

Bible Study 11 – Acts 3:11-26 – Peter addresses the people!

We pick up where we left off last week. The grace and power of God in Jesus Christ were made manifest through the mediation of the Apostle Peter in the miraculous healing of a blind and lame beggar at one of the entrance gates leading into the Temple in Jerusalem. The healing and the making whole of this individual was not an end in itself but was an authoritative sign to Christ's gospel and an affirmation of the apostolic message and ministry. Let us therefore continue the story and see how Peter and others applied the supernatural healing to proclaim good news to the people. We are in Acts 3 and are reading from verse 11 to the end of the chapter.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? 13 The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. 14 But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. 22 Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25 You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

1. Firstly, it comes as no surprise to learn that the people were astonished:

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

a) Note how the man who was healed clung to the apostles. As recipients of God's grace, like this man, when we become Christians, we associate with God's people and devote ourselves to Christ's church. One of the church fathers once said that we do not have God for our Father if we do not have the church for our mother. And there is truth in his statement. For the church is the body of Christ, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit, and the conduit of God's grace, love, and mercy in our world.

b) The people were naturally amazed and astonished by the evident transformation in the formerly blind and lame beggar who could now see and was not surprisingly walking and jumping for joy. It is joyous news that we are called upon to believe, express, and share!

c) Peter and John therefore attract a large crowd that excitedly came to them in Solomons Portico in the Temple precincts to hear and see the apostles for themselves. The people are naturally curious and inquisitive. And Peter will use the occasion to share the good news with all who will listen.

2. Peter therefore addresses the people: And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”

a) Peter takes advantage of the situation to address the people. He not only acts in Jesus’ name, but he speaks in Jesus’ name. His chief motivation is to glorify God in Jesus Christ and to bring people to believe in Jesus for grace, love, and mercy. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. And the principal purpose of Christ’s church is not merely to do good but to make known the ultimate Good for now and eternity.

b) Peter therefore addresses his fellow Jews for love’s sake in obedience to the Lord Jesus. Peter in the authority of Jesus’ name and in the power of the Spirit speaks courageously and with conviction and confidence. This is the same man who a few months earlier had on the night of our Lord’s betrayal and trials denied even knowing Jesus but he has been utterly transformed by the Spirit of the Risen Christ.

c) Peter is not seeking personal fame and fortune. Rather he speaks as a servant of Christ. And hence he makes clear that the apostles are mere agents of God’s grace in and through Jesus Christ. The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers... 16 And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

Jesus is the focus and fulcrum of their message and ministry. His desire and delight are to make Christians - followers of Christ, like he himself is.

3. Peter proclaims God’s grace in and through Jesus Christ: Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ 24 And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 25

a) Jesus Christ and his ministry were foretold by the prophets as written down and recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament. They proclaimed his unique person and his threefold office as Prophet, Priest, and King. They foretold his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. They explained the purpose of his saving mission and why it was essential and so much more.

b) Jesus Christ and his saving mission fulfilled what was prophesied. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled (18). And Jesus himself made clear that he was God’s Son and Christ.

c) Jesus Christ and his message are to be received by faith in the here and now. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ 26 God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.” We are to believe on him and in him for life in the present and for eternity.

4. Peter points out to his audience their personal guilt and thereby shows them the way to forgiveness and fellowship in and through the Saviour.

a) He is not afraid to draw attention to the people’s complicity in the condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus. whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate... But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and you killed the Author of life...

And what was true of those people is ultimately true of all. The Law is given to show us our sin after all that we might repent and receive and rest in the Saviour for God’s salvation. This is what the gospel is all about.

b) Peter was a witness to the people's guiltiness, but he was also a witness to the grace, love, and mercy of God in Christ. ...whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses...And hence he can empathise and sympathise with others. Like his Lord and Saviour, the apostle was compelled to speak out and act in love. And so should we. We are all Adam's fallen children in need of grace.

c) Peter lovingly prepares the way for repentance and renewal: And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers

Like, Jesus in the parable, the apostle is bidding prodigals return to the Father's house. And the way is by repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Peter pleads with all to repent for refreshing and restoration: Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, 20 that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 21 whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.

a) Peter urges the people to recognise their sin and turn to God for forgiveness – to take away the burden of guilt. Repentance is a turning from and a turning to. It denotes a U-turn back to God. It is to live before the face of God. And it is accompanied by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

b) Peter makes clear that repentance and faith are the way to God's blessing and bounty. that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus. Faith routes us to and roots us in Christ for fruitfulness as Jesus makes clear in the Gospel According to John when he likens himself to a vine.

c) Peter makes clear that the wonderful future and hope promised by God in the Old Testament scriptures referred to here as the restoration of all things are only to be found and realised in and through Jesus Christ. He is our Blessed Hope.

Questions

1. How should we respond to non-Christians who are curious or interested to know about the Christian Faith today? Are we equipped to answer their questions?
2. What do you think is the ultimate motivation for mission?
3. What place have faith and repentance in the Christian life and the mission of the church?
4. Can you testify to times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord?