

Title: His Name  
Text: Acts 3.11-26  
Theme: The necessity of faith in Christ  
Series: Acts  
Prop Stmtnt: Faith in Christ crushes pride and exalts Jesus

Read Text:

King Herod's Temple in Jerusalem was magnificent. It was built on scale to rival Solomon's Temple and was the focal point of the city of Jerusalem. Surrounding the actual Temple was the large plaza area where along one side was a massive structure called Solomon's portico. The portico was a series of columns that held up an open air structure that enabled people to gather near the temple and yet be in the shade. The stone floor and hard surfaces enabled large groups of people to gather where they could all hear someone speak without need of amplification.

Solomon's portico became the location where the early church gathered for worship and teaching. At this point in the early life of the church, their meetings were not in secret but in the open. While several thousand people would be noticeable, there was plenty of room for the believers to meet together and pray, sing and receive instruction while the other Jews who also gathered in the afternoon went about their normal routine. Peter and John were on their way to the Temple to pray which likely meant that they were going to gather with the other believers in Solomon's portico to pray and teach, when on this particular day, they encountered a familiar beggar who had been lame from birth. Peter and John, not having any money on them, healed the man by calling upon him to trust in Christ. The man did and this man who had never walked before began walking and jumping all the while praising God because there was no doubt in his mind that it was God who had healed him. And since he expressed faith in Christ (at least for his healing, if not for salvation), he went with Peter and John to the meeting of the other believers.

#### I. A Changed Life Demands an Explanation. (11-12)

There were a number of gates that you could go through in order to enter the massive Temple area (known as the Temple mount since it was the highest point of the city). Peter and John now having gone through the gate were doing what they had been doing and that was walking across the long plaza area toward Solomon's portico, where the other believers gathered. On this day the man who had been begging for possibly upwards of 30 years was with them and probably looked like a jack in a box. His excitement attracted some attention and the attention turned into wonder and amazement. Word spread quickly through the crowd that gathered at the Temple that afternoon. And of course there was no doubt that an undeniable miracle had taken place.

An older man told me one day that he had had 2 or 3 major heart attacks but that the Lord had healed him each time. I had no way of knowing if that was true or not. I knew it was possible, so I did not dismiss him, but neither did I have anyway of verifying it, so I just politely listened to him. But, this guy in Acts 3 was different. Everyone knew him. Everyone knew his story. And now, this man who had never walked in his life, who was over 40 years of age, was walking and jumping up and down. What happened to you? Luke says that the people were "utterly astounded." What do you do with this? Beloved, this how we are to live. Peter and John believed

Christ, no doubt and this man now believed Christ, no doubt. Now, the evidences of God's power demand an explanation. This is what Christ does in our lives. He changes us.

This man's life was changed radically and people wanted to know what happened. The gospel does not simply make us nice people. It makes us different and convictional. And the difference is often uncomfortable. Try explaining why you do not live with your boyfriend or girlfriend and why you are not sexually active and people will look at you as if you are from Mars. When it comes out that you do not cheat on your income taxes, or that you do not watch porn, or you do not call in sick unless you are actually sick, you might as well be like the lame man who just got healed. You will be in a category that people do not know what to do with. In fact, in some cases, people will get angry with you. Come on, they will insist, look at this and when you don't they will be offended. Everyone is doing it, they will say. Yet when you do not, then you'll have just messed with their system. Well, that is what the gospel does. It messes with our systems.

God uses changed lives to get people's attention in order to hear the gospel. What is wrong with you? Why are you like this? Peter doesn't waste the opportunity and neither does he water down the truth. What are you looking at us for? We didn't do this, Jesus did!

One day my neighbor casually asked, "What's the difference between Catholic and Baptist?" I paused for a second and said, "How much do you want to know cause it's a pretty big deal? Are you sure you want me to tell you?" That is sort of like what is going on here. This crowd of Jews are running to Peter and John and asking how did this happen and Peter is basically saying, "you really want to know?" I'll tell you, but, the explanation is hard to hear, but you need to hear it.

## II. **But the explanation is hard to hear** (13-16)

Peter's explanation of the gospel is striking. He speaks with compassion, conviction and clarity. The result is that this impromptu sermon on the gospel is compelling and the Lord uses it to bring people to faith in Christ. But Peter does not soften the edges of the message. He goes right to the heart of the matter and provides a good explanation of the gospel. Notice that he begins with God. This is very, very important. The gospel is ultimately about God and his glory, not us and our comfort. Peter preaches the gospel and the gospel is not oriented around us, but is centered upon God and Christ. Let me explain it this way. If you are going by train from Detroit to San Francisco, you are going to see Chicago, the farmlands in the Midwest, Denver and the Rockies, but your goal, your destination is San Francisco. Chicago, the farmlands, the plains, Denver, then the mountains, etc. are part of the journey, but they are not the goal.

### A. **Start with God** (13a)

God is the goal of the gospel. The gospel makes much of Jesus. We do not trust in Jesus for the ultimate purpose of getting a new job, passing a class, getting approved for a home loan, having a happier life, easier marriage or less hassle from our kids. We trust in Christ because we have offended God and we are deserving of his judgment, but Christ paid our debt by standing in our place. When we trust in Christ, we are forgiven of our sin and credited with his righteousness. This puts us in Christ. This puts us into a right relationship with God. This is like getting our spiritual spine aligned. We can breathe. We can walk and run without pain. So, yes, there are

often immediate benefits from repenting of your sin and turning to Christ, but those benefits are not the goal. God is. Peter does not start out by saying, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” When you tell people that, many are tempted to think, “Well of course he loves me. I love me!” Peter does not pretend that the gospel is about them and helping them get along a little better in life. He starts with God and when you start the gospel with God, and you realize who he is and what you have done, you are now in a position to understand the gospel and that is what Peter does here. In explaining the gospel, Peter is giving them an overview of Christianity. Christianity starts with God because the Bible starts with God.

In this case, Peter clearly identifies God as the God of Israel (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and he identifies himself as being a fellow Jew. (the God of our fathers) But, then he tells them that there is some theology that they have to understand. Jesus is from God. Jesus is the glorified servant of God. Peter uses this title because he is connecting Jesus to Isaiah’s prophecy about the suffering servant. The God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and our forefathers is the one who created the story and it all points to Christ. He starts with God and he clarifies the problem.

### **B. Clarify the problem (13b-16)**

You sinned. You rejected the servant of God. Our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, the God of Israel, the God who rescued us from Egypt and gave us this land, the God whose temple we are standing next to, is the God who sent his servant, his messenger, his representative to us. Instead of honoring him, listening to him, and following him, you condemned him to die. Even Pilate, the pagan Roman ruler wanted to release him. Pilate, the pagan, Roman ruler had more sense than you. He crucified him because you insisted on it. You have more guilt than he does and he has a lot of guilt. Do you realize what you have done? Do you realize the weight of your guilt, the depth of your shame, the breadth of the consequences, and the enormity of judgment that awaits you? You denied the Holy and Righteous One.

Look at the evidence standing in front of you. (literally standing in front of you). There is a lame man, who was broken who is now healed. The power that healed him is not from this world. That is power that is good! That is holy and righteous power. This servant, this Holy and Righteous One, is the author of life. You killed the author of life. You murdered the author of life and let a murderer go free. Wow! Talk about being on the wrong side of history. Every once in a while, you hear a story about an obnoxious driver weaving in and out of traffic, cutting off a car only to discover that the car he cut off was an undercover police vehicle. That is bad, but this? This is as terrifyingly bad. This is close your eyes, brace yourself, drop your head, get ready for a tsunami bad. You killed the author of life. You could not have made a worse decision in the world. This is as bad as it gets. And the one you killed, God raised back to life. You have to face the One you murdered and his defender, his advocate, the One who sent him to you is the God of our fathers. What defense do you have? What hope can you possibly have? Where are you going to run? What are you going to say? What can you do?

Now, if you are reading this text and your reaction is, “wow, they really messed up, didn’t they? They are in deep weeds.” Then you are missing something. That’s us! What is true for them is true for us. Granted, we were not there physically, but our own lives demonstrate that we would have done what everyone else did, betray him, deny him, abandon him or condemn him.

And while these are strong words that Peter is saying, they are true and they are needed. You need to own your sin and you must realize that you do not have any excuse. There is no circumstance that we can appeal to that will excuse our guilt before God. My father neglected me. My father abused me. My father left me. My mom was an addict. My brother got cancer. My husband was unfaithful. All of these are hard realities and deep wounds to our souls, but just because people have sinned against us, does not mean that we have to sin in response to them. See your sin for what it is. Until you see your sin for what it is, you will not see his grace for what it is. I have no excuse for my self-pity. I have no excuse for my bitterness. I have no excuse for my addictions. I have no excuse for my anger. I have no excuse for my distrust. I have no excuse for my hatred, my rebellion, my grudges, my pride, my defensiveness. I have no excuse.

This is what these people need to come to grips with, and so you do you. Our sin is treason. But now, he is ready to bring the good news. The bad news is serious, but the good news is glorious. In fact, as bad as the bad news is (and it is bad) the good news is more glorious than the bad news is bad. The glory of the good news is higher than the depth of the bad news. Because without excusing the what we've done, God used our rebellion as the means for our rescue.

### III. **The hard news of the sin leads to the glorious news of the gospel.** (17-26)

#### A. **God's compassion is jaw-dropping glorious!**

You acted in ignorance. You didn't know that Jesus was the Messiah. You should have known as I will show you in a moment, but you didn't and neither did your rulers. This is certainly the reason why Jesus prayed from the cross and said, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing." The compassion of God is stunning. Why did Christ heal this lame man? He healed him, so that these thousands of Jews on the Temple plaza would have an undeniable, unmistakable opportunity to see the glory and goodness of his power and to hear the good news of the gospel. After everything that they had done to Christ, would you not expect God to "move on?" They had their chance. And yes, they had their chance. But here is God, going after them again. And Peter! Peter's response is direct, but compassionate and thorough.

#### B. **Look at the evidence from the prophets.**

This is what "all the prophets" spoke about. (18) Isaiah's prophesy is particularly clear about this. The servant of God would suffer and he did. Christ suffered at your hands. The one that you caused to suffer is the one that God glorified (13). The prophets you read and claim as your own wrote about you. Look at what Moses said (22). Look at what is at stake. If you do not listen to THE Prophet, you will be destroyed from the people. All of the prophets spoke about this day. All of the prophets spoke about this time and about you.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of his sermon. And note how personal it is. "And now, brothers...." Note how many times he says, "you" and "your." Look at the hope that he leaves them with. "God having raised up (resurrection and ascension) his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness." And in what I think is an extremely powerful and poignant moment in this sermon, Peter says that God made a covenant with Abraham in which

God promised to bless all the families of the earth through the offspring of Abraham. Then Peter says (26) God, having raised up his servant sent him to you first, meaning, Jesus is the offspring of Abraham through whom the families of the earth will be blessed. Jesus! Jesus is the means of blessing the entire earth. You, who are from Abraham, if you want to be part of the blessing of Abraham, you have to be part of Christ. The covenant of Abraham points to the New Covenant in Christ. The Jews had been members of the covenant of God. If a Jew, or anyone for that matter wants to be a member of the household of God and part of the covenant of God, they have to come to faith in Christ. So, since you were here first, God sent Christ to you first. And now, before this message gets launched around the world, you get to hear it again, first. So, repent.

### **C. Repent and Believe. (19)**

Go back to verse 19, because this is the heart of Peter's sermon. The miracle demonstrated that this man was healed with a power that is not of this world. Peter showed the audience (Jews) that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and they rejected him, but, they had another chance and it was a glorious chance. Repent! Change your mind and your affections. Turn again. This means to trust Christ. Conversion to Christ means to turn from your sin (change your mind and affections) and trust in Christ as your Savior and Lord. Peter tells them that there will be 3 results: 1) Your sins will be blotted out. 2) times of refreshing will come from the presence of the Lord and 3) Christ will return for you and will restore all things.

Conclusion:

I met Jim (not his real name) and his wife over 30 years ago. We were newly married, starting our families, loving Jesus and wanting to do well in life. We lived near each other and became close, until Cathi and I moved here to the east side. On Friday, I had Jim's funeral. Jim had gone sideways. He left his wife, kids (5 of them), job, - it was a tragic mess. His wife was diagnosed with cancer, his kids were trying to figure out how to relate to their dad, it was hard. Very hard. The oldest son had gone in a bad direction and yet the Lord had mercifully hijacked his life. So, instead of being bitter at his dad, he prays for him and loves him and tries to reach him with the gospel that his dad said, that one time he believed. A few months ago, Jim, repented. He became hungry for the gospel. He wrote a letter to his kids around the holidays and asked forgiveness from each of them. No blame shifting, no excuses, he manned up to his sin, confessed it to God and now was making relationships right. Thank God! The wasted years had taken their toll on him and his body broke. But, Jim died in Christ. He died resting in what Christ had done for him. And yes, it is a shame, in a sense, that he took so long to come back. But, he did. Why? Because God is compassionate and will not let his kids go. It would have been very understandable for his kids to say, sorry dad, you've hurt me too much, or for his friends to say, we're done. But God didn't, and while it was not easy for Jim to embrace this grace, he did. With his funeral on Friday, I naturally thought a lot about him as I prepared this sermon. But, I had to laugh. Here is Christ again going after the very people who crucified him. And he is going after them to save them. And he's coming after you too. Trust him. That is what it means to have faith, in his name. His name is power, he heals, and forgives. His name is compassion, he is kind. But make no mistake. He is king! And while he is compassionate, he demands your life and is compassionate to demand it because no one else can save you.