

In the Name of Jesus

Acts 3:1-12

We have spent a lot of time studying the day of Pentecost, including what Luke wrote in the chapter 1 in anticipation of Pentecost and then in chapter 2, the day itself. For our study together these past few months, I devoted 6 sermons to Acts chapter 1, and 7 sermons as we studied chapter 2. That's a big commitment and a lot of time to spend focused upon one day in the history of Christ's church. But, of course, it wasn't just any day. It was the day when it can rightly be said the New Testament church was begun, established. It was a defining moment in the transition from the presence of the Old Covenant people of God to the existence of the New Covenant people of God, the covenant community of Jewish Israel became the covenant community of the universal church, the church of all nations, whose identity was made so plain by that miraculous and revelatory gift of tongues by which the gospel was preached to every nation, to every language. And, as chapter comes to an end, we read very specifically,

2:41 "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them."

Then, more generally, we read,

2:46 "So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, 47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

As chapter 3 begins, Luke starts off with a miracle, and he does so for the same reason that the gospel accounts of Jesus' life present so many miracles as well, which is to demonstrate and proclaim the supernatural power of God himself! I noted that

last week as well, from,

Acts 2:43 "Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles."

Wonders and signs refer to the supernatural power of God. Wonders and signs refer to miracles! And the purpose of those miracles in the book of Acts, as in the gospels, was to attest to the power of Jesus. Jesus was shown to be God, demonstrated to be God, by the miracles he performed, and then also by the miracles performed by the apostles. Going back to,

Acts 2:22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it."

We are taught that same point in,

Heb. 2:3 "...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?"

So the apostolic miracles were given by God to bear witness of the power of the gospel to save sinners, the supernatural power of the gospel. And those signs were obvious! Here in Acts 3, as the church is established, those miraculous signs show us,

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF APOSTOLIC POWER.

Luke obviously emphasizes that importance.

v.1-6

We will get to that actual miracle in a moment, but first let me note that,

A. The needs of a fallen world are obvious.

Miracles are performed to display God's power, but they also display his mercy and compassion upon a world cursed because of sin. Before the fall of Adam, there were no paralytics. There was no disease nor sickness of any kind. And obviously, no death. Instead we read over and over, "it was very good." Yet when Adam sinned, when mankind sinned in Adam, God cursed not only man himself but the whole world in which we live.

Gen. 3:17 "Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return."

I should note that the very nature of heaven itself is the full and complete removal of that curse,

Rev. 21:1 "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. 2 Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. 4 And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

But until that time, as Jesus says so comprehensively, in this world you will have trouble. There will be sorrow. And when it comes to that sorrow, we don't have to assign a specific cause for every example of trouble. In other words, when something bad happens, from our perspective, something hard or troublesome, we don't have to find cause in some particular sin. Remember Jesus' words,

John 9:1 "Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him."

So the importance of apostolic power in the early church is related to the presence of the curse, and the needs which that imposes upon all mankind. And in that context,

B. The self-conscious presence of the apostles is obvious.

In other words, the apostles are drawing attention to themselves. But for good reason! For the only good reason, which is to give further attestation of Jesus as the foundation upon which the church would be built.

Look at how self-conscious they are.

v.4 "And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." 5 So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them."

Again, let me stress, there was nothing inappropriate about that. There is nothing in that where Peter and John are assuming any prominence or prestige for themselves. This isn't selfish nor arrogant on their part. But rather is self-conscious presence of apostolic power is the foundation of the church itself, a church,

Eph. 2:20 "...having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."

I go back to Hebrews 2, where we read that of the gospel itself, that "God [is] bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will." That's why we have apostolic miracles, and that is why we can confidently that the power to declare those miracles ended with the apostles. God certainly continues to work in supernatural ways, performing miracles according to the pleasure of his own will, but the ability of a man to speak with that supernatural power was an apostolic ability, an apostolic testimony of the power of God himself. And that testimony is the foundation upon which the church is built.

So let's look at the miracle itself.

II. THE EVIDENCE OF APOSTOLIC POWER.

v.6-7

Let me emphasize a couple obvious points. First, the description makes it plain that it was common practice for people to come to the temple seeking money, handouts. To put that in its worst possible light, it's the kind of manipulation still used today in which there is an appeal to pity in order to get money. I don't want to make light of real human suffering, then or now, but the situation might be compared to a busy intersection in a major city of our country today, where people stand on the street corner seeking to collect money. So we read in verse 3 that this lame man was carried to the gate of the temple in order to "ask for alms." And Peter's response is not cold and uncaring, but it does emphasize the point I'm making here this morning, that his presence as an apostle was not simply to give money to the poor

and needy, but to demonstrate the supernatural power of God. "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

So, again, we see,

A. The supernatural power to heal.

v.7 "And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength."

Everything about that description speaks of power. It was immediate! "Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." It was complete and total. "His feet and ankle bones received strength."

I really hate watching performances of so-called miracles today, for there is nothing in common with this apostolic power. There was no showmanship here. There was no entertainment value. There was no pitch for money. There was no marginal or partial or subjective healing. And there was no failure, no inability to heal when the miracle was pronounced. And in that context, remember that the Old Testament penalty for someone who claimed to speak in God's name something that didn't come to pass was punishment by death. The penalty for false prophets, whose prophecies weren't fulfilled perfectly and completely every time, was the penalty of death.

So here there is nothing false. Nothing fake. Nothing imperfect or incomplete. Peter said, "Rise up and walk." "And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." That's supernatural power. And Peter makes that so specifically plain with his words,

v.6 "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

In the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus the Christ, the eternal son of God. And Jesus the God-man, the eternal God who was incarnate, who became of man. Peter emphasizes that as well, “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”

That’s not a formula. That is not a magical incantation. That is not a show put on by a man. Rather, that is a man, an apostle, invoking the name of Jesus in every good and proper way. It’s not Peter healing this man, it is Jesus. It is the power of Peter the apostle at work, it is the power of Jesus. It is,

B. The power of Jesus’ name.

And to invoke the name of Jesus is to call upon Jesus himself. Jesus is his name, it is his very being and person. And that is what gets such a good emphasis in these verses as Luke records them for us. The apostles, as the foundation of church, attesting to Jesus himself, confirming the gospel of Jesus, are bearing witness to that gospel with his miracle done “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.”

Peter makes that emphasis upon Jesus even more clear with the words recorded in,

v.12 “So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?”

Do you think this is done in my power?, asks Peter. Do you think I had anything to contribute to this miracle? Why are you looking at me? As if I did something by my own power or every my own godliness? Peter is so humble, and so appropriately focused on Jesus. Don’t look at me, he says to the crowd of people. Look at Jesus, he says, and we will study his full response next week in the verses that follow, but don’t miss that

godly emphasis.

We see that same emphasis when we come to chapter, where Luke directly connects this power to heal the physical body with the power to save the soul of a sinner.

Acts 4:8 “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. 11 This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

That’s what this is all about, not simply that some man who had been lame from his mother’s womb could now walk, but the one who healed him is the only one who can bring about the salvation of his soul. This lame man is made to walk by the power of Jesus’ name, so that we might now know that “there salvation in [no] other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

As I read so often in,

Rom. 10:9 “...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall

be saved.”

That is still true today, and that is the gospel I still preach today. I don’t pronounce miracle myself, for I have no such power. But Peter the apostle did, and I proclaim that saving power to you today. There is no other way to be saved. There is no other means by which your sins can be forgiven. There is no other way by which you or I could possibly get to heaven. There is no other name under heaven that has this power, the power of Jesus’ name. And so my preaching today must include these very words and this great declaration,

Acts 16:31 “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Or as Jesus himself said,

John 6:47 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. 50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.”

What, then, was the response to the demonstration of this great power? What was,

III. THE RESPONSE TO APOSTOLIC POWER.

It is pretty obvious, and very much understandable.

v.8 “So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God. 10 Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”

This is so delightful. This is so happy, and the words themselves don’t really capture the fullness of the event. So use your imagination to allow these words to express their full meaning. This man who was lame from birth was not just walking but leaping. Think about that a bit, and realize that Luke is a physician who understands something of human anatomy. In the name of Jesus, this man’s muscles were fully restored for the first time in his life! He wasn’t even limping. There was need for a cane or a walker, as we use today. There was no need for therapy and strengthening exercises. He leaped up, verse 8, and went into the temple. And Luke adds, “walking, leaping, and praising God.”

Maybe we should say he was dancing! And he wasn’t showing off, but rather giving full expressing to his,

A. Delightful praise to God.

He was dancing with joy, dancing with praise. And you can understand that, can’t you? He had never walked in his life, and Jesus healed him. He was absolutely and completely overcome by what Jesus had done for him. And it was obvious to everyone. v.9 “And all the people saw him walking and praising God.”

Again the note of what was really going on, such delightful praise to God. Such exuberance.

I should note that we would do well to observe this exuberance, and recognize that God is pleased with it. And he is pleased when we express delightful praise to him as well. Not just the formula. Not just the right words. But this sort of reckless abandon that comes when you realize that God is at work in your life.

If you are like me, and have been a Christian for many years,

decades, sometimes we forget the value and the beauty of this sort of exuberance. Sometimes we forget that our worship to God should be characterized by delightful praise. I'm not suggesting we start leaping and dancing, even as we worship together 'decently and in order,' but I am suggesting that we learn from this man what it means to give praise to God, personally. So think often of how the Lord has saved you, and think often of the power of Jesus' name to bring to you the forgiveness of sins, and to bless you with fellowship with God that is possible only because of the power and work of Jesus in your heart.

That's the one thing that is so encouraging about new believers, in whose life this work of God is new and fresh. And that is what is so encouraging about this great miracle here in Acts 3. "All the people saw him walking and praising God." They saw him "walking, leaping, and praising God."

And with that, one final thought. With this sense of delightful praise to God, Luke emphasizes one more aspect of their response to apostolic power, and that is an,

B. Astonished marveling at the power of God.

I struggled to find the right words to express that, and it seems any single word is inadequate to express fully what is happening. But we have to try to use words to do that. In verse 10 we have the transition, "they were filled with wonder and amazement." That's a pretty good attempt. Filled with wonder, or it could be translated "admiration" or marveled. They simply marveled in amazement and astonishment. That second word there, amazement, comes into English directly as the word ecstasy. One dictionary explains the word this way, "It was said of any displacement, and especially, with reference to the mind, of that alteration of the normal condition by which the person is thrown into a state of surprise or fear, or both; or again, in which a person

is so transported out of his natural state that he falls into a trance."

We usually use words like that for some sort of drug induced ecstasy. We have a drug by that name today, associated with hallucinations, euphoria, increased energy and enhanced sensory perception. So think of those reactions people might have under the dangerous influence of a methamphetamine, and then realize, that is the sort of experience defined by these words that Luke chooses to use. Only the source of the reaction is not a dangerous drug, but the natural experience of witnessing the power of God!

Astonishment and marveling, again, the words I've chosen. "They were filled with wonder and amazement." That's how we ought to respond when we see the power of God at work. And I'm wanting that reaction to be an encouragement and stimulation to you as you read and study these verses. The demonstration of God's power should stir up that very response in your own heart and soul today.

It was just that sort of demonstration of power upon which the church is established. So as you go about praising God in our worship together this morning, don't just go through the motions. When you read of God's power, when you hear of God's power being proclaimed, let it stir your hearts in the same way as it did that day at the temple. So I'll end with Peter's words again, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."