was expecting nothing more than a coin or two. He wasn’t looking to be healed. But Peter was on a mission that was more than material in nature, and he gave this man something far more valuable than what any amount of money could buy.

We note the combination of the *command* to rise, the *invocation of the name* of Jesus, and the *helpful gesture*. Faith acts through works of various kinds to bring the blessings of God to men. It is just such actions that make the Church and the Name of Jesus beautiful and a source of joy in any community (Ps. 48.1, 2).

Luke’s noting that the man *rose up* (was “lifted up”), became strengthened in his feet and ankles, and began leaping and walking about is a true picture of the healing, restoring, and reconciling power of the Kingdom of God. Human beings were made “upright” in every way (Eccl. 7.29). But sin has enfeebled us, and brings corruption into culture and society. Only words and works of grace and faith can restore us to our upright place before God – a place defined by wholeness and worship.

The power of the Kingdom flows to other people and into cultural arenas (like the temple) through the faith and work of Kingdom citizens, bringing healing and restoration to many people in many ways. Where will you make a beautiful impact for Him today?

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

“Then the lame shall leap like a deer...” (Is. 35.6).

“There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel” (Prov. 20.15).

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father” (Jn. 14.12).

Two of these verses they had read. The third they were told first-hand by Jesus.

And they had also been told this: “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (Jn. 14.26).

There Peter and John are. Full of the Holy Spirit. Living circumspectly in their Personal Mission Fields. On their way to church. And a distraction happens. In the bustling crowd a voice calls out to them for help. And having already learned from Jesus that people are more important than the program, they stopped to see what they could do. And as they stopped, the Holy Spirit was already bringing to their minds the things they knew from Scripture about the potential possibilities in this moment.

And maybe even, when the lame man only asked for alms, Jesus’ response to the Sadducees came to mind, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22.29).

The lame man was mistaken in his request; unaware that the disciples had so much more to offer than money.

And so do we. Is it possible, though, that those around us don’t know the goodness we have to offer?

We know the Scriptures, we know the power of God, we have repented and been forgiven, we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we have been commanded to go into all the world with this Good News. But are we? Are we able to recognize that others need so much more than what they may be asking for? Pocket change, instead of the gift of becoming a whole new creation? (2 Cor. 5.17)

Let’s reach out our hand to those lame from birth, dead in their trespasses and sins. Those just like we were (Eph. 2.1). Let’s tell them about “... God, who is rich in mercy, [who] because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ...” (Eph. 2.4, 5).

We just need to be ready and confident enough to say, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up!” (Acts 3.6) “And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5.2).

For reflection

1. What could you do to be more available to the Spirit for telling others about Jesus?
2. How can churches become more consistent in taking the Good News of Jesus to their communities?
3. To whom can you reach out a hand today to show them the love of Jesus?

Such was also the way of Christ. Often he healed by word, often by an act, often he also held out his hand, when the people were

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somewhat weak in faith, so that the cure should not seem to occur by itself. "And he took him by the right hand and raised him up." This act made manifest the resurrection, for it was an image of the resurrection. John Chrysostom (344-407), Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles 8

Pray Psalm 142.3-7.

Whatever are your burdens or challenges, give them to the Lord in prayer. Roll them onto Him, then rise up, giving thanks and praise that He has heard your prayers and will carry you through.

Sing Psalm 142.3-7.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

When my spirit faints away, You my falt'ring pathway know;
Where I take my journey they traps have hidden to my woe.

Refrain vv. 5, 6

Lord, You are my Refuge strong! O receive my plaintive song!

Lord, look to my right and see: None takes notice of my plight.
Is there refuge left for me? Is my soul out of Your sight?

Refrain

Hear my cry, Lord, I am low! They are strong who seek my soul.
Jesus frees from every foe; He will keep and make me whole!

Refrain

Out of prison lead me, Lord; thanks and praise to You shall be.
Righteous men armed with Your Word will Your grace bestow on me.

Refrain

3 Wonder and Amazement

Pray Psalm 126.1-3.

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion,
We were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
And our tongue with singing.
Then they said among the nations,
“The LORD has done great things for them.”
The LORD has done great things for us,
And we are glad.

Sing Psalm 126.1-3.

(Truro: [*Shout, for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*](#))

When God restored our fortunes all, we were like those who sweetly dream.
Our mouths with joy and laughter filled, made Him our constant song and theme.

Then the astonished nations said, “The Lord has done great things for them!”
Indeed, great things our God has done, Whose Name we praise, Amen, Amen!
Read Acts 3.1-10; meditate on verses 9 and 10.

Preparation

1. What did “all the people” know?
2. Why were they “filled with wonder and amazement”?

Meditation

Well I guess! Wouldn't you be filled with “wonder and amazement” at such a thing? We note that the people “saw him walking and praising God.” The life of faith is meant to be flaunted, displayed, proclaimed, and celebrated. It is not merely a *private affair*, as some of Christianity's detractors might like.

The healing power of the Gospel releases energies of joy and worship that come to the attention of the watching world when they are put on display *in the everyday settings* of the world. Most folks in this situation had come to the temple to praise God. They were doubtless planning to do so formally, as a group, following a prescribed liturgy or program. Then leave. This man's praise was so genuine, earnest, and constant that people flocked to see the fuss. They recognized the man lame from birth, and saw what he was doing; please remember: these folks had passed by this fellow every day *for years*, so they were “filled with wonder and amazement.”

The Kingdom comes with distinguishing signs, signs so wonderful, so out of the ordinary, that people who observe them cannot help but question and be amazed. Primary among these are the changed lives of believers and the beautiful and joy-bringing ministry of the Church. Let our sad and cynical world begin to glimpse these once again, and wonder and amazement won't be far away.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

The Kingdom among us will be seen when we employ the word *and*.
As in “walking” **and** “praising” in our Personal Mission Fields.

It is good to walk in the Lord. These verses confirm that:

The Lord will say to us, “This is the way, walk in it” (Is. 30.21).

We are to “walk humbly” with our God (Mic. 6.8).

“For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5.7).

“Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Gal. 5.16).

“And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Eph. 5.2).

“...that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God...” (Col. 1.10).

“...and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy” (Rev. 3.4).

Praise is also a noble endeavor:

“...the people shall praise You forever and ever” (Ps. 45.17).

“Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You” (Ps. 67.3).

“My praise shall be continually of You” (Ps. 71.6).

“Blessed *are* those who dwell in Your house; they will still be praising You” (Ps. 84.4).

“From the rising of the sun to its going down the LORD’s name *is* to be praised” (Ps. 113.3).

“Seven times a day I praise You, because of Your righteous judgments” (Ps. 119. 164).

“Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145.3).

“Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God;
for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful” (Ps. 147.1).

“...You are my praise” (Jer. 17.14).

“Then a voice came from the throne, saying, ‘Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!’” (Rev. 19.5)

Now combine the two, and people might be “filled with wonder and amazement at what” has happened to us!

And better yet, what can happen to them. Walking and praising God stirs the hearts of those who observe it.

“Then they knew...” (Acts 3.10).

“Let our sad and cynical world begin to glimpse these once again, and wonder and amazement won’t be far away.”

For reflection

1. In what ways is it visible in your life that Jesus has healed and raised you up?
2. People insist they can’t walk and chew gum at the same time. Could you “walk” and “praise” the Lord more consistently than you do? Explain.
3. How can Christians encourage one another to more consistent walking and praising the Lord as part of the ongoing work of Jesus in their lives?

How sweet the thought to our souls, that in respect to all the crippled faculties of our fallen nature, the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth can make us whole! With what holy joy and rapture shall we tread the holy courts, when God the Spirit causes us to enter therein by his strength! Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 3.1-11

Pray Psalm 126.4-6.

Pray that God would deliver His Church from its captivity to culture, convenience, and the status quo, and that His salvation may flow forth from His people to cause the world to wonder and be amazed.

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Sing Psalm 126:4-6.

(Truro: [*Shout for the Blessed Jesus Reigns!*](#))

Restore our fortunes, Lord our King! Let grace like flowing streams prevail.
All they with tears of joy shall sing who sow while yet they weep and wail.

They who in tears of sorrow sow and cast their seed on every hand,
with joy shall reach their heav'nly home, and bring the harvest of their land.

4 Big Deal? Big Deal!

Pray Psalm 145.1-3.

I will extol You, my God, O King;
And I will bless Your name forever and ever.
Every day I will bless You,
And I will praise Your name forever and ever.
Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
And His greatness *is* unsearchable.

Sing Psalm 145.1-3.

(Brother James' Air: [*The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want*](#))

I will extol You, God, my King, and ever praise Your Name!
I bless You, Lord, for everything each day, and e'er the same!
Great are You, Lord, my praise I bring; unsearchable Your fame!

Read Acts 3.1-16; meditate on verses 11-16.

Preparation

1. How did Peter explain this man's healing?
2. What was *not* responsible for his healing?

Meditation

Peter is almost too cool here as he seems to be saying to the astonished people, "What's the big deal? What'd you expect, what with Jesus rising from the dead and all? Isn't this just the same thing *He* did, and which He now *continues* to do?" A new reality has broken into human experience, and the apostles get it, while the crowds can only look on in amazement. The Good News is about God and what He is doing, not about men or anything they might accomplish.

Peter comforts his hearers: You sinners! You murderers! You who prefer the scum of the earth to the Messiah of God! That ought to get their attention. Then look at the lovely, powerful way Peter connects Jesus with God's covenant, and the Holy and Righteous One glimpsed and anticipated throughout the Old Testament. He was here, Peter says. You killed Him. God raised Him up. This man walks by the power of His Name. What's the big deal?

Of course, the Kingdom of God *is* a big deal – *the* big deal, we should say. It's the new reality in the world, even though most of the world remains out of sync with the ongoing work of Christ. It's just a matter of time, though – time and faithfulness on our parts. The Kingdom of God comes with power, which is making all things new. Christians must neither fear nor neglect that power. Rather, we should *seek* it like the apostles did in Acts 1, *proclaim* it like Peter did in Acts 2, and *wield* it like Peter and John in Acts 3.

That day in the temple, no one who was present doubted that something new, wonderful, and amazing had happened. And it was neither magic nor the result of some cleverly-organized, big-skill-set effort on the part of some local church. Just two guys being Jesus to their world (Acts 1.8).

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Peter and John gave the perfect response to worldly acclaim.
Turn your eyes away from us, and look to Jesus.
He is the source of all power for goodness and life.

“Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us,
but to Your name give glory,
because of Your mercy,
because of Your truth.
Why should the Gentiles say,
‘So where is their God?’
But our God is in heaven;
He does whatever He pleases.” (Ps. 115.1-3)

Peter then abruptly turns their eyes onto themselves. Yes, he says to them, you killed Jesus by delivering Him up and denying His release. Hear me now he says, “you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and killed the Prince of life...” (Acts 3.13).

Peter never lets anyone forget, nor should we, that there is much bad news to go along with the best Good News ever. Unless they, and we, and others realize the depth of our sins and our extreme need to be saved from the wrath of God, we will never properly appreciate the need for, and the gift of, forgiveness and life that has been lavished upon us.

A denial of dirt doubts the need for soap.
“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse of from all unrighteousness.
If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar,
and His word is not in us” (I Jn. 1.8-10).

When the need for a Savior is proclaimed, all eyes are on Him. And He never fails (1 Cor. 13.8).
“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5.8, 9).

And that is a very big deal!

For reflection

1. What is the “bad news” people need to know about themselves?
2. How does Jesus deal with this “bad news”?
3. What will “being Jesus” in your world require of you today?

Peter pointed to the healing of the beggar as a sign of the glorification of Christ. The people had handed Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. Yet God had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead. It was in the name of this very same Jesus that the crippled man was healed. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), NKJV Study Bible Note on Acts 3.13-16

Pray Psalm 145.13-21.

Thank God that His Kingdom has come and is coming more and more every day. Ask Him to lead you today as a Kingdom ambassador for righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14.17, 18).

Sing Psalm 145.13-21.

(Brother James’ Air: *The Lord’s My Shepherd, I’ll Not Want*)

Your Kingdom evermore shall be; You reign forever, Lord!

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Your works You do so faithfully, according to Your Word.
The falling You uphold and the oppressed You rescue, Lord!

The eyes of all look up to You to meet our needs each day.
Open Your hand, provide the food we need, O Lord, we pray!
Kindness and righteousness You do, O Lord, in every way!

Be near to all who call on You; all those who fear You, bless.
Preserve all those whose love is true; save us in our distress.
Our mouths will speak with praise of You; Your holy Name we bless!

5 Overcoming Ignorance with Truth

Pray Psalm 98.1-3.

Oh, sing to the LORD a new song!
For He has done marvelous things;
His right hand and His holy arm have gained Him the victory.
The LORD has made known His salvation;
His righteousness He has revealed in the sight of the nations.
He has remembered His mercy and His faithfulness to the house of Israel;
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Sing Psalm 98.1-3.

(Duke Street: [*Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*](#))

Come, let us sing unto the Lord new songs of praise with one accord!
Wonderful things our God has done: Jesus has our salvation won!

Now is God's saving mercy known; His glory to the world is shown.
Faithful and kind is God our Lord; earth has the Name of Jesus heard.

Read Acts 3.1-21; meditate on verses 17-21.

Preparation

1. What did God fulfill in Jesus' death and resurrection?
2. What is the proper response to this?

Meditation

Peter says that his hearers "practiced ignorance," not only in killing the Lord, but in everything else they did as well. They were living in darkness and unbelief, under the canopy of the Lie, and not in the Light of God. So Peter, and the Lord, are willing to cut them some slack. Their rulers, too. That "ignorance" though, must have grated on any rulers in the audience, I suspect. Truth hurts.

The coming of Christ brings light and truth and understanding into the way of things (Eph. 4.17-24). But to enter that experience one must repent and turn away from every sinful practice, giving evidence of forgiveness in their hearts, and opening their souls and every aspect of their lives to the refreshing blessings of the Lord.

The blessings of salvation are all to be enjoyed in Jesus, Whom we may know, enjoy, and follow now, and Who is one day coming to take us unto Himself forever. This, Peter explained, is all in line with the prophets; he's not making this up. We can turn to those same prophets to help skeptics and scorners today to see that God has truly appointed Jesus for the salvation of lost sinners. If, that is, they are willing to repent and believe the Good News.

In ignorance the religious people of Peter and John's day acted contrary to the will of God. These people went up to the temple to pray and worship *daily*. But they were ignorant of the truth of God and guilty of sinning against Him. They thought the followers of Jesus were the ignorant ones. Much like today.

The Gospel offers the hope of life and refreshment in the Lord, but people need to admit their sins and turn from them before they can receive the ongoing work of Christ in their lives. For now, ignorance engulfs

many of our neighbors. Our duty is, knowing their ignorance, to make known to them the truth that is in Jesus.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

And “when we make known to them the truth that is in Jesus” we can rest assured that this Word, this truth, is sure.

Peter pointed out their sin to them for three reasons:

1. They needed to be sure of their need for a Savior.
2. They needed to realize that all the words about this very occasion, their participation in the killing of Jesus, was prophesied in the Scriptures. And it had been fulfilled. Just so.
3. Jesus will return in the “times of restoration”. This has been prophesied. It will be fulfilled. Just so. “...those things which God has foretold...He has thus fulfilled” (Acts 3.18). Acts fulfilled. “...that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken...” (Acts 3.21). Acts to come.

Get on board. God has spoken about His Son Jesus by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began. (Acts 3.21) And He will return. “I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom... (2 Tim. 4.1).

We, too, can rest assured that every word of the Scriptures is true. We can count on it, and not be afraid to take it into our hearts—to read it, absorb it, meditate on it, consume it, pray about it, and fully believe it. And then boldly share it with others.

It is the basis for our existence. “Set your hearts on all the words—all the words of this law. For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life...” (Deut. 32.46, 47).

“Is not My word like a fire?” says the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’” (Jer. 23.29)

“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (Jn. 17.17).

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...” (Col. 3.16).

“For the word of God is living and powerful...” (Heb. 4.12).

We can absolutely count on every word of God to be true and trustworthy. God always keeps His promises. His word never returns void (Is. 55.11).

“The words of the LORD *are* pure words,
like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps.12.6).

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matt. 24.35).

Like Peter, we carry the confidence of this secure Word into our Personal Mission Fields to overcome ignorance with Truth.

For reflection

1. Why can we have confidence in the message of the Gospel? What should we expect as we share it?
2. We are *not* ignorant of the things of Christ. How should knowing and believing the Gospel affect our prayers?
3. What does it mean to set your heart on all the words of God’s Law and all His Word?

Ignorance, saith he, hath made you guilty, yet God hath brought that to pass which he had determined, that Christ should redeem

The Kingdom among Us: Acts 3

you by his death. This is a most notable consideration, when as we ponder and consider with ourselves, that through the wonderful counsel of God our evils are turned to another end to us... John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Acts 3.18*

Pray Psalm 98.4-9.

Pay attention today to every reminder of God's goodness and salvation – the warm sun, a passing bird, the kindness of a friend, the food on your table. Rejoice in the Lord and speak of your joy to Him out loud.

Sing Psalm 98.4-9.

(Duke Street: [*Come, Let Us Sing unto the Lord*](#))

Raise to the Lord your loudest voice! Break forth and sing! Rejoice! Rejoice!

Praise, praise to You our God and King, with all our hearts and strength we bring!

Now let the whole creation 'round burst into song with joyous sound!

Jesus will come to judge the earth; let all proclaim His matchless worth!

6 Things to Come

Pray Psalm 78.1-4.

Give ear, O my people, *to* my law;
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
I will open my mouth in a parable;
I will utter dark sayings of old,
Which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children,
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD,
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.

Sing Psalm 78.1-4.

(Foundation: *How Firm a Foundation*)

Give ear, O my people, attend to my word,
dark sayings and parables sent from the Lord,
things we have before by our fathers been told,
which we would not dare from our children withhold.

Read Acts 3.1-26; meditate on verses 22-26.

Preparation

1. Where did Peter turn to validate his claims about Jesus?
2. In what do the blessings of God primarily consist?

Meditation

Peter explains that Jesus is the promised Prophet Who has life in Himself and Whom to disobey is to perish. Again we see Peter inserting this warning of judgment: You've heard the Good News; reject it to your peril (v. 23). We must include the *bad* news along with the *Good*, if only to keep the *whole truth* in a proper perspective.

Moses was speaking about Jesus. He was promised in the covenant with Abraham and proclaimed in the prophets throughout the Old Testament (Jn. 5.39). The Scriptures everywhere testify to Jesus and the Kingdom God is bringing through Him.

The mention here of "all the families of the earth" being blessed (v. 25) not only ties into the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12.1-3) but serves to foreshadow events to come in the book of Acts. Yet there will be no blessing, no forgiveness, and no hope of promise without repentance, without turning from sin to the holiness and righteousness of God (v. 26).

Peter's first sermon wasn't a fluke, a momentary burst of courage perhaps sustained as much by adrenalin as by a real and transforming spiritual experience. No, he's a changed man, a bold man, a caring and urgent man – a man on a mission. Peter is like that generation who invaded the land of promise in the book of Joshua. Whereas previously the people of Israel (and Peter) demurred and denied the Lord and His promised land, now Peter and this new generation were charging ahead, like the people in Joshua's day, all faith and fearlessness, taking on giants and laying the foundations of the Kingdom of God.

Let's make sure we are of the generation of Joshua and Peter, and not of those who, unfaithful to their calling, failed to claim the promises of God.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

These folks were being taken to the woodshed! You denied Him, you chose a murderer in His place, and you killed Him. The accusations were all true; and they knew it. But here's the upside: "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" (Acts 3.26). "You first."

They fulfilled the bad news prophesied (Ps. 22.6-8). But now they are the first to participate in the good news prophesied (Joel 2.29): "A posterity shall serve Him. It will be recounted of the Lord to the *next* generation. They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has done *this*" (Ps. 22.30, 31).

Peter also reminded them of Moses' words concerning Jesus: "*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*" (Acts 3.22; Deut. 18.15).

Him you shall hear. But not just hear what you like or what is easy. Whatever He says to you, hear!

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14.6).

"If you love Me, keep My commandments" (Jn. 14.15)

"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you" (Jn. 15.14).

"But 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" (Acts 1.8).

And now on to us. We are as guilty as they, and we are just as forgiven. We might not be the first to hear the bad and good news, but we are equally included!

"And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..." (Eph. 2.17-20).

We are participants in the promised things to come:

"...I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (Joel 2.29).

We carry the legacy of Joshua and Peter into our days, so "... let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6.9).

For reflection

1. What happened to Peter? Could what happened to Peter happen to you? Explain.
2. Why is it important for us to understand that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is tied in with the promises made to Abraham?
3. What does hearing Jesus mean for you today?

Christ came into the world to bring a blessing with him. And he sent his Spirit to be the great blessing. Christ came to bless us, by turning us from our iniquities, and saving us from our sins. We, by nature cleave to sin; the design of Divine grace is to turn us from it, that we may not only forsake, but hate it. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), Commentary on Acts 3.22-26

Pray Psalm 78.4-7.

Our calling to bear witness to God and His truth is rooted in His covenant of promise. Ask the Lord to give you an opportunity today to encourage a fellow believer and to bear witness to a lost soul.

Sing Psalm 78.4-7.

(Foundation: *How Firm a Foundation*)

The glorious deeds of our God in His might,
and all of the works He has done in our sight,
together with all of the words of His Law,
would we on ourselves and our children bestow.

Lord, let all our children arise and declare
the truth of the Lord every day, everywhere,
and set all their hopes in God's wonderful Word,
and never forget all the works of the Lord.

7 Good Works, True Words

Pray Psalm 72.1-4.

Give the king Your judgments, O God,
And Your righteousness to the king's Son.
He will judge Your people with righteousness,
And Your poor with justice.
The mountains will bring peace to the people,
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He will bring justice to the poor of the people;
He will save the children of the needy,
And will break in pieces the oppressor.

Sing Psalm 72.1-4.

(Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed)

O give the King Your judgment, Lord, and righteousness Your Son;
and let Him judge by Your good Word the need of every one.

Let now the mountains ring with peace, the hills in righteousness.
Let justice rise, oppression cease, and all the needy bless.

Read Acts 3.1-26; meditate on verses 12-16.

Preparation

1. What got the attention of the crowd?
2. How did Peter respond to their amazement?

Meditation

With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the long-promised Kingdom of God was established on the earth. For the Christian, seeking the Kingdom must be the defining priority of life (Matt. 6.33). We pray that the Kingdom will come on earth in the same way that it exists in heaven, with ever-increasing measures of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Spirit, and with power for making all things new (Matt. 6.10; Rom. 14.17, 18; 1 Cor. 4.20; Rev. 22.5).

But how does that happen? How does this glorious new realm and economy come into being on earth as it is in heaven? Acts 3 answers that question and lays a cornerstone for the rest of the book of Acts. The Kingdom comes by the good works and true words of those in whom that Kingdom has become established.

Christians are called to be witnesses to Jesus Christ (Acts 1.8), to bear testimony to Him and His salvation, speaking the truth in love at every opportunity (Eph. 4.15). But these words will only be credible as they issue from lives devoted to good works of love and service (Eph. 2.10; Titus 2.11-14). Doing good and speaking truth are the identifying marks of the presence of the Kingdom of God.

We who believe in Jesus are citizens and ambassadors in the Kingdom of God. This is not a calling to passivity, but to action. We must not grow weary in doing good to others (Gal. 6.9, 10); and we must be always ready, when our good works impact the people around us, to give an explanation for the hope that is within us (1 Pet. 3.15).

Every day, every situation, every opportunity: Good works, true words.

Treasures Old and New: Matthew 13.52; Psalm 119.162

Have you ever been to a church service where folks are invited to give praise to God, and it all ends up being about the person speaking? Is that the way it should be? Let's see how Peter handled this.

In Acts 3, outside the church service, a hubbub has arisen because by a Word, the Name of Jesus, a man lame from birth is now "walking, leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3.9). Already the focus is on Peter, the man of the moment, who has done an incredible act of healing, and the folks are "greatly amazed" (Acts 3.11). Will he falter? Will he allow it to be about him? What exactly was his response?

1. Why do you marvel at this?
2. Why are you looking at us?
3. How could you think that we did this in our own power?
4. Do you really think our godliness has made this man well?

Peter is saying what John the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I *must* decrease" (Jn. 3.30).

This miracle, as all miracles, has happened because of the Name of Jesus. "...His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know" (Acts 3.16).

This was not a miracle that they read about in the *Jerusalem Times*, about someone that they didn't know. This was someone that they had seen with their own eyes every time they went to church. They knew his parents. They knew his siblings. They knew him. And now they saw him healed. And how? Healed by faith in a Name. But not just any Name. The Name of Jesus:

"...our Redeemer, from Everlasting is Your name" (Is. 63.16).

"...to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings..." (Mal. 4.2).

"...hallowed be Your name" (Matt. 6.9).

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name..." (Jn. 1.12)

"...God...has given Him the name which is above every name..." (Phil. 2.9)

"...hold fast to My name" (Rev. 2.13)

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4.12).

Peter was establishing the premise for all miracles henceforth to be performed. He was clarifying the power behind the miracles, and he was making clear the point of good works. He was taking the focus off himself and placing it directly upon the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

"Doing good and speaking truth are the identifying marks of the presence of the Kingdom of God."

"This is not a calling to passivity, but to action."

True words. Good works. Pointing always to Jesus.

For reflection

1. How can you continue to be mindful, throughout the day, of opportunities for doing good and speaking truth?
2. Why are both works and words important for expressing the reality of the Kingdom?
3. How can you encourage the believers in your life to greater consistency in good works and true words?

The Kingdom among Us: Acts 3

Peter pointed to the healing of the beggar as a sign of the glorification of Christ. The people had handed Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified. Yet God had raised the crucified Jesus from the dead. It was in the name of this very same Jesus that the crippled man was healed. Earl Radmacher (1931-2014), *NKJV Study Bible Note on Acts 3.13-16*

Pray Psalm 72.5-11.

Pray for the coming of God's Kingdom by the words and deeds of His faithful servants. Ask Him to show you how His Kingdom can come through you this day.

Sing Psalm 72.5-11.

(Martyrdom: Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed)

Let nations fear You while the sun and moon endure on high;
refresh, renew us, every one, like sweet rain falling from the sky.

Let righteousness abundant be where Jesus' reign endures;
Let peace increase from sea to sea 'til moonlight shall be no more.

And let the Righteous rule the earth, and let His foes bow low;
let nations praise His matchless worth, and all His bidding do.

The Kingdom among Us: Acts 3

For reflection or discussion

1. Based on what we've seen in Acts 3, summarize the kind of impact we should expect the Good News of the Kingdom to have in our community.
2. What makes the Kingdom such Good News?
3. Why must we keep Jesus at the center of our preaching and living? Are the blessings of Jesus more important than Jesus? Explain.
4. Do you think Christians today expect their churches to be sources of beauty, joy, healing, restoration, and reconciliation in their communities? Why or why not?
5. What's the most important insight or lesson you've learned from Acts 3?

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