

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Preaching in the Spirit

Acts 3:12-26

Intro: We are looking at the events Luke recorded in Acts 3. Last time we dealt with the miracle of a lame man being empowered to walk, by the Holy Spirit, for the first time in his life. When I referred to this man as Lt. Dan, it wasn't to be humorous. There are actually a couple of good, practical reasons for doing this. First, when you hear the name Lt. Dan, most people immediately get a vivid picture in their minds of Gary Sinese with long, greasy hair; a scraggly beard; wearing grungy ODs while making his way through the streets of NYC in a wheelchair. That name comes pre-loaded with an image that most people readily identify with so it was an appropriate moniker for this individual. He was just as hard-pressed and down-trodden as Lt. Dan and making that connection helped to paint the picture.

The other reason for giving this man a recognizable name was to familiarize us with the use and benefit of a good illustration in a sermon because Peter is going to do the exact same thing several times as he begins to present the Gospel to the crowd of people who were excitedly gathering in the temple courts. Peter makes reference to Jesus by using several different names or titles that might not mean much to a casual reader today but had great meaning to his listeners on this day. The terms he used for Jesus immediately brought images into their minds that pointed to the truth of who Jesus of Nazareth truly was and their own guilt over how they had treated Him.

11-12 – Why – Luke tells us in **vs11** that, even though Lt. Dan was healed and could walk perfectly fine; he still held onto to Peter and John. He had no problem publicly identifying with the Apostles here in the temple and later (**4:14**) when they are arrested. Now that he could stand, there was absolutely no question where this man stood.

Of course, this miracle caused quite a stir in the temple compound. Those who were present, seeing the man who was healed, knowing he had been lame his entire life, were greatly amazed; and they all came running together up to the Apostles and the healed man if for nothing else, the sheer excitement of the miracle and his new life! Peter wisely took advantage of

the gathering crowd. He knew that the phenomena of a supernatural miracle couldn't bring anyone to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, it merely aroused interest. Though they were greatly amazed, they weren't saved yet. Peter knew that saving faith didn't come by seeing or hearing about miracles but rather, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (**Rom 10:17**).

Now, at this point, Peter could have focused on the miracle itself. He could have explained how important it was and how it had come about. He could have focused on the man who was healed. He could have let the man stand and tell them what happened – it would have been a good time for a testimony service. But Peter didn't do any of that. Peter knew that what this crowd needed to hear was the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They needed to hear a clear call to repent and believe on Jesus. Of course, the healed man didn't know enough yet to share so Peter will do the talking.

This is the 2nd sermon from Peter recorded in Acts and it begins much like his 1st sermon. If you recall in **ch2**, Peter began his sermon on Pentecost by refuting the false accusation that the disciples who were speaking in tongues were drunk. Here, he begins by refuting the notion that he and John had healed this man by their own power. If you think about it, every presentation of the Gospel is given to refute some false notions, inaccurate beliefs or strongly-held traditions or superstitions. I know it's nothing new, but people today are beset with the strangest ideas about God, eternity or the spiritual realm and often times, they've come to these beliefs by the flimsiest reasoning. The only way to effectively defeat fallacy, or foolishness, is with the truth. The Bible is the absolute truth given to us by God.

This sermon's a little but shorter than Peter's 1st but it's no less effective as thousands will respond to it in faith (**4:4**). This sermon is a little more structured than the first as Peter loosely follows 3 main points. First, he will levy a serious indictment against his Jewish listeners. 2nd, he will present them with some real encouragement. 3rd, he will offer them some exciting inducements from God's Word for putting their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

13-15- Wow! Clearly, the Holy Spirit is giving Peter the power to speak boldly to this crowd. He's not pulling any punches with these people. Part of a Gospel presentation is grappling with the problem of sin and guilt and

Peter does this in a very personal way. When Peter starts to talk about the sin of the people, he uses the word “you” 4 times (2nd person plural pronoun). That’s stepping on some toes right there! But, before Peter can begin to deal with their sin, he must first put it in its proper context. Sinning against another person is bad enough but when you have committed the most egregious crimes against the most innocent and the most powerful person in the universe, you sort of run out of options for surviving the experience unscathed.

Thus, Peter opens up and focuses his entire message on Jesus Christ. Just like his first message in [ch2](#), this sermon is centered on the Bible and on Jesus Christ. Unlike the first sermon, Peter doesn’t quote passages of Scripture and then explain them to the crowd but that doesn’t mean his sermon is not centered on the Bible. Peter uses a different tactic. He knows the crowd is well versed in OT doctrine and is very familiar with the themes and concepts presented in it so instead of conducting a lengthy Bible Study, Peter gets his point across quickly by using certain terms and titles to identify the true character and position of Jesus of Nazareth, a man the crowd was also very familiar with.

First, Peter gets their attention by referring to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a reference to the focus of all Jewish religious activities and life; a reference the crowd would be open to and would gladly receive. But then, Peter turns it right on its head by associating Jesus of Nazareth as God’s Servant. This may seem like a bland reference to us but to this crowd, it was pregnant with meaning. They would have immediately made the mental connection with the Servant that’s mentioned in [Isaiah 52](#) and [53](#) – where the coming Servant of God ([52:13](#)) is described as the same One who would be “wounded for our transgressions [and] bruised for our iniquities” ([53:5](#)). The concept of the “servant of the Lord” was well-known in Israel because of [Isa 53](#) and other texts.

Next, Peter calls Jesus the Holy One. This is not just a reference to the moral character of Jesus. This term is used more than 40 times in the OT as a high and glorious title for Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel. Peter accurately and appropriately applies this title to Jesus and in doing so; he exalts Jesus as God before this crowd. He also declares Jesus to be the Just and the Prince (Author) of life. Clearly, this was no ordinary man that they handed over to the Romans to crucify. Peter is teaching them that

Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah promised in the OT! Peter is preaching a biblical Jesus who was both the Son of God and fully man.

Having established the reality of the person of Jesus Christ – his deity and humanity, Peter leads them to grapple with their own sin. In **vs13**, he boldly sets the guilt of Jesus' death squarely where it belonged. Pilate was determined to let Jesus go but the Jewish mob insisted that He be crucified instead. Of course, this doesn't mean that the Jews were solely responsible for the death of Jesus; the Gentile Romans were also party to that guilt. The Romans would not have crucified Jesus without pressure from the Jewish leader and the Jews could not have crucified Jesus without Roman approval and participation. God made certain that both Jew and Gentile shared in the guilt of Jesus' death. In fact, the one thing that put Jesus on the cross was sin so in essence – we're all to blame.

The sad reality is, if we had been in Jerusalem during that Passover week, we would have more than likely been the ones calling for His crucifixion. I realize that statement may be hard to accept but if it is a sensitive point in the hypothetical, just imagine how sensitive it was for those who were actually there, those who used their own voices to call for and demand the death of the Holy One and the Just! Do you think they received this accusation warmly? I'm sure they didn't but Peter levied this indictment against them nonetheless. This wasn't a general accusation; Peter made it personally to each one of them – “you...you...you...”

Why was Peter so direct with them? Why was he being so hard on them? We need to realize that even though Peter spoke boldly to them about their sin, he didn't hate them. He is making it abundantly clear that they had committed a great sin and they something to repent of. Before a person can experience a conversion, there must be conviction. Unless a patient is convinced that he is sick, he'll never accept the diagnosis or submit to the treatment. The point of preaching the Gospel is not to offend sinners but to confront them with their sin and guilt and then show them that they the option to remedy that by repenting of their sin and turning to Jesus Christ as their Savior. That's exactly what Peter does next in his sermon; he presents them with a great encouragement.

16-18- Peter was not interested in simply condemning his hearers. The truth is: his heart's desire was that they would repent and believe on Jesus

and it is to that end that Peter makes his appeal. He assures them that it was power in the name (authority) of Jesus alone that healed the man, the very Jesus he is speaking about. They knew all about Jesus' life and ministry; how He had walked about the countryside teaching and preaching about the kingdom of God and giving evidence of the truth by performing miracles. If Jesus performed miracles while here on earth, why is it so strange that He would continue to do so from heaven? Peter consciously did this in the authority and power of Jesus. He didn't even take credit for the faith that was exercised in the healing.

Now this crowd was in a real theological pickle. How could 2 ordinary fishermen perform such a great miracle unless God was with them? Nobody would dare deny the miracle because the former beggar stood right before them in perfect soundness. To accept the miracle, which could not be denied, meant they had to admit that Jesus Christ is indeed the resurrected, living Son of God and that His name has power. They were in a bad spot but Peter is about to give them a good out.

Notice how Peter begins to associate himself with these people. Earlier, he had accused them twice of denying Jesus, in [vs13](#) and [vs14](#); something he himself had done 3 times on the night Jesus was arrested. Now he's calling them his brethren and he's not leaving them without any hope. In fact, he almost appears to defend them when he points out that they acted in ignorance ([17](#)) while at the same time they had fulfilled the Word of God ([18](#)).

Peter acknowledges that they had called for the execution of Jesus in ignorance of God's eternal plan. This did not make them innocent by any means but it did carefully define the nature of their guilt. If we sin in ignorance, we still sin, but it's different from sin committed with full knowledge. In the OT Law there was a distinction made between deliberate sins and sins of ignorance. The person who sinned presumptuously was a rebel against God and was guilty of great sin. The defiant sinner was condemned but the person who sinned unwittingly and without deliberate intent was given the opportunity to repent and seek God's forgiveness. Ignorance doesn't remove the sinner's guilt but it does mitigate the circumstances.

In their ignorance, not only did they sin against God, they also fulfilled His

Word. The cross is the meeting place of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. God had a plan from all eternity, yet His plan did not in any way force these men to act against their own will. The prophets had foretold the sufferings and death of the Messiah and the nation fulfilled these prophecies without realizing what they were doing. Despite all the evil they did to Jesus, it didn't change or derail God's plan of salvation. When God cannot rule in men's hearts, He overrules their actions and will always accomplish His divine purposes and decrees. God can take the most horrible evil and use it for good.

19-26- Having announced the crime, having presented the evidence and explained the nature of their sin, Peter now offers them a pardon! He offers them a way of escape and some inducements to accept his offer. First, Peter presents the only option they have – repent and be converted. Repentance is more than just feeling sorry; it's more than just changing your mind about yourself and your sin. True repentance is actually admitting that what God says is true and since it is true, to change your mind about sin and see it as God does in all of its horror and destruction. That's how God sees sin and that's why He works to remove its influence from our lives. Repent is a word of hope.

Peter also exhorts them to be converted. Another translation would be to turn to God or quite literally: flee to God. This was also intended to suggest a powerful image. The Mosaic Law provided for cities in Israel to be set aside as "cities of refuge." If an Israelite accidentally killed someone else, he could flee to one of these cities and be protected from an avenger of blood, a relative of the deceased who might try to retaliate. These cities provided no protect for real murderers. If somebody intentionally killed a person, they were to be tried and punished, as a murderer. But if the killing was accidental, then the killer could flee to the city of refuge and be protected there. Peter had told them they were guilty of killing Jesus, but because they did it ignorantly, God would forgive their sin if they would repent and flee to the refuge He has provided in Christ.

Along with these words of hope and encouragement, Peter lists certain benefits that come from repenting and believing on Jesus as Savior. The 1st is forgiveness of sin! Peter's comment carries the idea of wiping ink off of a document. In the ancient world, ink didn't have any acid content so it didn't "bite" into the parchment. It could almost always be wiped off with a damp

cloth. Peter says that God can wipe away our record of sin just like that!

Forgiveness is what people need, and the only place anyone will ever really find forgiveness is in Christ. Most people carry a heavy load of guilt. This may be true of you. Nobody may know what you've done but you remember and you carry the guilt of your actions around with you every day. Your burden keeps you from being what you can be, what you should be, what you were created to be. You can't find forgiveness in the world; the world is not capable of that. It can judge your sin or pretend to overlook it but it can't forgive it. Only God can forgive sin and He will forgive your sin; He will lift that great load of guilt off of your life but only if you will turn from your sin and believe in Jesus Christ.

2nd, times of refreshing! The primary fulfillment of this concerns a future day of blessing when the Jewish people will turn to Jesus in large numbers and a final age of national blessing will come. But, in a lesser sense, there are also times of refreshing for all of God's people even now. In our Christian walks, we routinely go through "dry" spells.

These times don't necessarily mean we are far from God, they only mean that we feel far from God. Sometimes the cause is bad health or bad weather or maybe you've been quarantined in your house for several weeks with no end in sight. Despite all of that, we're told here that times of refreshing are to be found in Jesus for sinner and saint.

The 3rd inducement is implied in [vs22-23](#). Here, Peter quotes from Moses in [Deut 18](#) concerning the Prophet like Moses who would come to Israel after Moses who would speak God's truth to them. Israel's responsibility was to not just hear Him but obey Him as well and for those who refused to listen, a destructive judgment was prophesied to fall upon them. Sadly, the destruction promised in this passage would become the legacy of this particular generation of Jews. While clearly, some would repent and believe in Jesus, many refused. The result is that many (not all) were guilty of rejecting Jesus twice if not more. The inducement implied by Peter is that all who will repent and turn to Jesus will be spared this promised judgment.

4th is seen in [vs26](#). As we repent and turn to God, Jesus blesses us from heaven with the power to turn away from our sins. God's desire to bless us and do good for us also include His desire to sanctify our lives, to turn us away from our iniquities and sins. As humans possessing a fallen sin nature,

we will never become sinless on this earth. But as believers in Jesus Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit in our lives, we will, by the grace of God, sin less and less as the days of our lives progress and we allow the Spirit to do His work in our lives.

How do I know we would have rejected Jesus? If Jesus were here today, He would still be scoffed at and rejected. How do I know? Because He is here and He is still ignored. People go out of their way to ignore the truth about themselves, their sin and the blessings Jesus has to offer if they would only repent and believe on Him. When Jesus can no longer be ignored, He is scoffed at and spurned and when that doesn't get rid of Him, the crowd will eventually turn to abuse and even violence if necessary. The people didn't want Jesus when He came the first time and they don't much want Him around today.

But, He is still here and He still offers salvation to all who will accept Him into their lives. When they do, He forgives their sin, freeing them from the weight of their guilt; he brings times of refreshing; He now protects us from divine judgment having taken our place of judgment on the cross and He offers us the strength and ability to turn away from the sins that so easily beset us today.

The lame man sat at the Beautiful Gate wanting nothing but spare change from the passers-by but God wanted to give him so much more than that. In a similar way, the Jews were merely looking for a political or military Messiah but God wanted to give them so much more than that. He gave them a Messiah who could turn everyone of them away from their sin. This, again, shows how important it is to expect the right things from God. 😊