

An Instrument of the King

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[0 : 0 0] because as we get more and more into the thick of Acts, we find that people who want to reach out and touch the Lord can only do so through his people, and so they reach out to them.

So we're back in Acts. Yes, we've spent the past year in Acts, and we're only halfway through. We're back in Acts this morning.

Acts chapter 9, and from verse 32. So Acts chapter 9, from verse 32.

Let me read. Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed.

And Peter said to him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you. Rise and make a bed. And immediately he rose, and all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

[1 : 1 8] Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which translated means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, please come to us without delay. So Peter rose and went with them, and when he arrived, they took him to the upper room.

All the widows stood beside him, weeping, showing tunics and other garments the Dorcas made while she was with them. But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed.

And turning to the body, he said, Tabitha, arise. And she opened her eyes. And when she saw Peter, she sat up, and he gave her his hand, and raised her up.

Then calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa. Many believed in the Lord. And he stayed in Joppa for many days, with one Simon at Tanner.

[2 : 3 4] And we pray that the Lord would bless the reading of his word. Have you ever had that awkward experience of mistaking someone for someone else?

Now, I'm not the type of person to get embarrassed easily. But I'm sure we've all had that experience. Because I'm an outgoing person, if I see someone on the street, someone I know, I will go out of my way, to say hi to them.

You make these big gestures, like Mr Bean, you know. Alan! Alan, it's me! You shout over, you wave your hands, make this big gesture, only to get greeted with a confused look in somebody's face.

Suddenly you realise, it's not the person you thought it was. And sometimes that's all it is. Sometimes, it's just, an awkward moment, that makes you laugh at yourself.

Then there are other times, that really make you double take. Someone really does look like the person that you know. And it takes a bit longer to figure out. You're shouting on them, and you're waving at them, and you're looking at them.

[3 : 50] And they look back, with that kind of look, of confusion. Do I know you? See, this happened to me, when I was around 15 years old, me and my family, we lived in a ground floor flat, that was facing the road.

And the car park for the flat, was just round the corner. And I remember going to the shops, with my dad in the car. And everything was completely normal. On the way back, as usual, my dad drove up the hill, past the flat on the left, to the car park around the corner.

But as we passed the flat, something very strange happened. Now my dad was driving, so because this is Scotland, he was on the right hand side of the car. I was on the left hand side, in the passenger seat.

And to my left, was our flat, that we were passing by. And so, as we came up the hill, my dad was on my right. The flat was to the left, and I saw in the window of our flat, my mum in the living room.

And beside my mum in the living room, through the window, I also saw my dad. Slowly, I looked to my right, as we drove past the flat, looking at my dad, who was driving next to me, and thought to myself, who on earth am I in the car with?

[5 : 11] Because I just saw my dad in the flat. And there's this man in the driving seat. Now I know that sounds weird, I was in the car, with who I thought was my dad. And everything was normal, but as we passed by the flat, and I saw my dad in the flat, with my mum, suddenly I got this sinking feeling, of wondering who was, who on earth was in the car with me.

Even though my dad was sitting, I could touch him, I could reach out and touch him. For some reason, I didn't question who was in the house, I questioned who was in the car with me. Strange.

Strange. Now as it turns out, when we got in the flat, my dad's brother was in the flat. He doesn't look like my dad, he doesn't particularly look like my dad, but in that moment, a man with the same kind of glasses, a similar face, in the house, was convincing enough at a glance, to make me question, my own dad sitting next to me in the car.

So silly. Some people can look, a little like others. Some people, can look a lot like others. And depending on the context, in the moment, it can really confuse you.

And so that's what we see here, in Acts chapter 9, is that Peter is looking, a lot like Jesus, and what he is saying and doing. And this highlights something, that Luke does in Acts, to show us, that Jesus is still, very much at work.

[6 : 34] And it's appropriate, that we come back into Acts, at this point, right after going through, our summer series of, the signs of Jesus and John. And now, we see such signs of Jesus, being done by his chief apostle here, Peter.

Back in chapter 5, of Acts, Luke records in verse 12, many signs and wonders, were regularly done, among the people, by the hands of the apostles. And now, Acts chapter 9, it focuses in, on Peter.

And this is where, it's important to remember, that Acts, is volume 2, of Luke's writing, to Theophilus. And so throughout Acts, there's going to be, threads and parallels, that go all the way, back into Luke's gospel.

And these two, encounters in particular, are moments, these are moments, like we've been talking about, of awkward waves, and double tapes.

And these encounters, Peter is doing, almost exactly the same, as what Jesus did, back in Luke's gospel. You see, back in Luke's gospel, in chapter 5, there was a paralyzed man, who was brought to Jesus, lowered through the roof.

[7 : 46] And after forgiving him, Jesus healed him, saying, I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home. Now, in Acts chapter 9, there's a similar situation, with a paralyzed man, Jesus' right hand man, Peter, heals him, saying, Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you, rise and make your bed.

He's doing exactly, the same as Jesus did. And he was there. You remember, back in John chapter 3, Nicodemus, who was a ruler of the Jews, said to Jesus, no one can do, these signs that you do, unless God is with them.

You see, no one else was doing, the things that Jesus was, in his day. The Pharisees, weren't healing people. The Sadducees, weren't doing miracles. The scribes, and chief priests, weren't doing signs, and wonders.

The zealots, weren't performing miracles. The Herodians, couldn't heal anyone. Herod himself, couldn't heal anyone. And even Caesar, the most powerful man, in the world, at that time, could not do, the things that Jesus, was doing.

Jesus stands out, amongst, everyone else in history. And so, when we get to this point, in Acts, we find that there's another man, doing the same things as Jesus.

[9 : 02] How can this be? And it's not the disciples, of the Pharisees, it's not the disciples, of the Sadducees, it's not the Herodians, or the Zealots, it's not Roman citizens, and it's not Greek philosophers.

It's not even, the trained magicians. Who do we find, doing the same standout things, that Jesus did? Well, it's none other, than his own disciples.

You see, even now, in Acts chapter 9, even now, this kind of thing, is still, a Jesus thing. Still limited, to the sphere of Jesus, and his followers.

The Jesus thing, has not gone away, despite all the efforts, of everyone else, and Saul, who we just met, previously in chapter 9, despite all the efforts, the Jesus thing, has not gone away.

And if this, wasn't a big enough sign, of who God was with, Peter, is then called, to Joppa. And if there was any doubt, about this Jesus movement, Peter's next, pastoral visit, is not to a paralyzed person, but to a dead person.

[10 : 12] Tabitha herself, was a disciple, and the people, who urged Peter to come, are disciples as well. Now perhaps, they had been praying, for this, wonderful woman of service, in the church.

Perhaps they had been praying, for Tabitha, before she died. And we don't know, what their expectations were, in urging Peter to come. But it was very likely, that they had no expectation, of a resurrection.

You see, at this point, no disciples, have performed, such a miracle. Maybe all they, they were looking for, was a bit of pastoral, support and guidance. And when they heard, that Peter was nearby, in Lydar, then, they were going to get him, to come.

Who better to have, for a pastoral support, than the Lord's right hand man. See, maybe all they were looking for, was this pastoral, support and guidance. And any Christian, any Christian around, who was close to Jesus, who was closer to Jesus.

Even among the apostles, like, the likes of Peter, James and John. Surely, you would want someone around, who was close to Jesus. If you could get someone, who was the closest to Jesus, you would want them to come.

[11 : 34] If anyone's going to offer comfort, or hope, or restoration, surely, it's someone like Peter. someone in the inner circle. Someone who spent, all these intimate moments, with Jesus, in person.

If there's any doubt, about where Jesus was, at this point. When we see what Peter does, if there's any doubt, about where Jesus is, he is still with them.

He's still with his disciples. And if they, if the disciples of Jesus, if Christians, really are ministers of God, and if Jesus, the one who we call upon, and who we follow, really can give people life, when Jesus was the only one around, who could raise the dead, now Peter is faced, with a lifeless person.

He was there, he's seen Jesus do it before. He sends everyone out, and he kneels down, on the floor, and he prays, to the only one, that he can know, can do something about this.

So again, back in, in Luke's gospel, in chapter 8, verse 54, Jesus, Jesus went, and was faced, with a lifeless child, if you remember, you know.

[12 : 53] And if you know about that, in Luke's gospel, when Jesus was faced, with this dead child, he only allowed, three people to come in with him, Peter, James, and John.

He only allowed them, to go in with him. And he took the child, by the hand, and Mark records, that he says this, in Aramaic, he says, Talitha kumi, Talitha kumi, child arise.

And Peter was there. Peter heard, what Jesus said, and he saw, what Jesus did. And now Peter, faced with the same conditions, he prays to the one, who had seen, do this very thing.

And then Peter, likewise says, but two words. And if he says them, in Aramaic, it's the difference, between one single letter. Jesus said, Talitha kumi, Peter, Tabitha kumi.

Peter was there, Peter saw Jesus, do this very thing, and when life returns to her, he likewise gives her his hand, and rises her up. You see, in both these encounters, a great many people, learned about them, and believed in the Lord.

[14 : 07] This is the result, of such things. These people, encountered Jesus, through Peter. And there was no doubt, that the work was Jesus. And that Jesus, the work of Jesus, at this point, isn't a past event.

You might think, well, Jesus is now gone, it's his disciples' turn. But at this point, you know, that Jesus' work, isn't a past event, it's present. People weren't turning to Peter.

People weren't believing in Peter. They were turning to the Lord. And Peter knew, for sure, that it wasn't him that did it. He knew it was the Lord.

In the first instance, he said, Jesus Christ heals you. In the second, he prays. Peter knew, that it was Jesus, who did both miracles. And Peter, was only, an instrument of the King.

He was, only, the Lord's hands, on the ground. And you see, at this point, Jesus has not been visible, or present on the earth, for a good while now. His disciples were gaining popularity, in Jerusalem.

[15 : 13] But suddenly, faced with the threat, of extinction from Saul, Jesus intervenes. Jesus was the one, who intervened, to stop Saul, and turn him around.

And now Jesus, through Peter, is healing the paralyzed, and raising the dead. And just as Saul, was called to be, the instrument of Jesus. So Jesus uses Peter, in this moment, as his instrument.

This is the truth. Every disciple, is an instrument, in the hands of the Lord. Every one of us, if we are following the Lord, we are instruments, in the hands of the Lord.

And it's funny, I was talking to Bill, earlier on, about tools. Some, some are better than others, some are sharper than others. Some, after a bit of use, become dull.

If we are instruments, in the hands of the Lord, then may we be found, to be sharp, and not dull. May we be found, to be ready, for use, should he want to use us, at any moment.

[16 : 23] And so, in these two encounters, I think there's two things, in particular, that we can learn. Number one, the work belongs to Jesus. The work, of whatever we do, as a church, belongs to Jesus, and we are, but as instruments.

You see, these are the things, the things that Jesus, said and did, these are the things, that we ought to give, our time to. The things that Jesus, gave us time to. This is his mission, not ours.

His church, not ours. This is his world, not ours. The things that we say, and do, should reflect Jesus, in such a way, that the world, can mistake us, for Jesus.

You see, Jesus is always, shaping his disciples, to reflect in the world, who he is, and what he's about. We are being made, into the image of Christ.

So number one, the work, belongs to Jesus, and we are his instruments. And number two, and encouragingly, Jesus is, still at work in the world.

[17 : 28] Today, the power was not Peter's. He doesn't claim credit, for these miracles. Remember back in chapter three, of Acts, after the lame beggar, was healed, what did Peter say?

Peter said, 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 this man walk. And now in chapter nine, even more so, Peter says, Jesus Christ heals you.

Jesus is still at work, in the world. This is not an incantation, using the name of Jesus. Though he's not visible, to this man, in this moment, the person of Jesus, is the one, who is active here.

Jesus is the one, doing healing. Jesus is at work. Jesus is active now, more than we realize. And in this passage, these people, encounter Peter.

But really, through Peter, they encounter Jesus. Oh, that the world, would encounter Jesus, through Christians. That our neighbours, would encounter Jesus, through us.

[18 : 38] Or our family, our friends, the people in our town, the shops we visit, the places we go. Oh, that people would encounter, Jesus through us. May we always be ready, to reflect him, to be used by him.

As the visible representative, of Jesus, Peter is the embodiment, of hope, and life, and restoration. You see, even if we are not, performing miracles, disciples of Jesus, are the aroma, of Christ.

That's what Paul calls us. Paul says, in 2nd Corinthians, chapter 2, 15 and 16, to those who are perishing, we are the aroma, of death.

And to those, who are being saved, we are the aroma, of life. This is what it's like, to be the aroma, of Christ. And I think, this is what makes, Peter in these encounters, an example to us.

Whether or not, miracles are a feature. You see, if Peter, in this moment, as the visible representative, of Jesus, if Peter is the embodiment, of hope, and life, and restoration, what does that make us?

[19 : 46] When the world, only have, hopelessness, and despair, and darkness, what do we embody? What do we carry? Are we lights, in this world?

Are we the embodiment, of hope, to our neighbours? Are we the embodiment, of restoration, to our family? All this brokenness, in the world. Well brothers and sisters, we are.

This is not, a try better thing. This is a, who you are, in Christ. And more than that, this is a Christ, is at work, through you. Isn't that encouraging? Jesus is at work, always.

Jesus said this, in John chapter 15, didn't he? I can do nothing, of my own accord. Only what I see, the Father do. Just likewise, we can do nothing, of our own accord, only what the Lord does.

He's at work. It's not up to us, to attempt, to do miracles, or to try our best, to be light. You see, Jesus said, we are.

[20 : 54] We are his. We are the light, of the world. Lord. We do carry, the aroma of Christ, into the world. And although, he is set apart, although Peter, has been confirmed, as a true witness, by such miracles, to be the authoritative, messenger of Christ, any one of Jesus followers, can be used by him.

And so we ought to be ready, like instruments, prepared for use, in the workshop, of an active carpenter. Jesus is at work today. This very day, Jesus is at work.

Any one of us, can go out this afternoon, as instruments of Christ, be used, perhaps even be used, without even knowing it. But he is at work.

This is his world. We are his instruments. And the world encounters him, through the instruments, he uses to do his work. What a grace it is, to be such.

And may we always be ready, when the master reaches over. Let me pray. Dear Lord and God, we thank you so much, that you have brought life, and light to us.

[22 : 13] we know that you are risen. We know that you are reigning. And yet you have brought life, and light to us, through your people.

Through your people, as your mouthpieces, and your hands, and feet. Lord, we give you great thanks, that any one of us, sits here in this church, because of someone else.

Whether we were invited, or introduced, or whatever. Whether it was through our family, or through a friend. Whatever the case. This church exists, because other people, have committed their energy, to doing your work, to being your instruments.

We thank you for the history, of this church. We thank you for, all the churches, around the world just now. That are meeting in your name, and glorifying you. And seeking to take, your message of life, into the world.

For two thousand years, your servants, have been faithfully doing that. And we thank you, because today, we would not know you, without that. And yet you are always at work.

[23 : 29] None of this, could have even have left Jerusalem, if it wasn't for you, being at work. If it wasn't for your spirit, and your power. And so Lord, we thank you for the life, that you have given us, if we know you today.

And we pray, that we would be, instruments, ready for use. We pray, that you would use us. We pray, that we would be ready. We pray, that you would help us, to see how we are, the aroma of Christ.

We pray, that as any, any other person, would encounter us, that we would be, following you, and imitating you, such that they would, encounter Jesus. And Lord, help us, to encounter you, even through our gathering, together as your body.

So we thank you Lord. We thank you, that you are always at work, even today. You are giving us life, and light, joy and peace.

And so we look to you, we pray to you, we ask you, and we do all things, in your name. Amen.

[24 : 43] Well, we are going to,