

Stand Amazed at God's Work

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[0 : 00] Oh, praise the one who paid my debt and raised this life up from the dead.

That's why we're here. We have the joy of praising the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The rest of that song transitions into helping us understand why we can praise.

Why can we praise the Lord? Well, because Jesus paid it all. All to Him we owe. It's because of His life, His death, His resurrection, that we have hope of being able to enjoy the benefits of the life that He provided through His death, His resurrection, the payment of sin.

And so we praise Him. And this morning as we look at Acts chapter 3, we're going to see a similar direction to Peter and John as they seek to draw attention to the praise that God deserves, the praise that Jesus deserves.

I would encourage you, if you would, please to open with me, if you would, to Acts chapter 3. We're going to be starting in verse 11. If you're using the Pew Bible, you can find us there on page 911.

[1 : 16] There's a contemporary example of how this played out on May 24, 1844.

Samuel Morris officially opened the first long-distance telegraph between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. The line stretched for 38 miles.

It started at the old Supreme Court chamber in the U.S. Capitol and stretched to Baltimore. And on the receiving end of this line was a man named Alfred Vail who waited to receive this message and then confirmed that he had received and the success of the telegraph was born.

The initial message was put together by a woman by the name of Annie Ellsworth and it's a line that was drawn from the book of Numbers chapter 23 verse 23 which reads, What hath God wrought? It's a powerful historical moment of celebrating this achievement, this success of this improvement, this technological advance of being able not just to deliver a message by hand but now to be able to deliver a message electronically between two places that were spread apart.

[2 : 40] But rather than celebrating the ingenuity of human invention and celebrating Samuel Morris and his ability to put this together, Annie Ellsworth wanted to draw attention to something else, someone else.

Look what God has wrought. Draw attention to him. Praise him. And in this first public message, it deliberately lifted the higher question, What has God done?

It's a question that Peter and John will raise through our passage today of directing hearts and attention, not to what Peter or John have accomplished there in the early parts of Acts chapter 3, but to draw attention to the work of God.

His work, his power, and praise needs to be directed to him. And so as we move into our passage this morning, we're going to find in verse 12 how Peter will do this.

He says, Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us as though by our own power we have made him walk? This lame man. The God of Abraham glorified his servant Jesus and the faith that is through Jesus has given this man health in the presence of you all.

[4 : 06] Don't celebrate the power of God working through humanity. Celebrate the power working through God. God and his son Jesus. Don't ask, What has Peter and John done for you?

Understand and recognize the power of God. Stand amazed at the work of God. And so the posture this morning that we need to recognize from Peter and John is the same posture that we need to have as well.

That those who celebrate and praise God and recognize the work of God, that posture needs to be directed appropriately.

This morning, we're going to observe four principles of standing amazed at God's work. We're going to see that beginning in verse 11. And it begins with this. We must recognize the difference between wonder and worship.

Recognize the difference between wonder and worship. Let me read this for us. It says in verse 11, While he clung to Peter, speaking of the lame man who had just been healed, he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

[5 : 20] And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 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 him walk?

Now remember this story. Those of you who were here with us a couple of weeks ago, remember this miraculous healing that took place. That Peter and John were there. They had gone up to the temple to pray.

This was one of the several moments throughout the day where God's people would assemble. This was the ninth hour, which means it was the third time throughout the course of the day where God's people would pray.

It would first happen at nine in the morning and then at noon and then at three o'clock in the afternoon. And on this occasion, a lame man was brought. A lame man who couldn't come on his own.

He was carried. And while he is in transit, rather than Peter and John just letting him go by as they had done before, they help him to stop in his tracks. And we find something about this lame man.

[6 : 20] He's been lame from birth. And in chapter four, verse 22, we find that he had been, he's 40 years old. So he's been dealing with this affliction, this infirmity for a great deal of time.

And here he is. He's dependent on the gifts of those, the generosity, the kindness, the mercy of those who would come by. And Peter stops and looks at this man and says, I have no silver or gold to give to you, but what I have, I give to you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

In other words, I don't have exactly what you are looking for, but I have something better. And Peter faithfully directs attention of this miracle.

He begins this miracle by directing attention where direction was due to Jesus Christ. It's through the name of Jesus of Nazareth that this miracle is happening.

And then we find what happens. Well, this man's ankles and feet were strengthened. He leaps up and he begins to walk and praise the Lord as he's moving into the temple.

[7 : 29] We recognize that a miracle's occurred not only because of the strengthening of his feet and ankles, but also because of this coordination, this proficiency of walking that was taking place.

Everyone who was there would have noticed that something significant had just happened. And he's not just shuffling his way. He's not just limping or wobbling into the temple.

He is walking and leaping and praising the Lord through this process. And all the people who saw him recognized him and we find that they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had just happened.

Wonder and amazement. And at this point, I want to pause this morning because wonder and worship are not the same. Wonder and worship are not the same.

And if God is going to receive glory the way that God deserves glory, we need to move from just being amazed, just wondering, just being astounded, just marveling.

[8 : 34] We need to move from an emotional response of realizing that what God has done and it needs to move us into worship. It needs to move us to a spot of recognizing there's an object of wonder, there's an object of praise and that praise must go to God.

And so these people would stand in awe and they would even praise God. Some would even marvel at what had been done, but it did not lead them, at least initially, to faith, which means it didn't lead them to worship because worship depends on faith.

It depends on having an understanding the right object of worship, the right object of wonder, and moving us into faith in the Lord Jesus. The people stood with mouths open with a puzzled glance, but their response on this day, I don't believe was a coincidence because Jesus himself would heal a lame man, not just, not too far away from this very time, but not more than a couple of months before this incident, Jesus, his final healing miracle in public, in the final week of his ministry, would be a ministry of healing lame and blind.

We find that in Matthew 21, verses 14 and 15. It says, And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, Hosanna to the son of David, they were indignant.

I don't think it's a coincidence that Jesus healed the lame and the blind just a few months, just actually a few weeks before this very incident.

[10:23] But even when Jesus performs this incredible miracle, the response was wonder and amazement. They wondered, they were amazed at the wonderful things that Jesus did, but instead of turning and inclining their hearts to worship, the chief priests and the scribes were indignant.

They were furious. They were incensed. You see, if we're ever going to stand amazed at the work of God, we must first recognize the difference between wonder and worship.

The people here in the temple need to be enlightened. They need their wonder to be informed. And so this miracle gets everyone's attention. We see that in verse 11. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

It's interesting, isn't it? Jesus had performed miracles. Jesus had done plenty of miracles. Why does this now garner so much attention? Why was this not, seems to be this unique response of the crowd?

Well, I think it's because Jesus was now gone. And now the works that Jesus had done that had affirmed his ministry, his word, are now being worked out by the apostles who are also teaching.

[11:45] And in their teaching ministry, their teaching ministry also now confirmed, affirmed by miracles. This work of God through their lives. And now all of a sudden, these works and wonders that were associated so closely to Jesus are now being attached to the apostles.

apostles. And in utter amazement, the people run together. It's a word that's only used in this verse. This running together. It's a word that describes their tremendous amazement.

They're blown away. They're out of their minds for what is happening here. And it's not only garnered their attention, but it's created a response. Response of rushing and running and assembling.

And they gather here in a place called Solomon's Portico, which will become familiar to us as we continue to move our way through this book of Acts. This was a recognizable public place.

It was a place where God's people would often assemble. It was a large, expansive place on the east side of the temple. And it was a place that was accessible because it was on a part of the outer courts.

[12:53] It wasn't restricted to anyone. And it had this awning, this covered shade that allowed people to gather when the sun was hot. It was accessible and the people are gathering.

But these people needed to understand that while however amazed they might be, they needed to move from wonder to worship. Next, they needed to understand, we need to understand the significance of refusing to take credit for God's work.

If God will ever get glory, if praise will ever be directed to him, then we need to recognize the significance of refusing to take credit for the work that God does, for God's work.

We see that in verse 12. And when Peter saw it, he addressed the people, 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 him walk?

In other words, I know you're really amazed right now. I know this work has really captured your attention. But don't direct your attention to us. Don't look at us.

[14:01] Don't marvel at us. This is not a work of men. This is a work of God. Peter has already directed attention to the Lord Jesus in Acts chapter 3, verse 6.

He says, In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And the lame man got up and what does he do? In verse 8, well, he praises God. His heart is now already inclined to praising the right object of worship.

Praising God for what God has accomplished. Not praising Peter or praising John. This man who had lived on the perimeter. He had lived on the threshold, as it were, of the temple.

Never being able to really move into the inner courts. Now, as a result of being healed by the Lord Jesus, he is now moving in. He's praising God. He's a part of the assembly. He worshiped and praise has filled his heart and the object of praise is to the Lord himself.

It's to God. This emblematic of his physical full recovery is seen in the posture of his heart. Yes, he was healed physically, but we're beginning to see already there's a transformation, there's a change in his heart and life.

[15:15] There's a direction to it. There's an object to it. Peter says, don't look at us as though we accomplished this work. Look to God. And this is exactly what we learned from the Lord Jesus'

example.

Jesus would do the same thing. Jesus constantly deferred attention to the will of the Father. He would defer attention to the words of the Father throughout his ministry.

We see that in John 5, verse 19. So Jesus said to them, truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing.

For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. A few verses later in verse 30, chapter 5, verse 30, he says this, I can do nothing of my own.

As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me. We find it again in the next chapter, John 6, verse 38.

[16:13] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. Jesus modeled this kind of heart. The heart of submission and obedience and deferring to the Father, seeking to direct attention of hearts of people to God the Father.

Jesus depended on the Father's will and the Father's power. And if we're ever going to stand amazed at the works of God, we must do the same. We must draw attention to the work of God, not to the work of us.

Whatever things God accomplishes through our lives, whatever successes that you may have, whatever comfort you may give, whatever joys your life and service your life may contribute to the body, it is a result of the work of God.

We must direct attention to God. That's what I love about Ephesians chapter 3 verses 20 and 21.

Paul here says, Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Notice the emphasis. Now to him. Praise to God. Yes, he has given us the joy of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit but everything that happens, everything good that happens in life is a result of the power of God and it's directed to his glory.

[17:55] Glorify the Lord. In our working, in our serving, in our speaking, we need to have the posture of deferring and directing people's attention to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I believe as I look around this room, I believe that most of you do a really good job at this. You often give credit to the Lord for what God has accomplished through you and in you and when you receive credit and praise from others, you often defer that praise.

praise the Lord for this. Thank the Lord for how he's worked through me. And I think we tend to do really well at this. But we often get it wrong in reverse or maybe I should just maybe personalize this.

I often get it wrong in reverse. And what I mean is this. When credit comes my way, it's easy for me to defer that credit to somebody else.

But where I struggle is when nobody notices. When I struggle is when that pat on the back doesn't come to me. When no one appreciates, when no one enjoys, when no one takes notice, then that's when my heart begins to be discouraged and be depressed and be frustrated.

[19:23] Why didn't anyone notice what's happening? But this is the same problem in reverse. is the problem in reverse as Paul will say in Galatians 1.10. Am I now seeking the approval of men or God?

Or do I seek to please men? For if I still please men, I cannot be a servant of Christ. You see, it's easy to acknowledge God when people acknowledge us.

It's not so easy, I think, for us to acknowledge God when nobody acknowledges us. And that's where the real test comes. Will we give God praise even in private when no acceptance, no appreciation, no commendation comes our way?

We continue to say, praise the Lord for what God is doing. You see, if God is going to get praise, if he's going to receive the accolades and the celebration for what he is doing, we need to direct hearts to him and refuse to take credit for God's working.

We find in verse 13, we also need to reckon with the reality of rejecting God's son. If God is ever going to receive praise, we need to reckon with the reality of rejecting God's son.

[20:39] It says this in verse 13. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate.

when he had decided to release him, but you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this, we are witnesses. Reckon with the reality of rejecting God's son. What do I mean by this? Well, it is this. In summary, you cannot reject the son and have the father.

You cannot stand amazed at God's work and oppose the son. The two come together. And that was largely the problem in Jerusalem.

They had no problem directing attention to God and recognize the work of God, but when Jesus came into the mix, they opposed Jesus, they pushed him away, they rejected Jesus, and by rejecting Jesus, they also rejected God.

[21 : 52] And so you cannot praise and please God and worship God by rejecting Jesus. John will say, in 1 John, chapter 2, verse 22, who is a liar, but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ.

This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

That's where true saving faith crystallizes. It crystallizes in knowing who Jesus is. It crystallizes in knowing and directing attention and praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so that's what Peter is about to do. we find that in verse 13. He begins to draw attention to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who was also the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob.

The God that these people in Jerusalem celebrated and worshipped is the same God that was embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

[23 : 10] And he is the promise keeping God. God. It's interesting that Peter will draw attention to the God of Abraham. That's where the people of God find their identity.

They find it in the promises that were originally given to Abraham and then worked out through Jesus Christ who was the seed of Abraham and those who are in Christ are also beneficiaries of these promises that were originally given to Abraham.

God has promised these things to Abraham and those who are of faith in Christ are now beneficiaries of this promise. We see this God glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered over to and denied in the presence of Pilate.

This word Jesus as servant, this servant Jesus is an unusual word in the Greek. It's a word that's used only a few times throughout the book of Acts.

It draws attention to Jesus as servant but it is this title that had this messianic understanding, this future promise that God would send this promised king and this title that was used in this moment is meant to create that connection, that association.

[24 : 34] You see Jesus here? He's the servant of God. He's the son of God. He's the promised king sent from God. We find in Isaiah chapter 52 verse 13 a reference to this servant, this promised servant.

It says this, Behold my servant shall act wisely. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.

Yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted, but he was pierced for our transgression. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.

This same promised servant, this servant of God is the one in the same Jesus Christ who came to serve and to save his people from their sin.

The one that was promised in Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah is the same one that you crucified and killed by hanging on a tree. This is one and the same. Do you recognize the weight, the gravity of your rejection of your very God, Jesus Christ, who came, who came to offer salvation to you?

[25 : 53] This was God's servant. There's not some random prophet, not just a good man, not just a worker of miracles, but this was God's very servant and son.

And this identity calls attention to the gravity of the offense. Jesus was sent by God, affirmed by God, spoke the words of God and worked the miracles that God called him to work and what did they do?

We find this two-fold reaction. They delivered him over and they denied him, this very servant son. And while Pilate was ultimately responsible for Jesus' death, we find through the gospel accounts that there were six times through the gospel accounts that Pilate refers to Jesus as innocent.

And three occasions when Pilate wanted to release Jesus and the crowds that were in Jerusalem, those Jews, demanded his death.

They rejected him, they denied him, they delivered him over. And Peter assigns this full responsibility for Christ's crucifixion to the Jews. The very ones who were standing there listening to this message, they were the ones, they were culpable.

[27 : 12] Peter uses three titles for Jesus which are meant to add weight to his identity. He calls him holy and the righteous one. He calls him the author of life.

All terms that were used throughout the Old Testament to direct attention to Jesus as the Messiah, the promised king, the one who is coming. And even though it should have been clear, it should have been obvious, and even though as the holy one, even the demons believed and trembled, we find from Mark chapter 1 verse 24, the demons who say, I know who you are, the holy one of God. And what the demons could recognize, the people in Jerusalem could not. And so they delivered him over, they denied him. This author of life, and the irony is meant to come with force.

The author of life, you killed, you murdered, you delivered him over. If we're ever going to stand amazed at God's work, we must recognize the son for who he is.

We must come to terms with Jesus as the son of God. We must recognize what he is owing, he is due, our praise.

[28 : 30] And finally, if we're ever going to stand amazed at God's work, we need to respond in faith and praise to Jesus. We find that in verse 16, it says this, and his name, by faith in his name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given this man perfect health in the presence of you all.

To ensure that his audience doesn't miss the point. Peter will draw attention to the name Jesus, the object of their praise. He draws attention to three times in this one little verse.

He begins, and his name, by faith in his name. That's the second one. And then in this middle phrase, and faith that is through Jesus.

Peter, that started this whole miraculous event by directing attention to Jesus Christ, now draws attention to him once again. And to ensure this emphasis, he calls attention to him now three times in this short little verse.

And the message is this, that faith is only strong when the object rests on the right individual. And faith is not powerful because it comes from us.

[29 : 53] faith is powerful because it rests in Christ. And we find throughout this passage, this verse in particular, that Peter is drawing attention to faith.

Well, what is missing is whose faith are we talking about? Are we talking about the faith of Peter, who recognized that God could do a work in this lame man? Are we talking about the faith of the lame man, who when Peter grasped his hand, that he lifted him up, and by faith the man was able to stand and believing that the word that Peter gave him was true?

I believe this is by design. We don't know whose faith we're addressing because the faith of both parties was important. But what the apostle Peter is trying to welcome us and invite us to participate is recognizing that if you want to enjoy the same kind of work of God, you must also be a person of faith.

You must also come to a place of recognizing who Jesus is. You must also be the kind of person who lays aside personal praise and refuses to accept that praise for the sake of directing praise to God.

And that through faith in Christ, you can enjoy the benefits of healing. He uses this word. He's been healed. It reminds me again of what we found in Isaiah chapter 53 verse 5.

[31 : 21] It says, but he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace and with his wounds we are healed.

Well, what kind of healing are we talking about here? We're not just talking about the healing that took place here in Jerusalem. This physical healing, this miraculous healing of this lame man. But it was just meant to be emblematic of the greater healing that God desires to do for anyone who trusts in him. And that's a healing of our greatest need. Our sin need that has separated us from the Lord.

That because of sin we have been separated from him. And without a connection to him, without fellowship with him, without being restored back to him, we will continue to walk in disfellowship apart from God.

This great healing that Jesus offered is the healing of your heart. And ultimately those who believe in Jesus will also enjoy the benefits of this resurrected body at some point down the road.

[32 : 27] So there will be a physical and spiritual healing that comes because of the work of Christ. But this miraculous work is meant to draw attention to praise to God.

You see, the crowd came rushing because they had seen a miracle. And Peter would not let them stop at the miracle. He would not let them stop even at the healed man.

He would not let them stop at Peter and John. He would not even let them stop at wonder and amazement. Peter wants to direct their attention to the object of worship. The object of praise to Jesus Christ himself.

Faith in his name. Do you believe in Jesus this morning? Have you enjoyed the benefits of his power? His saving power that came through this crucified Lord that all of us here in this room are culpable in some sense.

That at some point in our life we've all participated in this process of denying the Lord Jesus. Of delivering him over.

[33 : 36] But as we find in this passage there is still an invitation. There's an invitation for all of us to enjoy the benefits of this welcome. Through faith in his name we can participate in the power of his healing and especially his healing power in salvation.

Healing hearts in bringing us to God. So this morning we're reminded of what faith in Christ entails. us. We're reminded this morning of the importance of what Christ has accomplished for us through his death and resurrection.

And we come this morning to these elements and we're reminded of the cost that are required for us to enjoy the benefits of Christ's work. His crucifixion and his resurrection have afforded us the joy of being united with him in faith.

Do you believe in the Lord Jesus today? Are you setting your affection not just on the wonder of what God has done but has it drawn you into worship, into faith, into believing in him as the only son of God, the servant of God who is worthy of your worship and praise.

Let me pray. Father, thank you for the work of your son Jesus Christ. thank you that through faith in Christ we can enjoy the benefits of life with God.

[35 : 06] The author of life who was put to death has ushered in an age of enjoyment of life with God through faith in the son. And God, as we recognize this work, I pray that our hearts would not only be reminded but challenged to direct our hearts, our praise rightly to the object of worship to God himself and his son Jesus Christ.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.