

Healing and Explanation

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Date: 02 November 2003

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[0 : 00] I'd like you to open your Bible to Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 3. I will spend our time looking at verses 1 to 26.

Acts, Chapter 3, is found on page 114 in the New Testament section of your Pure Bible. I'm sure all of us are aware that this weekend has been a very spooky weekend.

With the Halloween celebrations and the consecration of Jim Robinson in the Diocese of New Hampshire as Bishop, it's beginning to feel very eerie at this point.

And for some of us Anglicans, it may appear that this weekend is the end of the road for us.

In a sense, it may be the end of the road as we see Anglicanism today, but it is not the end of the road for us as Christians in the Anglican Church.

[1 : 16] And why do I say this? I think the answer is simple. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead.

He is indeed alive. And because Jesus is alive, and because he is seated at the throne of the Father, his power is present with us, and his power will continue to be ever-present with his sins, in the present and in the future.

And so I want to begin this sermon by inviting all of us to proclaim what we usually proclaim on Easter Sunday.

And if you remember on Easter Sunday, we say, Alleluia, Christ is risen. And your response is, he is risen. Indeed, Alleluia.

So let's do that together. Alleluia, Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia. Can you say amen? Amen.

[2 : 21] I know it's not an Anglican thing to do that, but... I think that is the truth. It is not a slogan. It is not something superficial that we say in order to dom the pain that we have.

It's not a way of ignoring the crumbling reality around us. It is the truth. Jesus is indeed risen from the dead. He is alive, very alive among us.

And he continues his ministry of teaching, his ministry of salvation, his ministry of strengthening and healing, even through his church today.

And that is what we see clearly in the story before us. Peter and John were going to the temple at 3 p.m. in the afternoon.

And right at the temple gate was a man who had been lamed from birth. And seeing Peter and John, he asked for alms. But the interesting thing was that this was no ordinary day.

[3 : 30] Every single day of his life, to this point in his life, was the same. He would come to this place, and he would search, and he would ask for alms.

And sometimes, to God's alms, that's how his days were. That on this day, God had a different plan for him.

God, in his graciousness, God, in his spontaneity, had something greater than alms for him. And I think it is a great lesson for us.

Today is no ordinary day in the presence of God. God, in the midst of God, in the midst of our sin, in the midst of our hopelessness, in the midst of our uncertainty, in the midst of our uncertainty, in getting used to the way things are done in Anglicanism, we may think things are just going to continue going downhill as they look.

But as long as God is involved, as long as Jesus is alive, God, in his sovereign power, has the authority to overrule and bring into being the wholeness and the hope that we desperately need, especially at this time.

[5 : 10] There is absolutely nothing in this disordered universe that supersedes the order and the power of the risen Christ.

He is the one that overrules. And so for the beggar, it was this day, the same ordinary day, but for God, it was different.

And so Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, directed his gaze at him, and said, look at us. And the beggar looked up at them, expecting some money.

And so Peter begins by delivering the bad news. I have no silver and gold. That is bad news for a beggar. And of course, his heart probably started beating very fast.

He has no silver and gold. I mean, Peter and John, you are Christians, you ought to have silver and gold. But then came the good news.

[6 : 18] But what I have, I give unto you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And Peter took him by the hand, raised him up, and he began to walk and leap, and began to praise God.

And of course, you know, there was pandemonium. There was chaos. I mean, this was, this was in the narthex of church. I wonder if that happens here, what we're going to do.

It's good to have pandemonium in church. Every now and then. Some excitement. We need some excitement. Some good excitement. And I think the, this story reminds me of another story that I read some time ago.

The story is told of Thomas Aquinas, St. Thomas Aquinas, going to visit with Pope Innocent II. As he was visiting him in Rome, Pope Innocent was counting a large sum of money.

And the Pope looked at St. Thomas and said, You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say silver and gold, have I known.

[7 : 38] And Thomas replied, True, Holy Father, and neither can the church now say, arise and walk.

And I think we need to ponder that seriously. Why is it that we do not see more of the power of God made present in his church?

What is the reason for that? And of course, as reformed Christians, we run to, well, you know, the sovereignty of God. God has decided not to do that.

But are you sure? Is that what God has said? We believe in the sovereign authority of God. God has said, and that sovereign authority of God includes the manifestation of his power in the midst of his people.

And so I think we need to keep praying and asking God that in his sovereignty he will reveal himself evermore in the life of his church.

[8 : 49] And so as a miracle happens here, the people were filled with wonder and amazement and we're asking what is going on here. And of course, Peter begins to explain what has happened.

An interesting thing is that Peter does not draw attention to himself. He draws attention away from the miracle and away from himself.

He denied any special power or godliness in himself. Now, I'm sure many of us here watch television and I do not remember any single time I have watched television evangelists in their healing on television not drawing attention to themselves.

I'm sure some of you may remember. I don't. They talk about how they met Jesus and how Jesus commissioned them to do this and how their ministry is getting bigger and bigger and how you should send money and they send you a cloth and the cloth is going to heal you and you send them more money.

And that's not what Peter does here. Peter puts the attention on Jesus Christ. And I think as we read all of the Bible especially in the New Testament miracles and healings do not point to the power and piety or godliness of the instrument.

[10 : 31] They point to the person of Jesus Christ. About two or three weeks ago I was watching the canonization of Mother Teresa on television and at some point during that celebration there was a side comment and the comment was that the Pope Pope John Paul had gotten into trouble for trying to canonize Mother Teresa and you know the reason for that.

The son believed that Mother Teresa was not supposed to be a saint was not qualified to be a saint because she had not walked enough miracles. In other words her piety her saintliness her godliness was not strong enough because if it were she would have walked a lot of miracles.

And that is precisely what Peter denies in this passage. It is not by our power it is not by our piety it is not by our godliness that this has happened it is because God wants to glorify his servant Jesus.

God is glorifying his servant God is vindicating and honoring his servant Jesus. And that is the whole point of the miracle.

You see God is proclaiming in this miracle that Jesus indeed is the promised Messiah. Christ after his death and resurrection has taken his throne at the right hand of the father.

[12 : 19] And all authority and power has been given to him and now he is extending his dominion all over the earth. And so through his name and by faith in his name he has begun to heal the cosmos.

The whole universe is in the process of healing. And I think as Peter proclaimed this message to them that God is glorifying his servant it must have been a shock to all of them because the Jesus whom God is glorifying the Jesus whom Peter is proclaiming as the servant and the Messiah of Israel was the same Jesus that they had rejected and denied and handed over to be killed.

This is the Jesus whom God raised from the dead and exalted him. And this man is the proof of that. And I think the point is fairly very clear.

It's God's view of Jesus. God's attitude to Jesus is completely different from the view that others may have of Jesus.

They hated him as many people do today but God loved him. They killed him as many people do today in their hearts but God raised him up.

[13 : 57] They rejected him as their king as many people do today. That God has enthroned him as the king of kings and the savior of the world.

And I think the biggest shock that's going to happen to this universe at the end of the age is when God publicly and universally enthroned Jesus as the king of kings and the lord of lords.

And if your life if all of your life on this earth has been spent on rejecting and denying Jesus what are you going to do on that day?

God's shock element has not ceased. It is continuing and it's going to come to a climax on the last day. These people rejected Jesus, they killed him, but God loved him and raised him from the dead and they enthroned him.

And many continue to do that today. And my question to you, if you're still rejecting Jesus and you're sitting here this morning, what are you going to do on that day when God will publicly proclaim Jesus as the king of kings, the lord of lords, and the judge of all the of what are you going to do?

[15 : 29] And I think this is why Peter ends his sermon with an invitation to repentance, verse 19. Repent therefore and turn again that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the lord.

repent. In the light of what you have done and in the light of what God has done, what is the appropriate response?

The appropriate response of those who reject Jesus is to repent. Repent and turn from your sins toward God.

And to repent is to change our minds and to change our purpose, to change our direction. In other words, when we repent, we change our minds about the person of Jesus.

We change our minds about our view of Jesus. We change our minds about our attitude toward Jesus. And this change of mind is going to issue or lead to a change of behavior and direction.

[16 : 41] we need to repent of our sins of unbelief and self centeredness.

The sin that pushes Jesus out of the center and pushes me into the center. The sin that pushes Jesus out of the center and pushes the Anglican church into the center.

These are the sins that we must repent. because Jesus died on the cross, Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus is the throne as the King of Kings and nobody else and nothing else.

Not even Anglicanism. And I think as well all of us or some of us here desperately need to repent of our own sins in different ways.

I think that the major problem with Anglicanism probably all of us here is how we treat and how we look at Jesus.

[17 : 56] Is Jesus Lord indeed? I know we confess him as Lord but is he Lord? Does Jesus really have authority over me and over this church?

Peter is very clear. The danger of not repenting is stated in verse 23.

And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet that is Jesus shall be destroyed from the people. people. The refusal to repent of our views and attitudes toward Jesus leads to

being cut off from the people of God and being cut off from the blessings of God.

But when we repent and turn to God, God will forgive our sin, we will escape the judgment of God, God will send times of refreshing.

And of course, when you think about times of refreshing, that's the flip side of forgiveness. So when God forgives sin, he takes away the debt that we owe.

[19 : 14] But that's not all that he does. God gives something to us. He gives us spiritual rest, spiritual relief and refreshment.

He gives us joy and peace and hope. And on the last day, he will send Jesus to bring in the final, eternal, universal restoration.

And of course, what Peter is saying there is that this healing is sort of a preview and a prefigure of what the kingdom of God is going to look like when Jesus comes back the second time.

Jesus is demonstrating here that on the last day when the restoration comes, all of the cosmos is going to be healed. But until then, we are called to patience, we are called to faith, we are called to a life of repentance.

salvation. I want to conclude by saying to us, the will of God is that we receive the blessings of forgiveness, the blessing of spiritual refreshment, and the blessing of universal restoration.

[20 : 37] Participation and reception of this blessing hinges on our attitude and relationship to Jesus. The participation of Anglicanism in the full forgiveness of God, in the spiritual refreshment and restoration that God has in plan for his church, hinges on Anglicanism's attitude to Jesus.

Is it Lord God or is it not? And my question to you this morning is what is your attitude to Jesus?

Is it rejection or is it acceptance? If it is acceptance of his authority and lordship, the gift of forgiveness belongs to you, the gift of restoration belongs to you, and eternal refreshment also belongs to you as an individual and as Anglicanism of the denomination.

Amen.