

The Second Gospel Sermon

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[0 : 00] Welcome here for this Sunday, June 9th, 2024. My name is Kent Dixon and it is my joy to be the pastor here. So we're continuing this sermon series, Acts to All the World, and through this series we're exploring the New Testament book of Acts.

In the first gospel sermon, our sermon a few weeks ago, we learned that as he spoke to a crowd, the Apostle Peter proclaimed the death, burial, and resurrection and exaltation of Jesus Christ. And he called for a response in that message as well, a response that required faith and repentance and baptism for the remission of sins.

Remission, it's a big word, right? Have you ever heard that word and wondered what it actually means or where it came from? Well, unfortunately, it tends to be associated with one specific situation.

So we likely celebrate when someone who has previously been diagnosed with cancer has had treatment and we hear that their cancer is in remission.

[1 : 11] Those are the words that we hear. We understand that to be a very good thing. So the word remission is actually made up of the word, shockingly, mission, and then the prefix re.

So mission is taken from the Latin word missio, and maybe you know that, which means to send. So the prefix re means away or again.

So to speak of the remission of sins is to say that our transgressions, our sins, have been sent away. Isn't that an interesting way of looking at it?

Jesus has sent them away. Is that helpful? So it was definitely a new context and new information for me as I thought about that word remission in relation to sin.

So our message this morning is titled, The Second Gospel Sermon. So you may think this is a gospel sermon. Yeah, it is. And then we're going to talk about the second one in the book of Acts that we find there.

[2 : 16] So in this sermon this morning, we're going to be considering a second gospel sermon that was also preached by Peter. So the first one we looked at two weeks ago was Peter as well.

So it's found in chapter 3 of the book of Acts. So if you want to turn to Acts 3, this gospel sermon happened at a place called Solomon's Porch in the temple.

So this morning we'll be focusing on Acts 3 verses 1 to 26. So this is all of chapter 3. Don't panic. But this is all of chapter 3 we're going to be looking at this morning.

And we read there. I'll read it for us or you can follow along in your Bibles. One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer at 3 in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him as did John. Then Peter said, look at us. So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

[3 : 24] Then Peter said, silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up.

And instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God.

A friend of mine said this week, do you know that song? I didn't know it as well as she did, but she sang it for me. Walking and jumping and praising God. So you can look it up, I suppose, on Google.

So when all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in a place called Solomon's Colonnade or Solomon's Porch. When Peter saw this, he said to them, Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you?

[4 : 30] Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.

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

You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.

But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

[5 : 41] Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.

You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. Indeed, beginning with Samuel, All the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days, and you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers.

He said to Abraham, Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways. Does that sink in a little bit? We're going to dig into it more deeply now. So this morning, we're going to look at, as we consider this second gospel sermon, we're going to look at the setting of the sermon.

We're going to look at when and where it happened, in terms of the setting, and then we're going to look at the circumstances around it. So what happened at that time. Then we're also going to be looking at the content, the sermon itself, this message that Peter conveyed, and then also the call to action he made to his listeners.

[7 : 06] So if that expression, call to action, doesn't make sense to you or is new to you, a call to action happens all the time. If you get a marketing call on the phone or a call center phoning you, they often end with a call to action.

So is that interesting to you? Let's write this up. So that happens, calls to action happen all the time. So it's, you've delivered a message to someone and then you're looking for them to respond, looking to close the deal somehow.

So that's what a call to action is. And that's what Peter does. So let's begin by looking at the setting and the circumstances. Where did this happen? And what took place?

Acts 2 verse 46 tells us that every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts.

Christians had been gathering in the temple every day.

This was their common practice. Acts 3 verse 1 tells us then, one day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer at three in the afternoon.

[8 : 09] So if you don't know this, you may, but the Jews observed three times of prayer. Morning at 9 a.m., afternoon at 3 p.m., and then evening at sunset.

So there were three structured, three regular times of prayer, expectations of prayer. So Peter and John were arriving at the temple during a time of corporate prayer.

There would be people gathering for the specific purpose of prayer. Acts 3 verses 2 to 3 says, now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. So as this account begins, we hear about this man who is lame from birth.

I don't know about you. Do you already begin to anticipate something is about to happen? Do you begin to anticipate, wait a minute, something miraculous may be about to happen?

[9 : 14] So last week we talked about the devotion of the first church, the early church. Can you imagine the kind of devotion, the kind of commitment it would have taken for this man to show up at the temple every day?

Pretty significant. And being lame, what kind of devotion or care would it have taken for someone to carry him to be at the temple every day?

There's a commitment there. There's a relationship there. So we learn that the gate the man was brought to, presumably every time he was brought to the temple, was called beautiful.

We get the sense this wasn't simply an adjective, right, used to describe, oh, what a beautiful gate. Well, it's capitalized in scripture for one thing, so that is a title.

It was the name of the gate at that time. So this gate was only referred to as the name beautiful by that name once in the New Testament. Scholars vary, I looked at this a lot, scholars vary on their views of where the gate was located.

[10 : 19] So some believe it was perhaps the Nicanor Gate, which is another specific name of a gate. That gate was apparently made of bronze. That's beautiful, right?

Others suggest this gate may have been at the east entrance of the city of Jerusalem and led to a place called the Court of Women. So for men, you don't want to be tried by a court of women.

This gate would have been an entrance now to the temple itself, not only to the city. So this wasn't a city gate, this was a temple gate. And scholars suggest it would have been a favored entrance by many people.

So lots of people, lots of traffic, particularly at those three key prayer times, would have passed by and through this gate. Giving money to beggars was considered praiseworthy in the Jewish religion. So the lame man's choice of location here, where he was sitting, was very strategic in lots of ways. So we learn that he was brought there every day to beg for money from the people who were going in.

[11 : 29] Pretty strategic. Good place to be. It's here then that the man encounters Peter and John. As they're entering through the gate, he asks them for money.

Acts 3 verses 4 to 8, you can flip there. It says there that Peter looked straight at him as did John. Then Peter said, look at us.

So the man gave him his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have, I give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk. Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk.

Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. So Peter and John admit they don't have money, but Peter very quickly says that he has something far better to offer.

[12 : 33] Peter sees beyond that human need. Defying the man's wildest expectations, he received total and complete healing in Jesus' name.

That miracle that we thought might be coming was instant and complete. So let's hear the words of Acts 3, 9, and 10. So this is witnessed, right, by lots of people.

Remember we said there's lots of people going by. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. So many of the people in the crowd who witnessed this event would have likely recognized that lame man who had been at the spot day after day.

If you go to the same grocery store, if you go to the same pharmacy, if you go to, you know, these common places where we go, where we gather as human beings to meet our needs, chances are if you go to the same place you recognize people, right?

[13 : 40] You recognize the employees, you recognize the pharmacist, the person who's at the till. You begin to recognize these people. And sometimes I think we just don't even see them, right?

We become so familiar with them, with the faces, that we don't recognize them. And so this may have been the case here. This man had become part of the scenery, right?

They saw him there every day, all day. So maybe they stopped recognizing him, stopped seeing him in the way that they would have. Lame from birth, we need to recognize, would have been a life sentence of sorts, particularly at that time.

He would have been unable to function or to provide for himself, for his own needs. And suddenly, he's walking? That's a bit of a paradigm shift, isn't it, for him, for the people who knew him? So continuing in Acts 3.11, we read, while the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade or Solomon's Porch.

[14:52] What's a colonnade? Some in colonnade, some in colon B. No, no. A colonnade is a row of columns. Now, if you Google this, it's pretty impressive.

And I didn't put up a picture, but they're generally, and you've seen them, if you imagine a Greek or Roman column with the etching in it all the way around, those huge columns, those would be in a colonnade.

So a colonnade is those kinds of columns with horizontal moldings, huge stone or marble moldings that would have carried between or across the pillars.

It would have been part of a walkway or some sort of covered structure. And it would have been a bit like a covered porch or a veranda. Now, I'm not talking about a pergola from Home Depot, but a huge marble ancient structure.

So scholars suggest it would have likely been along the eastern wall of the temple area. Now, hear this. Columns would have been double columns.

[15:56] So they would have been as tall as 38 feet. Pretty big. And it would have spanned an area of about 49 feet. This is a huge outdoor area.

And it would have likely, lots of scholars suggest, supported cedar ceilings. So a bit like a pergola. So this would have been a large open area, huge.

And so this miracle would have drawn a crowd, a big crowd of witnesses. Remember, again, the traffic going to and from the temple. So does this sound familiar at all?

All of these events that are happening? Similar to the events and circumstances of Peter's first gospel sermon that we considered a few weeks ago. This involved a miraculous event.

That was key. And that event attracted the attention of a lot of people. And then Peter used that opportunity to preach the gospel.

[16:56] See all those dots connecting? So now that we've considered the setting and the circumstances, let's explore quickly the sermon itself.

Acts 3, verse 12 says, now maybe you, as I read it, the entire passage at the beginning this morning, maybe you didn't think there's no sermon in there. There isn't a, well, good morning, blah, blah, blah, verses, blah, blah, blah.

But it was a sermon. Absolutely a sermon. So let's look at it, what the sermon itself says. Acts 3, verse 12 says, when Peter saw this, he said to them, so he saw the context and he grabbed it, grabbed the opportunity.

Fellow Israelites, he said, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?

See that? Peter's drawing them in. Peter is prepared and quick in that response. He's quick to give credit for the miracle to God, first of all.

[17:59] And then he's also quick to not take any of the credit for himself or John, right away. And more than that, we read Peter's words in Acts 3, 13 to 16.

Peter says, here's the sermon part, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.

You disowned the holy and righteous one and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

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

Peter points the people, there's some alliteration, Peter points the people to Jesus, right, right away. He declares Jesus' identity.

[19:07] He recounts the circumstances of his arrest, of his trial, of his crucifixion, and he declares the fact and proof of Jesus' resurrection. All very compact.

It's an impressive summary of events and a powerful declaration of truth that Peter gives. But Peter doesn't stop there, either. He draws a very clear connection between the identity, power, and authority of Jesus and the healed man's faith in him as the reason for his healing.

Peter says, this was Jesus. This is Jesus. This is the man's faith in Jesus. This is the result of Jesus' identity, the man's faith, and the miracle.

Also worth noting that Peter and John's faith in Jesus would have also come into play because while he had faith, the man had faith, he was expecting silver or gold, right?

He believed, but he was expecting this. Peter and John needed to have faith in God beyond expectations to be able to see that God had something far greater planned.

[20 : 20] Can you see that? Having declared that his hearers bore responsibility for Jesus being handed over to Pilate, that would have been hard to hear, right? Oh, here I was hearing a nice sermon and I get blamed for something that I don't feel I was responsible for.

But it's the truth, right? Why was Jesus crucified? For the sin of us all. Peter acknowledges that both the people, the hearers, and their leaders acted in ignorance, he says, in what they did.

So they didn't know better is what Peter is saying. So let's hear the words of Acts 3.18. But this is how God fulfilled what he had told through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

That was the plan. What happened with Jesus' betrayal and his crucifixion, and it was foretold by the prophets for centuries. And it was always part of the plan.

But Peter doesn't stop there either. He doesn't just let people off the hook. Well, he didn't know any better. It's okay. He immediately calls them to action.

[21 : 29] He calls them to repent. Peter delivered a definite call to action, a desired response that he was seeking from his listeners. In response to the truth of Jesus, to this gospel power, he doesn't absolve them of responsibility.

Instead, he calls them to recognize Jesus for who he was, who he is, and to turn back to God. That's what he calls them to do.

Acts 3, verses 19 to 26 says, Repent then, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus.

Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people.

You must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people. Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days, and you are heirs of the prophets, and of the covenant God made with your fathers.

[22 : 52] He said to Abraham, Through your offspring, all peoples on earth will be blessed. When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.

Peter makes it clear that sincere repentance is required for the forgiveness of sin. And then following that, he says that times of refreshing, Peter says, may come from the presence of the Lord.

So, let's make some guesses. Maybe he's talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit, the presence of the Holy Spirit, refreshing us. But as Peter talks about God sending the Messiah, it's important to recognize that this is talking about when Jesus returns.

He's not talking about when Jesus came, but when he will return. And it's the second coming that will fulfill God's promise, as we know, to restore everything, as the prophets foretold.

Peter's also clear in his message that people need to listen to the words of Jesus or face, as he says, being completely cut off from the people, their people.

[24 : 10] So, Peter's clear that there is one chain of correct responses to the message, to the example of Jesus. Repent of our sin, submit to the Lordship of Christ in our lives, or risk everything, not only in this life, but also in the next.

The gospel message Peter consistently delivered here again is just as clear and true for each of us and the world today.

This morning, we've spent some time in Acts 3, verses 1 to 26. We've considered this second gospel sermon, delivered to a crowd near the gate called Beautiful at the temple.

We've explored the setting, the circumstances, and the sermon itself. We've talked a bit lately about the purpose of preaching, talking about the impact it should hopefully have on listeners.

Preaching should unpack God's word for us. It should change and challenge our assumptions and presumptions. It should impact and convict us, and it should also give us hope and draw us closer to God.

[25 : 26] Peter does those things so effectively in this sermon that we've read this morning, but how do people respond? Well, not everyone was all that crazy about it, as we know.

Acts 4, verses 1 to 3 tells us, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. They seized Peter and John and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. We're going to look at that more starting next week. The religious leaders weren't happy with this message and they wanted to put a stop to it.

I think it can be easy for us to think that opposition and persecution came far later in the story, but it begins. Acts 4, verse 4 gives us another perspective on others who heard Peter's message as it says, but many who heard the message believed.

So the number of men who believed grew to about 5,000. So 3,000 believed before and another 2,000 were added. The gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ is front and center in Peter's preaching again.

[26 : 54] Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection, and lordship are proclaimed. And flowing from that is this call to respond with faith and repentance, with the promise of the remission of sins and the refreshing gift of the Spirit to come from that.

Peter's message proclaimed Jesus' character, character, his identity, in so many powerful ways. I don't know if you noticed in there, but in that passage, Peter refers to Jesus as servant, holy, righteous one, author of life, the Christ, and prophet.

He also proclaimed that Jesus would return to fulfill God's plan and to restore all of creation. So your presence here this morning tells me something.

That at some point you heard the gospel message. At some point you responded. But how have you responded to the message of the gospel?

May our response always be one that responds to the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ with deep love and gratitude, with a desire to respond with repentance and submission, and with a desire to share this message with anyone and everyone we meet and with all whom we have relationships.

[28 : 32] Amen. Amen.