

Reaching Out, Speaking Up

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, you can turn back to Acts chapter 3. That's what we're going to be looking at. If you've been around the church, you've probably heard this quote before.

It's attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, although he probably actually never said it himself. So he got stuck with this quote. And the quote goes like this.

Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words. Sounds lovely. I think you kind of get the heart behind it, right?

But here's the problem with it. It's necessary to use words to preach the gospel, right? The gospel is an announcement. It's a message of what Christ has done. It's something to be declared, to be told, to be heeded, to be embraced, to be bowed before.

Romans 10, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. I want to flip it around, though. On the other hand, what if you heard, preach the gospel at all times, is if necessary, do deeds of justice, mercy, and kindness.

[1 : 08] Would that work? What I'll talk about tonight is word and deed ministry. And what I want to suggest is that they go together. While we can talk about one and talk about the other, they're actually inseparable to the life and ministry of a church.

These deeds are to be done in the church and outside of it. Paul says in Galatians 6, verse 10, To do good to everyone, especially those within the household of God. This idea, we're supposed to do good to others.

In here, we can't neglect our church family, but then it's supposed to spill out also. And so this is the big idea. As a church, we should want to proclaim the good news of Jesus with our words, and then to adorn this gospel with our acts of love, service, and compassion.

We're talking about the Lord's Supper this morning, and Colin talked about how it is a means of grace in our life. That it's supposed to nourish us, that it's supposed to feed us. Towards what? Towards worship of God, but then out into the world in word and deed ministry. So Acts chapter 3, the context is that we're in Jerusalem.

[2 : 19] Jesus, who has died, has been risen, he's gone back to heaven. The disciples are standing there kind of looking up, like, what do we do now? And the angels come, and they say that, hey, listen, Jesus, he hasn't abandoned you.

Actually, him going back to heaven, he's going to pour out his Holy Spirit into you. He's going to give you power. Ooh, so many people in the world want power, right?

But power for what? Power to be his witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. And so the disciples, they're kind of, like, huddled up in a room, and they're waiting, and the Holy Spirit's poured out.

And they go out, and they speak in tongues at Pentecost, and they proclaim the word of Christ, and the good news of his resurrection. They call people to repentance. 3,000 people are added to the number and are baptized.

And then there's this little description at the end of Acts chapter 2 saying, like, it's kind of amazing. Everybody, all of a sudden, is praying together, and they're coming. They're being brought together around the Messiah.

[3 : 21] He is now the identifying thing, and they're sharing things. They're being radically generous, and they're living their lives. It's just a beautiful description of the church and what it's supposed to look like for us to live.

And so you see, Peter, you know, at Pentecost, it's word ministry, and then all of a sudden people are looking at God's word, and yet also in deeds, sharing in kindness and love towards one another.

And that's the interplay that we're going to see, even if we went beyond this passage. You start to see through the book of Acts, word and deed playing off one another. Just in Acts chapter 6, they establish the diaconate.

The deed ministry, taking care of the needs of people. Why? So the apostles could give themselves to the word and prayer. Word ministry, they go hand in hand. And the word ministry leads to deed ministry, which leads to more word ministry.

They're intertwined. And before we look more closely at this passage, though, let me pray for the preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we do ask that you would make your word plain to us, that you would apply it to our hearts by the power of the Spirit.

[4 : 31] The same Spirit that was poured out at Pentecost, we thank you that we have that Spirit, that he is ours, that he is at work in us. And so, Father, we pray that we would see Jesus and the calling of the kingdom, Lord, that we would hear your voice loudest among all the other competing voices in this world.

We pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen. One of the simultaneously cool and terrifying things as a parent is when your kids start repeating things you say in the way that you say them.

I remember a few years ago, our oldest daughter, she said the word shenanigans. And I was like, where did you learn that word? She said, you, Dad. You say that word. Or our youngest, our three-year-old, every once in a while, he'll let out a really long sigh.

Like he's wearied by the troubles of this world. And I think it's just because Aaron and I walk around the house sighing all the time. Everyone knows that that's what kids do, right?

They imitate adults. They imitate their parents. They imitate teachers, things like that. That's what they're supposed to do. It's amazing when you see it. And also when you witness it, not just with their words, but also kind of with their actions.

[5 : 54] Have you ever been around a kid? And this kid, it could be a five-year-old, it could be a 25-year-old or a 55-year-old. And all of a sudden, you meet their parent. And you see some way that they brush their hair back or stand or some little tick.

And you see it in the parent, too. And you're just like, whoa, that's amazing. Because there's so much of what we pick up on is from those that we look at and we adore. Do you ever wonder what you're supposed to be doing or you're supposed to be saying as a Christian?

Well, as a church, what we're supposed to do is to imitate Jesus in his work, looking to him for our cue. And the way to understand the church's work, let me say, we are not Jesus, right?

That's an important distinction. We can't copy every single thing about him. But we are to imitate him. Paul says, imitate me as I imitate Christ. To understand the church's work in reference to and in light of Jesus' work.

The earliest Christians, the way they were described is as followers of the way. The way of what? The way of Jesus, right? And that's what's going on in Acts chapter 3.

[7 : 02] Acts chapter 3, we see this Christ-imitating pattern in the lives of Peter and John. In the lives of the early church. And it informs us in our word and deed ministry.

So our outline is just two points. First off, reaching out. And then secondly, speaking up. So, deed ministry, then word ministry. Reaching out, speaking up. First up, reaching out.

And don't get scared. I'm going to make six observations in this first section of the passage. And try to apply each one to us. I'm just going to walk through the first little bit.

And make some observations. And apply it to us as we go. First observation. It's a small thing. But I want you to notice where Peter and John are. Outside.

They're in the world. They're on the way to the temple for worship. But where they are not is huddled up in a room. In the back, in the first chapter of Acts. They're in a room.

[7 : 58] They're waiting for the Holy Spirit. But when the Holy Spirit comes. Those that he indwells. He moves out into the world. The gospel is on the move in the book of Acts.

They're actually on their way to temple to worship. Something at the end of Acts chapter 2. It says that they're actually doing daily. This isn't just like a Sabbath thing. They're going daily to the temple to worship.

And they don't walk past this man in order to get to worship. Right? They stop. And so this is just the point. The Christian life is not a secret one.

Not this tiny little private thing. Your faith as a Christian is a public faith. You don't stop being the church when you leave this building.

This is the church gathered. When you walk outside the doors. You're just the church scattered. Church gathered. Church scattered. Okay? Quick application then. We don't simply move towards one another.

[8 : 54] But we also look outside of the household of faith. This beggar. He's not yet a follower of the way of Jesus. So we've got to get out in the world. Probably already happening.

But it's to see that as a venue for your ministry. So many times I think people kind of flail and wonder. What is the ministry that God is calling me to? There's got to be a place or a thing. Where are you right now in the world? That's where God is calling you to make your faith public. And this man, he doesn't first respond to a gospel invitation.

And then he gets a healing. Right? No. No. Rather the grace of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit moves Peter and John towards this man. We've seen how the gospel affects how the church loves one another.

And now we see it moves towards those who have yet to join this community of the Messiah. And this is just a simple point. The gospel casts you into the world for the life of the world.

[9 : 52] Second observation. Our ministry is to take place against the backdrop of community. It's interesting if you read through some of the more liberal commentators on the book of Acts.

They get to this part at the beginning of Acts chapter 3. And they're befuddled. They don't know. Why is John mentioned? Who does all the speaking and acting in our section?

Who does it all? Peter. Right? And so they go, why not just say Peter did that? It's literal. Multiple commentators say that. And I think the answer is actually fairly simple.

First off, because John was there. And then secondly, this is the community of ministry that Jesus envisions. Right? He gathers a community around himself.

That's what he's doing in the gospels. And when he sends the disciples out, how does he send them out? Two by two. Right? He sends them out into ministry together.

[10 : 55] This is vitally important. Jesus, he does not leave behind a disembodied teaching. But instead, he leaves behind, when he goes to heaven, he leaves behind a church.

A community. Which would continue his work. In the very first verse of the book of Acts, it says, Luke is the one who wrote it.

And he says that in his gospel account, he dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach. All that Jesus began to do and teach.

And so there's this impression as you pick up in Acts, that it's what Jesus is continuing to do and teach through the power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the followers of Christ.

Application. Just a quick reminder. I'm preaching to the choir here, I guess, a little bit. But joining, the importance of joining a local congregation of Christ followers.

[11 : 53] This is the context of ministry that Jesus desires. Not all by yourself. Not just you and your Bible. You know, maybe a question would be, who's the John to your Peter? Or vice versa.

What we do in ministry is together. That requires fellowship. It just requires time spent together. Out in the world. Going to church together. Looking for opportunities to serve.

Third observation. We need to begin our deed ministry by seeing the needs of our neighbors. There's a lot going on at the beginning of chapter 3.

You know, and it keeps talking. I don't know if you saw this. The word see comes up. See and saw. Seesaw, right? He sees him. He saw him. Hey, look at me. So the lame man, he sees Peter and John.

And then verse 4 says that Peter directs his gaze at the man who's been unable to walk since birth. And then Peter tells the man what? Look at us. Look at us.

[12 : 50] And then verse 5 says he fixed his attention on them. It's very personal. Very face to face. Lots of seeing. And just in describing this man, we start to see his needs, right?

He needs bodily healing. The passage tells us he's lame. He needs material resources. The passage tells us that he's begging at the gate. He needs inclusion. He's on the outside of the temple.

He's unable to go in. He needs God's presence. He's on the outside of the place where people go in for worship. It helps us, the application. It helps us as we set out into the world to do deed ministry if we would slow down and see the needs of our neighbors.

It can be easy to miss other people's needs because we're so busy. We're worried that a smile might require a conversation and we don't have time for that. We need to slow down.

Did you know every time in the Gospels that Jesus has compassion on a group of people or a person, do you know what it says first? It says he saw them.

[13:56] It says he saw them. It says he saw them. Matthew chapter 9. Jesus sees the crowds. He has compassion on them because they're harassed and they're like sheep without a shepherd. And so he tells the disciples to pray.

Matthew chapter 14. Jesus sees a crowd and he has compassion on them so he heals the sick.

John chapter 6. Jesus sees again 5,000 people and they're hungry.

And he sees them and he has compassion on them so he miraculously provides food for them.

Luke chapter 7. Jesus sees a widow whose only son has just died and so he has compassion and brings life to the son's dead body.

Even in the stories that Jesus tells, Luke chapter 15, the parable of the prodigal son, this young guy who squandered his father's wealth and goes off and lives this licentious lifestyle, is humbled and he's coming back and he's just hoping that his father would receive him, not as a son but as a servant.

And it says, while he was still a long way off, what? The father saw him, ran towards him and embraced him. Jesus tells stories about deed ministry like the parable of the good Samaritan.

[15:09] And the Samaritan's going along and he saw the man beaten in the road and he had compassion and he moved towards him to help. Seeing and compassion.

Application. We need to look. We need to notice. Take a notepad with you. Make some observations even.

What are the needs in your community? Look. Observe. We should look and see the needs of our neighbors until the compassion of heaven is actually stirred inside of us.

And it's a compassion that moves us towards them to enter into their suffering. It's not just a warm, fuzzy feeling that we give towards them. Fourth observation. We address the needs of the world in faith.

Peter says in verse 6, I have no silver and gold. He asks for silver and gold. I don't have any silver and gold. Sometimes we feel like we have absolutely nothing to offer.

[16:08] And Peter, he recognizes his own poverty. He doesn't have any money to give, but he has Jesus. And he has the Holy Spirit. And that'll do. And Peter says, What I do have, I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Rise up and walk. In the name of Jesus. That is how we do our deeds. By the authority of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And that's addressing the needs of the world in faith. So, application. There should be a confidence and a humility in our ministry to other people.

The sermon this morning was such a good reminder of this. That Jesus did in his entire ministry in submission to the will of the Father dependent upon the power of the Holy Spirit.

That's the same way that we're supposed to do it. Submitting to the Lord's will. Well, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit. And it should give us confidence and humility. Confidence that Jesus says, I'm actually going to give you power.

[17:16] I'm actually going to give you the Holy Spirit. You're not going to go around being this miracle worker. But you actually have the same Spirit. The same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you.

That should give you confidence. God wants to use you. Ministry within a church, it will always be stifled if we do not believe this, that God actually wants to work in and through us.

And we believe that in humble reliance. And it causes this humility too because we realize that what we have to offer is not our own goods and our own resources. What we have to offer is Jesus.

And we have to rely on the Holy Spirit in that. That's what's going to drive us towards prayerfulness. You don't need prayer if you're just like, your life is full of turning on Netflix every evening.

But what if it involves some more? Of going outside your comfort zone, of extending the healing hand, of reaching out, of speaking up. Then you'll know that you need Jesus.

[18:25] So it creates this confidence and this humility. Fifth observation. Our deeds should be restorational in nature. Because maybe you're thinking this.

I don't know. I thought this. You're like, Nate. Peter, it doesn't seem like he's caring about the guy's physical needs because he doesn't offer the man money.

Right? Well, no. That's actually missing the point. Peter has no money, but he's something far greater which he's going to share. And the man is healed. And it's interesting that the healing that Peter brings this man through the power of the Spirit, it addresses all of the needs that he had. Right? The man's restored bodily. He was formerly lame. He's restored materially. He doesn't have to beg anymore. He can actually go work. Right? He's restored relationally. He gets up and he immediately goes where?

Into the temple where the people are. He's restored spiritually. What does he do? He praises God. And it's not like the miracle is just there for the point of winning souls later. The miracles of Jesus that happen in the Gospels and that continue in the book of Acts, what they're often referred to is as signs.

[19 : 33] Signs of what? Signs of the kingdom. When the king is here, this is what it's going to look like. This is the type of healing and restoration that the king brings.

That the Messiah has come. What happens when the Messiah has come? Isaiah 35, verse 6. Then will the lame leap like a deer. What does this man do? He jumps up and praises God.

And why do these things happen when the Messiah comes? Because when the king comes, restoration comes. This is the salvation promised in Jesus Christ. The miracles of Jesus, and by extension the miracles of his disciples in the New Testament, they are signs, meaning they are not just these naked displays of power.

It's not like Jesus is going, hey, let me pull a rabbit out of a hat to prove something really cool to you. Because if that was it, I could probably think of something cooler. Like, let me elevate that mountain over there into the air and spin it around a few times and make it dance on the pointy part. You know, like, you could do all sorts of things if all you're trying to do is prove a point of power. But every single one of Jesus' miracles show how the world was supposed to be.

[20 : 48] Each and every single one of them push back against the effects of sin in this world. They show what will one day come in fullness.

No hunger, no disease, no alienation from one another, no need, no death, no more tears. You know, Jesus is always saying before he's about to heal somebody a lot of times, don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.

It's like the prelude to the overture of the new heavens and the new earth where God will wipe away every tear. And so what does this mean for us? Because maybe you're thinking, you know, like, I've never healed anybody from paralysis.

Anybody here done that this evening? No? Okay. Alright. Here's the application then. It means that the deed ministry that we engage in also should be signs of what is to come.

Our deed ministry bears witness to the love of God and the goodness of his reign. So, we adopt orphans and feed the hungry and sit with the lonely and counsel the confused and comfort the dying and advocate for the powerless and give to the poor.

[21 : 52] All these things are not second-rate ministry but the very life of the future brought into the present by the power of the Holy Spirit through the deeds of the people of God.

And mind you, this isn't like rosy optimism where we're saying, hey y'all, let's just like create this society, this Christian utopia together. It's not going to be perfect. But it's interesting, sometimes we can get caught up on those things and caring for the needs of others in the congregation and outside because we say, you know, there's always going to be the poor.

People are going to take advantage of our mercy. And you know, the world's always going to be a messed up place until Jesus comes back. Yes and amen. You want to know what else is going to be messed up until Jesus comes back?

Me. And my sin. But we don't talk about it that way in terms of sanctification. Right? We are not going to be perfect until Jesus returns and yet, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we fight against sin. We fight against sin in our own life and it should be the same out in the world. Sixth and final observation is that we need to initiate extending our hands.

[22 : 59] It's just an interesting little thing that Peter doesn't stand back and wait for the man to struggle to his feet like a baby deer or anything like that. After commanding to him to walk, what does he do? He reaches forward and he grabs his hand and he helps him up.

It's a gesture of love and help. Application. We don't simply tell people the truth. We also need to extend the helping hand and be ready to do so with gracious initiative.

Before we move on to Word Minister, I just want to think, I want you to think and contemplate for a second about the importance of deed ministry for our Christian witness. There was a Christian speaker who I thought was really cool, I liked listening to and not going to name names or anything like that and happened to be around him a few times and to put it just kind of lightly, he's just kind of a prickly pear, just wasn't very nice.

He just kind of felt like he was always trying to show you he's the smartest guy in the room and I just, guess what happened? Next time I heard him speak it wasn't going to be going, whoa, taking notes.

Just kind of felt, ah, right, when I was listening to him because of his deeds. Also remember in seminary I had a friend who was from Kansas. If you know anything about Kansas, there's a lot of wheat there and apparently a few people too.

[24 : 18] But he goes, he went to this church, this Presbyterian church and he spoke glowingly about his minister and how much he loved his minister back home. And it was so bizarre to me, he said the words, he's not that great of a preacher.

I was like, well why do you love the guy? And he said, because he loves us so well. He had seen the costly love of this guy shepherding the congregation.

And so when this minister spoke, he didn't matter about rhetorical effect. People know that he cared. They knew that he knew Jesus and wanted to display the love of Jesus to them.

They loved him for it. In the early church, in the mid-fourth century, the Roman emperor was named Julian and he absolutely hated the Christians.

But even though he hated them, he was honest about what made the Christian faith so attractive. He said this, nothing has contributed to the progress of the superstition of the Christians as their charity to strangers.

[25 : 22] They not only care for their own poor but for ours as well. This is your legacy as the people of God. Don't pit word and deed ministry against each other. They go hand in hand.

That's deed ministry. Now word ministry. Second point is speaking up. So Peter's deeds, right, lead to an opportunity for word ministry. Everybody's amazed. They gather around and so Peter speaks up.

And there's a lot to address but I'm just going to boil it down to two characteristics about word ministry that Peter has as he addresses the people who gather around and it's this. He talks about sin and he talks about grace.

He talks about, first off, Peter talks about sin. Did you notice how blunt and confrontational Peter was? Men of Israel, why do you stare at us as though by our power or piety we made him walk? No, it was God. You know, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who glorified his servant, Jesus. Remember? He's the one you delivered over for death.

[26 : 21] You had an opportunity for him not to die and you said instead you wanted Barabbas. You killed the author of life. To this we are witnesses. Like, awkward, Peter.

Like, come on, they just saw a miracle. Give them a second to catch up here. But here's the thing. Just as Peter looked and he saw the lame man's need, he looks at the crowds and he sees their need and it's their sin.

The people have rejected salvation by killing Jesus. Application. Part of our word ministry needs to be confronting the sins of the world and calling it out for what it is.

It's rejecting Jesus. That's what our sin is. There's a prophetic aspect to our word ministry where we speak against the dehumanizing effects of sin in this world.

We don't settle, we don't equivocate, but we speak the truth even if it puts us in an awkward position. It doesn't mean you need to respond to everything every single time. There's wisdom. But we do need to boldly speak.

[27 : 24] And do it prayerfully dependent on the Spirit and listening to his promptings of where he's giving you opportunities to speak, to confront. Peter's speech, it doesn't stop there.

He doesn't just talk about their sin. He also talks about grace. While our words must confront, the most wonderful thing we get to do is to announce grace. Right? Do you hear the grace in Peter's words?

Brothers, I know you acted in ignorance. Repent that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come. Peter's looking out at them and he's going, listen, listen, you who have ruined yourselves, you who have impoverished yourselves more than all the beggars in history combined,

there is hope for you.

There's hope right now because this Jesus who died, who you killed, he actually took sin on himself and if you turn in faith, you will be forgiven and you too will have a place in the restoration of all things.

And just remember, who's saying these words? It's Peter, the one who had utterly failed in word ministry, given the opportunity to speak up.

[28 : 41] He denies Christ. He abandons him at his greatest hour of need. This is the same guy who Jesus confronted in his sin. Go read John 21 tonight and it's kind of awkward.

Jesus like builds a fire, which is where Peter was when he denied Christ. He kind of like sets the scene again and asks him three times, Peter, do you love me? Because he wants Peter's love. Jesus offers Peter grace. Just as our sins have been exposed and have been healed, we turn and offer the same thing to the world. If we only seek to expose the sins of the world and we neglect our own sins and withhold grace with our words, then we know nothing of the word ministry to which we're called.

Did you see the grace that's promised in Peter's words? There's three blessings. Verse 19, that your sins may be wiped out. Even the sin of killing the author of life.

And that word there, that wiped out, it means to obliterate, to blow to smithereens, to wipe out totally like a stick of dynamite brought to your sin is what Jesus can do by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[29 : 52] Amen. Verse 20, times of refreshing may come from the Lord. God doesn't just wipe away your sin without also adding his refreshment for our spirits. He doesn't just take away.

He gives. Verse 20 again, that he may send the Christ who has been appointed for you. You know, even though in this present period, we live with the forgiveness of our sins.

We still wait for him to come back, which verse 21 says is going to happen. So with our words, we imitate Jesus in announcing the rule and reign of God has come, that your shame can be dealt with, that God will not abandon you, and that in this world of death and suffering, there remains hope for the people of God.

How do we apply this? I don't know. There's like a thousand things, right? Try to keep it simple.

That's what I like to do. First off, just let other people know that you go to church. Just put that on the table.

You bring it up in conversation. It's simple, but it's important. What did you do this? We were talking about this in our city groups in A Passion for Life. What did you do this weekend?

[30 : 56] Oh, well I was at church and we had this really nice lunch. There's this American who talked at us and raised his voice a little bit, but otherwise it was great, right? Second point of application, let people know that you're a Christian and that it means something to you, right?

My Christian faith has helped me in my marriage. Yeah, our marriage isn't perfect, but my Christian faith has actually helped me with that. My father passed away recently. This is how my Christian faith has helped me in that.

We went through the pandemic. This is how my Christian faith helped me in that. Those are good places to start. They lead to organic, extensive conversations. This is what we're called to.

We're called to deed and word ministry together. There's lots of other examples in the Bible of it. And they have to be taken together because you see on their own, they're good and they're right, but it's when it's together that we see the beauty of the kingdom.

It's like cheese. Anybody like cheese? Cheese is delicious, right? It's amazing. Pasta. So good. You know what's better than those two things separately?

[32 : 03] Like some Parmesan Reggiano on your Bucatini? Oh my goodness, holy moly, now you're talking. When they come together, it's this beautiful new thing. You see, when we come and we serve the Lord and we proclaim with our mouths His goodness and His reign and we display in loving kindness and service to one another and outside of the church that His reign is for the least of these.

It's wonderful. Let's pray that the Lord would help us in that. O Holy Spirit, we ask that You would pour Yourself into our hearts, that it would overflow this living water that we have because of Christ and that it would give refreshment to us, to our families, to our relatives, to our church family, to those who live next to us, to those who go to school and university with us, to our unbelieving neighbors, to those we come in contact with, to those that we work with.

Father, we pray that we would hold together the goodness of proclaiming the message of the kingdom and displaying the love and servanthood of the kingdom that our Savior displayed for us, that it was a costly love, a costly service.

Father, in all these things, would You strengthen us? Would You give us hope? Would You give us eyes to see the way that Jesus sees, that we would see You at work and so that we would give You praise, that we would make much of Jesus because we know what it is to be beggars and to need grace.

Thank You that You feed us, Lord. We pray all this in the name of our Savior. Amen.