



**Sunday, August 6, 2023**

**Speaker:** Pastor John VanderWindt

**Scripture:** Acts 3:1-26

**Sermon:** Living in the Name of Jesus

Good morning everyone. It is good to be together again and to praise our Lord. As was mentioned, we are going through the book of Acts, looking at what it means to be the church. What does the church look like as a group of people? We've been looking at Acts as the beginning of the Church of Christ. We are now up to Acts 3. I invite you to turn with me to Acts 3. As always, we encourage you to keep your Bible open as we'll be going through the passages and looking at what God is saying through Luke, as he wrote Acts. Talking about what it means to take what God has given us as the leaders of the church and as the people of the church. When Jesus said, "You are to go into all the world and to make disciples of all nations." So together, we'll read Acts 3.

**1** One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. **2** Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. **3** When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. **4** Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" **5** So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

**6** Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." **7** Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. **8** He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. **9** When all the people saw him walking and praising God, **10** they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

### **Peter Speaks to the Onlookers**

**11** While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. **12** When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? **13** The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned

him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **14** You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **15** You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. **16** By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

**17** "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. **18** But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. **19** Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, **20** and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. **21** Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. **22** For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. **23** Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'<sup>[a]</sup>

**24** "Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. **25** And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, 'Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.'<sup>[b]</sup> **26** When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank you, Lord, for Your powerful name. And that in Your name, we may know You, we may be comforted, we may be healed. But we may also proclaim You in our actions and in our words to those we meet. Lord, we ask that this morning You will reach into our hearts and that you will open our ears that we may hear. May the words that are spoken, Lord, may be Your words, and that nothing of mine may come out but that we may all hear You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Here we have Acts 3. Acts 2 is about Pentecost, this huge day within church history in which the Holy Spirit comes and descends on the people. And we see the power of God reached. In **Acts 2:41**, it says that the Lord added to their number daily. Then at the end of Acts 2 it says, "And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." So God is working and people are seeing that.

Then Acts 3 begins with, "One day." This is not the next day. We don't know how long after Pentecost this took place. But there was a time between Pentecost and this event. And notice what Peter and John were doing. They were going to the temple at the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. Do you remember when we read in **Acts 2:42**, "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." Prayer was part of the habit of the church. It was a discipline in which the church hung on to.

Now these Jewish followers of Jesus, they grew up with us. They grew up with daily times of prayer. When they follow Jesus, they're like, "We're not getting rid of that. That's an important piece for us to hang on to. This daily practice and discipline of prayer." So here we have this kind of concept of the church moving day by day doing the deeds of the church, listening to the teachings of the apostles, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. Sometimes when we read through scripture, especially when we read through the book of Acts, it seems like one event after the other and we think about how exciting church must be because there's always something going on.

But we also know that in between these times of events happening, there is the faithfulness of God's people. In devoting themselves to the teaching of God's Word, in the breaking of bread and fellowship, and in prayer. And one of the things that we've learned about the church is that it's not just about those great times. It is, "What are we doing between Sundays? What are we doing in those times and seasons where it seems like we are just kind of hanging in there? Are we dedicated to the teaching of God's word to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer? Is that the way we live our lives?" So we're encouraged to stay focused in those places.

Then we notice it is Peter and John that come in. And when we read through it, it says, "Peter and John (**starting in Acts 3:3**) entered. Then Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter spoke." Peter and John, longtime companions, partners as fishermen, part of the inner three in the circle of Jesus, but two very different people. Peter, we remember as this outspoken, speak first/think later. John is very quiet. He spends time learning and listening.

A few weeks ago, when we went through that list of disciples, we saw some of the differences between Peter and John. Here they are. It's important that we recognize that Peter and John, though very different, are both very important within the church. Peter and John are not the same and nor is everybody in the church the same. We all have different gifts in which we can offer each other and others. So we remember that this fellowship is a distinct group of people, but it's an eclectic group of people. It's a group of people from all backgrounds, from all different ways of life, from all different ways of wanting to serve and worship God together. We have the one name of Jesus in whom we worship.

So then in **Acts 3:4**, it says, Peter said, "Look at us." There's a very important lesson here about fellowship. For a number of years, I went with a group of students to Halifax. And as part of our mission in Halifax, we would work with food banks and clothing stores. We would work in shelters. One of the first lessons which I learned is that people need to be noticed. Everyone. So Peter doesn't walk by and ignore him. Peter calls the attention of the other person. Peter engages in this interaction and it says in **Acts 3:5**, "So the man gave them his attention..." This piece of looking each person in the eye, acknowledging them as an image bearer of God, that each person we meet is an image bearer of God.

Do we think that? As we walk the streets of Peterborough, as we go grocery shopping, as we're in the stores or other places in the park, and there are the people that are annoying us, do we think of them as image bearers of God? Or do we try to avoid them and say, "You know what? That's someone else's problem. I'm going to kind of walk on." Peter stops, he gets the attention of the person and says, "Look at me. I've got something to offer you." And the man, expecting something like a donation or maybe a helping hand. Peter says, "I've got something better than that."

Now, we have to be clear that throughout the book of Acts and throughout Scripture, it talks about helping the poor financially. This is not an excuse to say, "Well, I'm just going to do miracle healing and I'm not going to give any money to the poor." That's not what this is. But it is saying, "We need to make a connection with people and who they are. And Peter says, "I don't have any gold or silver, but what I do have I give you." Then he says, "In the name of Jesus, walk."

This is not the first time in scripture when it's been said, "Get up and walk." In fact, Jesus did this a number of times. In Luke 5, there's the man who let the paralytic down through the roof. And Jesus begins by saying, "Your sins are forgiven." And the people are like, "Who are you that you can forgive sins?" Jesus says in **Luke 5:23-24**, "Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." And he did. In that story, it says that they were amazed.

The same reaction that happens in the temple courts, where Peter and John are now. That people are amazed. The people are amazed when God does things. Think about that for a minute. Are you amazed when God does stuff? Think about how often God will do things and we will kind of ride it off into, "Well, that was kind of nice that that happened. Or the world around us tells us, "Well, that was kind of a coincidence." Or, "That was lucky." Now, we may not have someone who is a paralytic stand up and walk. But do you think about all the things that God does daily in your life?

You know, I'm hoping most of us slept last night. Everybody who's here and everybody who's watching online, we all woke up again this morning. How many of us made ourselves - well, maybe we set an alarm so we woke up that way - but we don't give ourselves life. We don't give ourselves breath. That all comes from Christ. Do we recognize the things that God does in our lives each day? Or do we recognize how God adds to the church's numbers each day by bringing people to Him and drawing people to Him? Are we amazed at how God is working in our lives? Or do we just go through life just expecting it to be there and never thinking about God working specifically in your life?

Have you ever thanked God for green lights when you're in a hurry? I sure hope so. That happens a lot of times. Or when you say, "You know, Lord, we really need some rain." And it rains. God is working. There's God's providence that He gives us. God is also working miraculously each and every day in our lives. So here we are. We have this person who has been healed. Peter says, "In the name of Jesus, walk."

Going back to the story in **Luke 5**, you'll notice that Jesus just said, "Get up and walk." Jesus doesn't have to use his name to get up and walk. In fact, he did it also in **John 5** when he heals the man at the pool of Bethesda. He says, "Just do it." But anytime we do things, we do it in the name of Christ. In fact, as we will see a little bit later on in Acts, it is in Antioch that people were first given the name Christian, one who follows Christ. If we think about being the sense of witnesses, when you bear the name Christian, you are doing everything in the name of Christ.

So in a couple of weeks when we have VERSE week and we go to serve other people, that is not in our name. That is not in our goodness. It is in the name of Christ that we serve. It is the name of Christ that gathers us for fellowship. It is in the name of Christ that we break bread. In fact, at the end of our prayers, we often say, "In Jesus' name." Because we realize that the power of the Christian life comes from the name of Christ. It is Jesus working in us and through us. He gives us the power to do what we need to do for Christ.

So here we have this great scene. Peter and John, the paralytic who is now leaping and jumping and praising God, and the people are amazed. Then Peter asked the question in **Acts 3:12**, "'Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

In some ways, it's an eye opening question, right? In some ways, it's going back to that question of, "Why are you surprised when God acts? God is a God of action. God is a God who continues to act in the world all the time. So why are you surprised when he does?" Or maybe the reverse is what you're asking? "Why doesn't He? Why doesn't He act when I call Him to? Is it because my faith isn't strong enough? Is it because of other reasons? Why does Jesus not act when I call Him to?" When we look at God's work within the world, we see God's authority and we see God's power. Sometimes the question doesn't need to be, "Why doesn't God act?" Because God is acting?

Maybe the question is, "What are we to learn from what is happening? How does this strengthen and deepen my reliance on God so that I lean on Him more and more all the time? And how do I get more and more reliance on Christ as opposed to reliance on my own abilities?" As Peter says, "Do you think it's because of our godliness or our power that we were able to do this? It is because of what God is doing through us that we are able to do these things." Then he goes back and he tells these Jews who are children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and he says, "This began through Abraham, and God promised this, and you now have done the following."

It's interesting. A couple of weeks ago, we saw how Peter began right away with his sermon on Pentecost and says, "By the way, you kill them. Let's start this off right. I'm going to tell you about this great man, Jesus, the great God, Jesus, and by the way, you kill them." Here he begins that way again in Acts 3:13. It says, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate... "

I wonder what Peter was thinking at that point. Peter realized that he also disowned Christ. So now Peter puts himself in that same place. "I and you have disowned him." Peter owns it. It's interesting that Peter puts the emphasis a little bit further when he says, "You disowned him before Pilate though he had decided to let him go."

Wow. How many times have I or we or the church disowned Christ before the world even though the world was willing to let it go? We keep pushing it saying, "Are we stopping the world from seeing Christ? Are we being a witness in which the world can see who Christ really is?" Or do we need to ask the question of ourselves as well, "Have we disowned Christ?" And what as a church are we doing to show who Christ really is? That He is, as it says in **Acts 3:14**, "... disowned the Holy and Righteous One." Have we murdered him? By our sins, we have.

But Peter says, "You need to look beyond that. You need to repent and ask God to fill you with His Son. **Acts 3:16**, though, is very important. It says, "16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see."

Notice how it says, "It is by faith in Jesus' name." It is not, "How much faith did this man have?" It's not, "How much faith did Peter have in order to be able to do this?" This is faith in Christ. Each of us needs to put our own faith in Jesus and in the name of Christ. When you speak in the name of Christ, you are speaking in the most powerful God, the only God of the universe.

And that name has power. It has the power to heal, it has the power to comfort, it has the power to forgive. It has the power to give life. So when we think about ourselves as a church, what are we doing to reflect the name of Jesus? Do we reflect the Jesus who has power? Do we reflect the Jesus who forgives? Do we reflect the Jesus who gives life and gives it to the full? So Peter is inviting us. He's inviting us into the story of the Christian life. Into the story of God's kingdom, in which he says, "I invite you to be my hands and feet."

Did you notice backing up to Peter where he says that he tells him to walk and then in **Acts 3:7** it says, "Taking him by the right hand." Peter didn't just speak the words. He helped him. He reached out and touched him. He grabbed him by the hand and helped pull him up. He didn't just say, "Jesus heal him. I'm going on my way." No. He stopped and he stayed with the man and he helped him up. We as a church are called to stay with people and help them as we point them to Christ and we help them in their situation. And we continue to point to Christ who is able to give all that they need.

And as I said before, in **Acts 3:19**, it talks about repenting. Each of us needs to remember that as we go through our daily lives, what is it that I need to repent of? In what ways have I abandoned or disowned the name of Jesus? In what ways have I misrepresented the name of Jesus? In what ways have I tried to stand on my own power and my own goodness and think that that's okay. Peter reminds us this morning that each of us are in that space that we need to repent.

Peter also reminds us that this is part of God's plan. God planned for Jesus to be killed so that we could have life and that God was working in our lives each day so that we can continue to grow to be the person that God wanted us to be. He actually begins with Moses. He says there with Moses in **Acts 3:22-23**, "22 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people."

Peter reminds the Jews, "Here he is with people who know Moses. They know the Old Testament. They understand the covenant that God has made with the people of Israel." Peter says, "Here it is. I offer this to you, this Jesus, to whom you have killed but as part of God's plan, I offer him to you as the person who is going to come in to save you. And now I encourage you to listen to him. Because to be honest with you, if you don't, then you will be cut off." For the people of Israel, they understood that meaning. They understood their history where they have gone through life and have been in exile and have finally been released from exile and have been waiting for over 400 years since the last prophet. They understood what it meant for God to be silent. And Peter's reminding them, "Here he is. Here is Jesus. Here is that latest prophet. Listen to him and give your life to Him."

Then he begins with Samuel. Even though Samuel never predicted anything about Christ, Samuel was seen as the first prophet. Peter wanted to make sure that he included all the prophets in this. So from Samuel, he says, "When you begin at Samuel and you go all the way through, you can see how God is fulfilling what he told Abraham back in Genesis where he says, "Through your offspring all people on earth will be blessed."

A couple of weeks ago when we were in **Acts 1**, we read verse eight which says, "8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." We now see that the church is being sent by God to not just be in your space, but to go out as well. But it begins in your space. It begins by reaching out with your hands and helping your neighbor. It begins with pointing your neighbor to who Christ is and in the name of Christ, serving them in different ways.

Then it says at the end in **Acts 3:26**, "26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways." Here Peter gives the invitation and he says, "You know what? We are all sinners." And he says, "I invite you to come to Christ to turn away from a life that is not listening to him and to live a life in him. That in his name, you may have life."

When teaching - I don't know whether it was the greatest thing or the worst thing because dry erase markers always quit halfway through a lesson - but a white erase board, you write with markers on them. Then you take the eraser and you clean it all off and it's perfectly white again... if you got good erasers and good markers. When you think of that, the image which Peter is using for having your sins taken away is that image. Anything that blocks that whiteboard is erased.

You stand before God in Jesus' name, that your sins are erased. But not just your sins are erased. You stand there in the light of Jesus' righteousness. But the power of Jesus' name doesn't just take away the sins but it puts his righteousness on you so that you stand before God clean.

Today we hear Peter helping the paralytic giving him the power to jump and walk. May we be reminded of how God invites us to be that place of helping someone in Jesus' name and that we don't do it on our own strength. We don't do it because of our goodness. We do it because of Christ within us. And we invite you to each day, whether it is that time of great miracles that you witness or that time of waiting. Between days of Pentecost and the next big event that you spend your time in the Word, in fellowship, gathering together in the breaking of bread at church and in prayer. That we may be able to live each day in the power of the name of Jesus.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we thank you for who you are. Lord, we thank You that Your name is powerful and that you are our advocate, our healer, our Savior, the Lamb of God, the ruler of the universe, and King of Kings. That You are our Lord. Lord, that each of us can say that you are my Lord. Lord, will you give us the strength and the courage to live each day in your name as we go about our daily tasks. But Lord, also as we are witnesses for you each day in the world in which we live and it is in the powerful name of Jesus. It is because that Jesus loved us first that we are able to love him back and that we can pray this. Amen.

Transcribed by: *Liza Perry*