

Introduction >>>

The elephant in the room.

Illustration: Call to Ministry - Reading my resume to God.

I can't do this. I do not have the power.

Oh yeah! I am not the True Shepherd, 1 Peter 5 - the Chief Shepherd.

Can you point?

And so then, let's jump into today's passage and take a look at the True and Better Pastor!

Please stand with me as we read the True Word of God

Acts 3:11-16

This morning, if I were to give you an overarching summary of the chapter, I would say this:

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Purpose Statement

We are all without the power and piety to walk, BUT in Christ we find both, and are restored by His presence to a priesthood of praise in the already as we await the not yet!

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Today, we will look at the following:

1. The Sign
2. The Problem and the Power
3. The Therefore

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I. The Sign >>>

VERSE 1-10

Hopeless

Illustration: First Child walking

It is a normal expectation.

Children learning to walk, and leaping and jumping, was how it was meant to be.

It was the created order that God set in place.

A few years back, we took the kids to a park with a big trampoline, and I jumped with them for 5 minutes to show them how cool I am.

- I immediately started feeling nauseous.
- I had to go lie down in a cabin for 30 minutes to get right.
 - I was told that as we age, we have a lower tolerance for intense movement!

And that, too, was not how it was meant to be.

But man...

When he rebelled against the created order, the normative order of Creator and Creature, when man rejected his creatureliness and wanted to be god, everything was subjected to futility, to decay, to brokenness.

- And so our bodies groan, and we complain, and we ache, and we are confronted with our own mortality, as we are slowly being undone.
- And the reason it FEELS unfair is that we have been created for LIFE, yet we keep returning to dust.

In his orderly account of the situation, Dr. Luke writes this:

[2] a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

- The man's physical ailments necessitated that he be carried and laid down at the temple gate each day.

So see it clearly, this man could not even put himself in a PLACE to receive charity. He had to be carried!

The only way he could be sustained is by an alien mercy, that is, a mercy outside of himself.

Barred from the Presence

And also, in the man's lameness, he was not only cut off from the "normal" life but also from entering the presence of God.

Leviticus 21:16–18

[16] And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, [17] "Speak to Aaron, saying, None of your offspring throughout their generations who has a blemish may approach to offer the bread of his God. [18] For no one who has a blemish shall draw near, a man blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long,

And so this man sat in his inability, hopeless and cut off from normal, and dependent on charity.

Fixing Attention

Luke continues the account in verse 3:

[3] Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. [4] And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." [5] And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

[6a] But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you.

The man sees Pete and John, and he makes his request.

- And Peter directed his gaze at him and told the man to look at them. And then, in verse 5 (see it), we read that he fixed his attention on Peter and John, **expecting** to receive something from them.
- And what were the man's expectations on that day? Money.

And for a second, let's consider money.

- Money is the power of man.

- It is the power to eat, to find shelter, to afford rest, to provide comfort.
- Money is how we enable and take hold of life.

BUT Peter said, I have no silver and gold.

- In other words, I do not have the power that you were **expecting** when you fixed your attention on me!

But! The power I do have, the power of God who created you, the Power that the disciples had to sit and wait for at Pentecost...I give it to you!

Leaping

And this is what Luke records:

[7] And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. [8] And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. [9] And all the people saw him walking and praising God, [10] and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

See the response of the hopeless!

Walking and leaping and praising God, and he entered the temple with Peter and John!

- There was no amount of silver and gold that would have made this man well.
- And this is the power of God! Restoring that which was meant to be normal!
 - And he entered the gates with thanksgiving!
 - And while he knew where the praise went, the onlookers were filled with wonder and turned their eyes toward Peter and John.

Which brings us to our next point.

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II. The Problem and the Power >>>

VERSE 11-16

Don't Look at us!

And they ran to Peter and John!

See it in vs 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?"

"Why do you wonder at this?"

Why do you STARE at us? Why are you TURNING toward us?

- To use modern language, why are you trying to like and subscribe to us?

AS if it were our power and piety that healed this man!

- As if it were our strength and righteousness that made him walk.
- Peter was saying, "Don't assume that the lame leap, because of my 'rightness' before God."

And I wonder if, as the people's gaze fell on Peter, he was picturing himself outside during the trial of Jesus.

- He knew firsthand that in his power, a servant girl's interrogation would melt his courage and lead him to deny the name of Christ.

And see the great reversal for Peter!

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Peter used his hand to make a strong soldier lame by cutting off his ear, and now, in Christ, he was using his hand to restore the one who was lame since birth.

- Peter knew what he was capable of, and it was not restorative.

Luke makes it very clear that anything that happens in the book of Acts is not really OF the apostles, it is THROUGH the apostles.

The power and righteousness that restore the lame since birth are alien to them.

- It is from outside of themselves.
- What if the story of Pentecost was that as they were praying, a bunch of silver and gold fell from the ceiling to fund their ministry?
 - Or, if as they were praying, Peter stood up and said, Ok, I have made some mistakes, but I'm good now, we got this, let ME lead you, and we will go out into the whole world.
- It would have all been of and by the power of man, and so it would have died away, and we would not be here today.
- But God, at Pentecost, sent Himself, His Spirit, and through their faith in Christ, they received the power to walk.

They did not know their Need

Peter then looks to the gathered crowd and explains that they, too, are in need.

And the first problem is that they don't see themselves as lame.

They see themselves as spiritually healthy, and so Peter says:

[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.

And hear the paradox.

- They spared the murderer, the one who took life!
- And they crucified the one who gave life.
- At the trial of Jesus, they quite literally denied life and chose death.

But they were unable to see it.

- They were healthy in their own eyes and didn't need anything outside of themselves.
- Their eyes were spiritually lame.
- Their PRIDE blinded them to their TRUE Need.
- They thought they were soldiers who needed a man to lead them in battle against a government, but in reality, they were all dry bones in a valley of death.

- What could the man named Jesus from Nazareth have given them that they didn't already have?
 - He didn't even have a place to lay His own head.
 - And so they spat on Him and slapped Him, because that's what men do with their power, they tear down and destroy.
 - And His robe and humanity were stripped from Him as they mocked Him for being too weak to save Himself.

BUT NOW!

Peter declares that it is ONLY by faith in the name of this Jesus that the lame leap and are restored to perfect health!

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III. The Therefore >>>

VERSE - [17-22]

Light Healing

Illustration: Sweating out Penmonia

My senior year in HS, I was sick, and because I have a tendency to feel sicker than I actually am, my mom assumed I just needed a little cough syrup and more blankets - sweat it out. After a couple of days of trying to sweat it out, we went to the doctor, and apparently, I had pneumonia and needed antibiotics.

Point being, if you're truly sick and told everything will be fine, you are in danger.

In this final section of Acts 3, Peter references the prophets of God who foretold the Messiah.

But we also know in the OT that there were those who said they were prophets of God, yet they did not speak for Him.

In **Jeremiah 8:11**, we read that the false prophets **healed the wound of God's people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.**

In other words, the people of God were told that everything is fine.

They were at peace with God.

Their sin and rebellion, their idolatry, were of no consequence.

- Jeremiah goes on to say, they didn't even know how to blush in their shame.

Before I go any further, if you meet my mom, please don't tell her I compared her to a false prophet.

The false prophets sought to comfort the people.

- Giving them the good news of minor ailments!
- And they did that, because the truth would have taken the prophet's positions away.
- Tell them, their stiff necks and hard hearts are **not only** understandable, but acceptable.

- And the false prophets told the sinful children of Israel that they had peace with God.
- When in truth, there was no peace.

They healed their wounds lightly and neglected the truth that their lungs were filling with fluid.

And we know that these false prophets peddled spiritual Band-Aids instead of truth because they were greedy for unjust gain and the power of man.

- They longed for silver and gold and the gaze of man!
- If you give people an encouraging word about themselves, and a gentle prescription or strategy for behavior modification, they will keep you in power, but they will NEVER walk by the power of God!

Therefore Repent

But not Peter!

Not the Peter who has seen his desperate need, and received the power and piety of God in Christ Jesus!

And he stands before the people and gives them an accurate diagnosis.

- He tells them to stop looking to man for their healing.
- He explains that he cannot restore their health!

But what he can do is point them to the one who can!

And so Peter tells them:

[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,

So Peter makes the turn.

He goes from the sign of God's power, to the doctrine of God's power and now to what it is meant to lead people to.

And we see it in the word THEREFORE.

So, because of what you just saw, and because of who Jesus did, and how you chose and continue to choose death.

THEREFORE - Repent!

What About Us?

And hear it for us today!

Are we needy?

- Do we feel like we have lost our ability to walk and leap?
- Do we feel like we cannot even put ourselves in a position to RECIEVE healing?
- Have we lost the joy of our salvation?
- Do we look at the Jesus of the Bible, and put him on trial, and FEEL like He's powerless to give us refreshment, and life, and so instead of choosing life, we choose created things to soothe, heal, and escape the groaning of our appetites?
- And we are left in rhythms of decay, choosing that which takes life, instead of the Author or life?

Peter loves the sheep of Christ - and he refuses light words of healing, and he says to them, and us: Repent!

- Repent and turn back from all the ways in which we fix our eyes on man and turn our eyes away from our Lord and Savior.

And it is then, in repentance of our faith in man, and turning to faith in Christ, that our sins are blotted out, that we'll find refreshment, and restoration!

- The Kingdom of MAN declares that life can be found from within and we are lame at the gate of the temple, but the Kingdom of God declares that we are meant for a True and Better King!
 - A King who came to serve and not be served!
 - A King who emptied himself of his position and veiled His beauty in flesh, so that all those who see that they are lame could walk and leap in Him!
 - A King who was cut off and cast out so that we could be brought into His presence with praise.

And don't miss THAT destination!

- Peter says that our refreshing, that is, our relief, our rest, is found in the **presence of the Lord!**
- The false prophets preached that peace was found in them
 - They were the destination of their comfort.

- And Peter is declaring that peace, rest, wholeness, shalom, is only found in the presence of Christ!
 - He is the ark that Noah sheltered in, He is the fourth man in the furnace with Daniel's friends, He is the well that found the woman at midday, He is the fish and bread that satisfied the 5,000, and He is the power that makes the lame leap!
 - He knows that we do not even have the power and piety to put ourselves at the gate of His mercy, and so He is the Friend, who did more than carry our lame bodies to the gate; rather, He entered into death to come near to us where we were.
 - And so, He is the True Shepherd who didn't just call sheep to climb up to Him, He descended into the valley to draw near to us.
 - He walked into, through, and out the other side of the darkest ministry experience there will ever be.
 - We did not form a search team to find Him; instead, He left His throne to find us.
 - His resume is unmatched, and his **references** testified to his goodness by dying for the sake of His acclaim.
 - And we do not vote for Him, He chose us.
 - He is the Good Shepherd, whose rod and staff comfort us in hardship and suffering, and lead us to the green pastures of His fellowship!
 - And we have no want, because He's our full portion.
 - He is not only the healing that makes us walk, but He is also the joy that leads us to leap!

Praise God, because He alone is worthy of our praise.

Because He alone can heal hearts that are lame.

And He alone can carry the weight of our hope for tomorrow.

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Grace & Exhortation >>>

Great Expectations

I often wonder about our expectations when we gather as His church.

- Did you arrive this morning convinced that the only thing you could possibly receive is an hour of song and preaching?

I know there are a lot of changes going on here this month.

- And it's been a long season of questions.
- I know there is weariness, confusion, hope, hurt, questions, readiness, resolve, and everything in between.
- And because we're NOT God, because we do not have the power and piety to meet our own expectations and desires, we must look elsewhere for help.
 - We need something from outside of ourselves to not only provoke our hearts to hope, but to bear the weight of glory we groan for.
 - We all seek refreshment and restoration.
 - We all long to walk and leap in joy!
 - These desires are not shameful.
 - They are the normal.
 - You've been hardwired for praise!
 - However, the ancient and current danger is that we'd look to things like silver and gold or others to give us what only God can give us!
 - And it all falls short of the power to make us right.
 - There has never been a time in history when created things could bear the weight of our worship!
 - There has never been a season in which man could do for himself or others what only God can do.

And to be clear.

- The answer to our longings is not reducing our expectations; in fact, the problem is that our expectations are too small and temporary!

So then what should we do?

Where does our gaze go? Who do we look to?

2 Corinthians 3:18

[18] And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Eternal Church, the gathered people of Jesus Christ, the Chief Shepherd.

Do you want rest and transformation!

Behold Christ!

Fix your gaze upon him! True restoration can only be found in Him.

And finally!

I didn't focus on it, but as we close, look at this in Acts 3

[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.

Until the time of restoring ALL things! There will be a day of full restoration!

- The early church was continually reminded and assured of how their groaning ultimately ends.

Revelation 21:1-4

There'll be a day when what was meant to be will be fully restored.

By His Power and Righteousness, He will return creation to that which was meant to be normal.

- An everlasting day, in which we will walk in His presence!
- Do you believe that? Do you TRUST that it is true?

Which then leads us to my favorite verse in the Bible!

Revelation 22:4 They will see **his** face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

All eyes on Him!

And His name, not our name, not a church name, will be on our foreheads!
He will not only be ours, but we will be His! His Presence in full clarity!
Praise the Lord!

Let's Pray and then Praise Him!

Benediction

Let's be clear about this morning!

Let's be eternal with our expectations.

Today is not about man.

It is about all of us, turning our eyes to the hillside!

All eyes on Him!

He is our King!

He is our Power and our Righteousness!

And it is His presence that leads us to praise!

May we be devoted to gathering with each other to provoke one another to the love and good works that declare that He alone is our hope for today and forevermore!

For all those who have been grafted into the people of God...

Numbers 6:24-26

[24] The LORD bless you and keep you;

[25] the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

[26] the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Shalom - that is the fullness of His restoration!