

Gospel Triumph: What the Leaping Man Means

Acts 3:1-26

The third book in the Lord of the Rings series is called the Return of the King and there's a reason for that title. The king had been absent from his kingdom and forces of evil had threatened to destroy the kingdom while he was absent. After the climactic battle against evil the King, Aragorn is his name, returns to the capital city to take his throne. If you are unfamiliar with the books, the author, J.R.R. Tolkien was a Christian and so his description of the king and the peace and prosperity of his rule are not accidental. Listen as I read.

"But when Aragorn arose all that beheld him gazed in silence, for it seemed to them that he was revealed to them now for the first time. Tall as the sea-kings of old, he stood above all that were near; ancient of days he seemed and yet in the flower of manhood; and wisdom sat upon his brow, and strength and healing were in his hands, and a light was about him. And then Faramir cried: 'Behold the King!'"

"In his time the City was made more fair than it had ever been, even in the days of its first glory; and it was filled with trees and with fountains, and its gates were wrought of mithril and steel, and its streets were paved with white marble...and all was healed and made good, and the houses were filled with men and women and the laughter of children, and no window was blind nor any courtyard empty; and after the ending of the Third Age of the world into the new age it preserved the memory and the glory of the years that were gone."

I read this to you because I don't want you to forget that the book of Acts is set up as a book about the already-not yet kingdom where Christ Jesus is King. Remember Acts 1:3. Jesus won the victory over sin and death and ascended to the Father and is enthroned at the Father's right hand. But remember that this is an already-not yet kingdom. Jesus is King and we can enter His kingdom now and experience the goodness of it, but it's not yet fully here. We live in hope of the final arrival of His rule and reign.

It's vital to keep the reality of the kingdom in mind as we get to chapter 3. The miracle we read about in verses 1-10 is the only healing miracle we are told about that happens in Jerusalem in Acts. And I've titled this sermon "What the Leaping

Man Means” because of what we read in 3:8. Look there. His leaping response is connected to the kingdom. So, here’s what we will see in Acts 3:1-26. **3 Reasons the Leaping Man Matters for Your Life.**

1. The King’s Ministry Continues (vv. 1-10)

Look with me at verses 1-2 as we get the setting and characters of this story. Peter and John are headed to the temple to pray, as we saw last week was the practice of the early church. They head there at the 9th hour, which was 3pm.

There’s a lame man there, waiting by the gate. He’s been lame from birth, so this is not a minor malady or a temporary thing. Friends or family take him daily to place him by the temple gate because of the high volume of traffic and the chance that someone on their way to worship God will be more likely to give to the poor.

Notice what happens in verses 3-5. Peter and John look right at him and demand his attention. Of course, the lame man expects to receive some money, but Peter has other plans. Look at verse 6. Notice how Peter puts this. Peter does not just command the man to get up and walk as Jesus would have done. Instead, he understands that any power comes from Jesus as the enthroned king. Peter can do nothing to heal this man on his own but must rely on the name of Jesus.

Now, this isn’t a formula that suddenly “works” to bring about healing. The name of Jesus is a shorthand way of saying his character, position, and authority. As the victorious and enthroned King, He certainly has the power to make this happen. Look at verse 7.

This is clear evidence that the ministry of Jesus continues through the Apostles as they operate according to His Spirit and authority. Notice the progression in Acts already. The Prophet Joel predicted wonders and signs would accompany the “last days” in Acts 2:19. Peter preached at Pentecost that the life and ministry of Jesus has been filled with wonders and signs done by God. Acts 2:22. Luke, the author of Acts, summarizes the ongoing ministry of the Apostles this way in Acts 2:43. And now we have an example of these signs and wonders.

There’s a clear line from the OT expectation of the last days to the ministry of Jesus to the Apostles who are empowered by the Spirit of God. And what does this progression mean? Look at verse 8. Two times Luke mentions the man leaping. Why? This is the only time in the NT this word is used and it’s a clear

connection back to Isaiah 35:6 but listen to the whole context in verses 1-7. This miracle indicates that God has showed up to bless His people and judge. It's a sign of what God's kingdom will look like when it fully arrives. It's a kingdom of healing, joy, and praise to God. And there's no question this happened. Look at verses 9-10. The people had seen this same man at this same location for years. Now he's running and jumping throughout the temple grounds. Something happened.

This indicates to us that the ministry of Jesus continues through the Apostles and that we can hope in His good and perfect kingdom where healing and salvation will reign. This doesn't mean we can perform miracles now by pronouncing the name of Jesus, but it does mean we can continue the work of the King by pronouncing the truths of the King as Peter does next. This brings us to our second reason the leaping man matters.

2. The King's Name is Rejected (vv. 11-16)

Verses 1-10 give us the story of the miracle and verses 11-26 give us Peter's explanation. The people react as you would expect them to in verse 11. But this interest and curiosity doesn't indicate belief. Look at verse 12.

Peter directs their attention away from he and the other apostles and essentially says, "if you would have been paying attention to Jesus this miracle wouldn't have been a shock to you." He explains. Look at verses 13-15.

Peter uses language taken from Moses's encounter with God in Exodus 3. This is language of God's covenant with Israel and His redemption of them from slavery in Egypt. Peter's reminding them of God's history with them of love and faithfulness. But when God sent His Son to them what did they do? They delivered over and denied. They rejected Jesus in favor of a murderer. Even Pilate, the unholy Roman official, wanted to release Jesus, but they insisted on putting the author of life to death. They put him to death, but God raised Him to life. They denied Him but God glorified Him. They killed Him and it's His name and authority that has worked right in their midst. Look at verse 16.

Think of this miracle as another opportunity for Jews to turn from their sin to faith in God. It's a clear demonstration of God's grace. Why does their rejection matter for us? God is patient and slow to anger and the opportunity to turn to Him is still there for those around you and for you too if you have continually rejected Him.

Listen to 2 Peter 3:8-9. And repentance is exactly what Peter calls them to in our last reason.

3. The King's Kingdom can be Entered (vv. 17-26)

There's a clear shift in Peter's language in verse 17 that shows he's going to call them to respond. Peter doesn't mean they aren't responsible. They just didn't realize who Jesus was even though they should have. Ignorance doesn't remove culpability. The fact is, they should have known because of the entire OT. Look at verse 18. So how should they respond? Look at verses 19-21.

Repentance has been a dominant theme so far in Acts. Recognizing your sin and rebellion against God and turning from it to faith in Christ and His work. Notice that in these verses there are 3 results of repentance.

First, their sins will be blotted out. This is the promise of the New Covenant. One does not participate in the New Covenant by being born a Jew or by circumcision into the Jewish people. The New Covenant offers a new heart and full forgiveness of sins and this happens through repentance of sin and faith in the new covenant blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The glory of the New Covenant is that sin, our greatest threat, is permanently removed.

Second, times of refreshing will come. The removal of sin ushers us back into the presence of God, which brings a sweetness and comfort that can't be experienced otherwise. The knowledge of forgiveness releases us from guilt and shame and gives us unencumbered access to God's life giving presence.

Third, the promise of the New Covenant is that Christ will return to finally usher in His kingdom. Look again at the end of verse 20 and verse 21. Here's the already-not yet kingdom. You can enter the kingdom now through repentance and faith and have your sins forgiven and experience the presence of God. And the result of this is that you can live in hope for Christ's return and the consummation of the kingdom. This final kingdom is the hope we read about in Isaiah 35 and it's the hope the entire OT has anticipated. And how do we enter the kingdom? By listening to both the OT and to the promised King.

Look at verses 22-25. Peter takes them back to Deuteronomy 18 and these words from Moses. Deut. 18:15-19. Peter tells them that Jesus is this prophet, and they must listen to Him, or judgment will come. Jesus is also the fulfillment of God's

promise to Abraham to bless all the nations through Him. They should have been able to connect the dots of the OT and see the ministry of Jesus and understand who they were dealing with.

But now they have another chance. Look at verse 26. Christ has been raised from the dead, testifying to His kingship and fulfilling the OT. And the Apostles are preaching Him and doing miracles so that they can know and repent.

So, what does this mean for you and for me? You might be sitting there thinking, "I'm already a believer so this doesn't really matter to me." But what Peter preaches to them here from Deut. 18 matters so much to us. Listen to the OT and Listen to God's Son. Don't ignore Him. If He's truly the King and His kingdom has arrived and you claim to have entered His kingdom, you cannot live as one ignoring His Words. The book of Hebrews exhorts us over and over again to listen. Pay attention. Don't go to sleep. This matters more than anything else.

Listen to Hebrews 2:1-4. Now Hebrews 3:7-14. Hebrews 4:1-2. I could go on but I hope you get the point. The Leaping Man matters because it means that Jesus's ministry continues, and His kingdom is available. Don't fail to enter it because you don't listen to the King. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 10/27/24

- If you haven't read *The Lord of The Rings* explain why and when you plan to start.
- What about the book of Acts indicates to us that it is about Christ as King and the arrival of His kingdom?
- Why does Peter mention the name of Jesus as he attempts to heal this man? What is the significance of the name of Jesus?
- What is the OT connection to verse 8 and the leaping man? What does this tell us about the purpose of this miracle and about Christ's kingdom?
- What's the relationship between the miracle in verses 1-10 and verses 11-26?
- What can we learn from the Jews rejection of Jesus while He was alive and the continued offer of grace after His resurrection? Who is one person you are praying for that continues to reject the truth about Jesus?
- Why do you think Peter mentions that the Jews acted in ignorance? What's the relationship between ignorance and responsibility?
- What are the results of repentance mentioned in verses 19-21?
- What are some practical comforts you can draw from daily remembering your complete forgiveness of sins?

- When are you most clearly aware of God's presence in your life? What can you do to more regularly be aware of His presence?
- What are some practical ways you can more effectively listen to Jesus? What hinders you from listening to Him?