

New Prophet

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[0 : 0 0] Well, I want to wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving, and as Jim said, it's really appropriate that we're having baptisms on this Thanksgiving Day, and also that we're looking at Chapter 3 in the Book of Acts on this Thanksgiving Day, because if you look on page 114, you're going to see that this chapter is a real gift to us, to all of us who are gathered here today.

It gets right at what is wonderful and important and the bottom line for the church, and it tells us what the gathering of God is all about.

And that's very important if you just started coming to St. John's. You probably want to know what this group is all about here that meets on a beautiful, gorgeous fall morning inside, and who are all risking having late turkeys for their turkey dinner by being here over the noon hour.

And if you are here for a long time, you know that we face all kinds of challenges and struggles in our life together as God's people.

And these things can really distract us. Well, what this chapter does for all of us is it brings us powerfully back to what the great purpose of the church is.

[1 : 2 9] It talks to us about what the mission is that draws us together. It says we're a gathering of Christians that have a treasure that can be found nowhere in the world.

We actually don't have a whole lot to offer that the world can't do even better if we're just talking about ourselves. But we have a treasure that is not worldly, that no worldly price can be put on.

It is our wonderful mission to give this gift, which is God's gift. And so we want to talk about that this morning. Look at chapter 3. Peter and John have gone up to the temple for the 3 o'clock prayers.

And there is a man there who is lame from birth. He's never been able to walk. And he is being carried to the same place where he every day asks for money, which is part of the act of worship for people going up to the temple.

He saw Peter and John coming. And he said to them, I need money. And Peter looked at him and said, look at us.

[2 : 4 0] And of course, you can't say that without raising expectations. This lame man must have been hoping for something big from him. It says that in verse 5.

But there is this letdown in verse 6. Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but I give you what I have. Here's something that we as a church are saying.

We don't have anything of the world that we can help you with in the sense of that the world could not do better. But I'm going to give you what I have.

And I think that the man who had never walked must have wondered whether what Peter could possibly have that would help him. Money is what he needed. In that agrarian society, he couldn't work.

And so he couldn't get what was needed for eating or for a place to live. And he must have thought that whatever this guy is going to give me, it's a waste of time.

[3 : 38] It's not really relevant to me. And so then Peter's next words must have been a complete surprise. He said, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, in the name of a man who this guy knows had been executed a couple of months before, in the name of that person, stand up and walk.

Now what would he have thought? We don't know what was going on in his mind. But what this is telling us is what the church is all about. We don't have anything in and of ourselves that we can offer here.

That will change your life. But we have something that we will give you. It is from Jesus. We are to give Jesus to the world.

If you're a Christian, you know that this is the gift that we offer to the world. Paul said, Everything is lost compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.

This is what we have. At St. John's, we have the immeasurable gift of the risen Jesus in our lives. It's the same gifts that the Christians at Pentecost rejoiced in and had an incredible thanksgiving for.

[5 : 02] The gift of the Holy Spirit, the risen Jesus in our lives. And on this beautifully decorated Thanksgiving day, it is what we have to be most thankful for.

And the pattern of the church, as we're going to see in Acts, is that what we have as a church, we are to give. This is what we are about. It's the mission of the church.

And we will see it played out throughout the book of Acts. So that if somebody asks you, What is the mission, what is the purpose of this gathering here at St. John's? You say, We want to give Jesus.

For we have received everything from him. Now we don't know what the man was thinking, as I said when Peter said this, But there was a tiny bit of trust that must have been there.

In this Jesus who he thought was dead. And by the way, if you have never trusted Jesus, that is all it takes. A tiny faith that this man has something that you need.

[6 : 02] And we know this because the man allowed Peter to take him up by the right hand and raise him up. And Dr. Luke, who writes in an understated and clinical way, says, Immediately the man's feet and his ankles were made strong.

Well, what he meant by that is that muscles and tendons and ligaments were formed instantaneously where there had been nothing before. Where nothing had existed.

Suddenly there is this creation in his feet and ankles. Feet that had never been used before were made perfect and whole. So perfect that he leaped up and he stood.

And then he entered the temple with Peter and John walking and leaping and praising God. I think there is a song there somewhere, isn't there? But this is a wonderful picture of not only a physical healing, but of a real emotional and spiritual healing as well.

You know this man could not go into the temple because he was lame. Only those who are completely able-bodied could go into the presence of God in the temple. The first thing he does, being restored physically, is to run and walk and leap into the temple.

[7 : 16] The man was utterly transformed because Peter gave Jesus to him. And you know that the three o'clock service at the temple was probably a non-starter that day.

All the people who were going to the temple saw this guy walking and praising God. They recognized him, if you notice in verse 10, as the one they had seen every day asking for money.

He was a fixture there. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him. They couldn't believe it. People ran to them, astounded. And so a big crowd formed.

As this man is clinging to Peter and John, they are being rushed by people who are supposed to be worshipping. It's a wild scene. So what do you do when this is happening?

Well, Peter wants to give them Jesus. That's what it comes down to. And so he preaches. No time to prepare, but he had heard Jesus.

[8 : 15] He had walked with Jesus. He says, men of Israel, why do you stare at us as though by our own power and piety we had made him walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus.

And you see what Peter is doing here. He is directing the crowd away from himself and to Jesus. So that nothing will stand in the way of him exalting Jesus.

Of him being able to give Jesus to them. And that, again, is the pattern of the church. There is a real human tendency that we fall into in the church as well to exalt human achievement and human talent.

We can fall into this because there are many talented Christians around us. And God works in wonderful ways through his people. But the church is only a success when it exalts Jesus and continually says, Faith in Jesus alone saves you and transforms you and gives you all that you need for salvation.

And the thing about the church being all about exalting Jesus and giving Jesus is that there is a need to receive as well. And we get into this in Peter's sermon very soon here.

[9 : 36] We see that there is an inclination in every person not to see Jesus as that gift. There is a real need for a change of heart in order for a person to see Jesus from God's viewpoint as the immeasurable gift to the world.

And we know this because Jesus' own people completely reject him. Look at 13 through 15. There is a three-fold rejection.

The first in verse 13 we see that Peter says, The God of our fathers glorified Jesus. But you did the opposite. You delivered him up. You denied him when Pilate wanted to let him go.

And then verse 14. Jesus is the holy and righteous one. He is one who is exalted as God himself, the holy one. Yet you asked for a murderer, the opposite of holy and righteous, to be granted to you.

And then verse 15. Jesus is the author of life whom God raised from the dead, yet you killed him. Extraordinary thing. An extraordinary change of what the real Jesus is.

[10 : 46] You understood that you had to kill him. Well, the healed man is a demonstration that the crowd had the wrong view. And so the faith which is through Jesus is what has given this man perfect health in the presence of you all, Peter says.

Jesus could only transform this man if he rose from the dead and is the author of life, the holy and righteous one who is glorified by God. That man clinging to John and Peter is proof that the viewpoint of God is the right one.

And so what does Peter do? He invites them in actually a very kind way to change their minds about Jesus. In verse 17, he begins this call to them. He says, I know you and your rulers acted in ignorance.

In other words, literally, they ignored the reality of Jesus. They ignored what God had said about Jesus through all of the prophets, through the Bible.

But, he says, God has fulfilled what the prophets said about Jesus. And therefore, there is a need for action. Verse 19. Therefore, he said, repent and turn again.

[12 : 01] And here is the key. This is the key to receiving the gift of Jesus that we as a church are offering. Jesus himself preached that message over and over again that we need to repent.

We need to repent. And Peter does the same message. And that is the message of the church. When he says repent, he is saying to the crowd, you must change your mind about Jesus.

You must stop ignoring him and denying him and even killing him. And instead, you must exalt him. That's what repentance is. It's a complete change in how you think about Jesus.

And that word is for us as well. Not just for the crowd in the temple that day. Because if you've never known that Jesus is the living ruler of your life and all life, Jesus is speaking to you.

He is calling you to change your mind about who Jesus is and let him rule your life. And if you are a follower of Jesus and may have been for a long, long time, he is calling us to change our minds about those parts of our life that we don't want him to rule.

[13 : 10] So repenting means giving those aspects of ourselves to Jesus that we previously have not wanted him to rule. Give over to him those things we have not wanted to rule.

That's what that call is for us. Receive the gift of Jesus into your life. Exalt him. And if you were listening to the baptism service, you heard that that repentance is a normal part of the Christian life.

It is about how we are constantly being changed and renewed. And with repentance, Peter says, the blessings of Jesus that we heard about in baptism come to you.

They come into your life. They flood into your life. And you see those blessings in 19 and 20. And it's quite wonderful because this is the encouragement to repentance. Here's how God is working.

He says, In repentance, your sins are blotted out. In other words, you are washed clean. Just as you saw. That's why the waters of baptism are there for us to see.

[14 : 13] We are reminded that God blots our sins out through our repentance. And secondly, Peter says, Times of refreshing will come to you from the presence of the Lord.

That in our repentance, God brings his Holy Spirit into us. And we know his presence with him. We are alive to God, knowing that presence of the living Jesus in our lives.

And then thirdly, he says, God will send the Christ appointed for you. In other words, on the last day, Jesus will come for you. That he will bring his salvation for you.

And that is the certain hope that every Christian has of one day seeing Jesus. And not only seeing him, but knowing that you will be like him as well.

So what we hear in this sermon is Peter describing the joy of repentance. He shows the blessing of salvation that comes when we change our minds about Jesus. And you know that the way that miracles work in Jesus' ministry and here as well, is that that transformation physically of a lame man was a sign of a greater blessing that Jesus gives to us, that the risen Jesus brings.

[15 : 33] And so just as the man was crippled physically, our condition is, without Jesus, that we are crippled spiritually. That we don't, we have a broken relationship with God.

And as with this man, that there really was no hope for his condition in the world. There's no hope that we can find in the world of changing that. And what has to happen is that we need to be raised by God into his presence, by Jesus Christ, in Jesus' name.

Just as that lame man was raised physically to stand and be healed. And what are we raised to? We are raised to the presence of God.

Just as the man is brought into the presence of God in the temple, we are brought into the very presence of God, the living God, by Jesus Christ, by the gift of him.

And that's why Peter tells us that it is the forgiveness of sins, it is new life and a sure future with him that are our blessings. It is about being made whole.

[16 : 34] And there are extraordinary, astounding transformations that happen to every Christian person. And that's why Peter tells us in verses 22 through 24 that all the prophets in the Old Testament, beginning with Moses, pointed to Jesus and said, you must listen to him, whatever he tells you.

Because he is the one who fulfills every good and perfect promise of God. All of the promises find their yes in Jesus Christ. And that is where our blessing comes from.

He is the one who fulfills God's ancient promise to Abraham. Through Jesus, all the families of the earth will indeed be blessed. That's what the church is all about.

And I want to close by saying that this clear vision of the church is given to us in this chapter 3 of Acts. We are to say, I give to you, the world and to one another, what I have.

And that is Jesus. He alone transforms. And this extraordinary incident shows us that Jesus continues his own ministry on earth directly through his church.

[17 : 46] He speaks to people and touches them through his people gathered at St. John's and in countless churches throughout the world as they exalt Jesus.

That's why we speak and we pray and we act in his name, which means by his power, by his authority and on his behalf. And we are going to find out next week that Satan hates it when Jesus does this because people are being transformed and brought into the presence of God totally against Satan's will.

So he will try to oppose the work of the church. But when the church is about its mission of giving away Jesus, nothing can stop it. And indeed, we know that all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Amen. Please kneel to pray. Father God, this morning as we reflect on the sermon, we want to bring those parts of our lives which we want to hide from you and where we don't like you being our ruler.

Lord, we confess that often we like to be our own bosses instead of allowing you to rule in our lives.

[19 : 08] We pray for the transformation of your Holy Spirit in our lives, drawing us more to you. We thank you, Lord, that we can come into your presence, that through the blood of Jesus, we can know you.

And we ask that you would enable us and help us to share that with others. That like the apostles, we would say, such as I have, give I thee, Jesus Christ.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. Father God, this Thanksgiving Sunday, we want to give you thanks for you are good and your mercies endure forever.

we thank you, Lord, that it is you that are good, that when our life is going wonderfully, you are good, and that when our life is not going wonderfully, that you are still good.

And we praise you and thank you and glorify your holy name this morning. We thank you, Lord, for the harvest, for food to eat.

[20 : 40] We thank you for your provisions for us, homes to live in, and family and friends and neighbors. We thank you for your many blessings.

Lord, in your mercy, Lord, we also want to lift before you Sienna and Benjamin, who were baptized at this service this morning, and also the others who have been baptized today.

We pray for your hand upon their lives, that they would know, that they would know you. Lord, in your mercy, we also lift before you, Lord, those who have dedicated their lives in a special way to the ministry of the gospel.

We lift before you Richie Spidel from the Navigators. Pray that as he reaches out to students, that they would hear your word and respond.

We pray for Kristen Rene from Living Waters, and we pray for your work of healing in people's lives. We pray this morning, Lord, for Jeremy Curry as he transitions to life in Nepal.

[22 : 10] We pray that you would help him with his language learning as he studies Nepalese. We pray that you would help him as he settles into the country there and to the culture.

Give him your graciousness. We pray for Erica and Jess Cantillon. We thank you for the ministry that you have given them in Jerusalem, and we pray that your blessing would be on them as they make a short trip to BC in the coming months.

Lord, in your mercy. Father, we also pray for those in the parish who are unwell and in need. We pray for Lee, for Harold, for Gordon, Dawn, Rowena, and Yvette.

Lord, you know their needs and their trials. We ask you to bring them healing, to bring them wholeness. And now silently in our own hearts, Lord, we bring others before you.

Lord, in your mercy. Father God, we continue to lift before you Judge Kelleher as he considers the legal question that he has before him.

[23 : 43] We pray that you would direct his thoughts and bring him to the conclusion that you would have in your mercy. We also pray, Lord, for our political leaders, for the Prime Minister, for the Premier.

Lord, the weight of government can be heavy, and the pressure to make political decisions rather than wise decisions can be easy.

Lord, we pray that you would give them and all the leaders of our country wisdom and discernment and courage to make right choices. Lord, we pray for the larger city of Vancouver as well as we're preparing for the Olympics and pray there too for wisdom for the leaders in decisions they're making, that they would not be swayed by financial gain, but that they would make decisions that are right for the people.

Lord, in your mercy. And Father God, we want to give you thanks this day for that is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us.

We thank you for your love for us. We thank you for your presence with us. Amen.

[25 : 19] And continuing in prayer, the Lord be with you. Let us pray. Lord, we beseech thee, grant thy people grace, grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow thee, the only God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. O almighty Father, everlasting God, who crowns the year with your goodness and has given unto us the fruits of the earth in their season, give us grateful hearts that we may unfeignedly thank thee for all thy loving kindness and worthily magnify thy holy name through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. And together on page 7, we pray, O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, who has safely brought us to the beginning of this day, defend us in the same with thy mighty power, and grant that this day we fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger, but that all our doings may be ordered by thy governance, to do all ways that is righteous in thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. F upon you, Gee, Silence rush, are well Tajik, are well sunt- ■■■■■, except for any kind of danger, and for thy life, only last is choSM- fucks.

Amen. thang-CHe■c-CEG, allö name is guys, are all about■ ■■■■, and if we pass the throne, are all about knowing to the point of justice, are one of the hosts Correct, ofillon of the throne, we flush the throne and Junior, thank you. So, and giving us an honor of the charge, is cause that we take the charge, or all vieve in the throne, and the church, I UN-ChristW Gore,