

2023 Theme - Focus On What Matters

Sermon Series - The Book of Acts/God's Plan for His Church

Sermon Title - The Message of The New Testament Church

Sermon Text - Acts 3 (Selected Verses)

Sermon Presenter - Pastor Larry

"Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchase of love, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood! This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long!!" Folks, that's the message of the New Testament in a song! Because of this blessed assurance, we can trust God with our past, trust God with the details of our daily lives today and trust God with our future! The people who made up the New Testament Church had a message from God to share and they were determined to share that message at all cost! Let's pray and we'll look at the powerful message they passed on to us to share with the world! Pray.

So far in this series we've talked about the foundation of the New Testament Church - The life of Jesus/The teaching of Jesus/The sacrifice of Jesus/The resurrection of Jesus/The Spirit of Jesus/The mission of Jesus! We've talked about the decision making process of the New Testament Church - Decisions were birthed in unity/Bathed in prayer/Based on Scripture/and were by the will of God. And then for the last two weeks we talked about the Spirit of the New Testament Church - The Holy Spirit He is the Person of God/the Presence of God/the Power of God. The Holy Spirit reveals the Purpose of the Church and fuels the Church's Passion! Those sermons are all on line and you can go back and review. If you want to download the notes, just click on the sermon notes and they will be automatically sent to your download folder. Today we're going to discover some of the fundamental aspects to the...

The Message of the New Testament Church

The first aspect we find in our text is not directly stated in the text but is found once you dig a little into the background of the actions of Peter and John and it is this...

1. The Message of the New Testament Church was the fulfillment of the Old Testament message!

Acts chapter 3 verse one says this...

Acts 3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon.

This is significant! The Broadman Commentary on Acts states the following...

"The Jews normally observed two periods during the day for prayer. Both of these were associated with the daily sacrifice called the Tamid. Early in the morning and at 3:00 in the afternoon every day in the year the priest slaughtered a lamb for a sacrifice to God. While the

carcass of the animal was upon the ramp, they withdrew to the chamber of hewn stone for the incense offering and the recitation of benedictions, the Ten Commandments, and the Shema (The Shema became for the people of God a confession of faith by which they acknowledged the one true God and His commandments for them). It was this kind of ritual that Peter and John were going to the Temple to observe at 3:00 in the afternoon..."

T. C. Smith, "Acts," in Broadman Bible Commentary: Acts–1 Corinthians, ed. Clifton J. Allen, vol. 10, Broadman Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1970), 33.

Why do I give you this background information? Because it helps us to understand how the message of the New Testament Church was the fulfillment of the Old Testament message! While the disciples were still observing the traditional prayer times, they knew that many of the old practices were no longer needed because Jesus had fulfilled the purpose of those rituals. Listen to the writer of the book of Hebrews...

Heb 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

Heb 10:2 If it could, would they not have stopped being offered? For the worshipers would have been cleansed once for all, and would no longer have felt guilty for their sins.

Heb 10:3 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins,

Heb 10:4 because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Then down in verse 11 we read...

Heb 10:11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Heb 10:12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.

And who was this priest the writer is talking about? Jesus Christ! And listen to what Jesus had once said about the Old Testament law...

Mat 5:17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

Aren't you glad Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the Law that we could never be good enough to fulfill? If a person decides they want to work their way to heaven by observing the letter of the law, they will have to do it perfectly. And here's the problem with that, if you've already messed up in the past, then it's game over unless you let Jesus fulfill the letter of the law for you.

Listen...

Gal 3:10 All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

Gal 3:11 Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

Gal 3:12 The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, "The man who does these things will live by them."

Gal 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree."

Gal 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Then look down in verse 22 and following...

Gal 3:22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe.

Gal 3:23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.

Gal 3:24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Gal 3:25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Gal 3:26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

Gal 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

So Acts 3:1 which simply says...

Acts 3:1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon.

...actually means more than at first meets the eye! When we understand that they were going to the temple at the appointed time of prayer, and we dig deeper, we discover that the Old Testament message was fulfilled in the Message of the New Testament Church, which is all about Jesus....

Isaiah 9:6 For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

...and we will see even more clearly as we look at another vital aspect of the message of the New Testament Church...

**2. The Message of the New Testament Church was that God has what you really need!
Freedom in Christ!**

Freedom from the judgment of having broken the law of God! Freedom from things that seek to control us, attitudes that seek to destroy us, as well as habits and temptations that seek to cripple us! Look at verse two of our text...

Acts 3:2 Now a man crippled 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.

As Peter and John were headed to the temple they were interrupted by God's agenda! Does that ever happen to you? Peter and John could have said, "sorry we don't have time to talk, we're on our way to pray and you know it's supposed to be right at 3:00, have a blessed day, see ya!" Thankfully that's not what they said. They had come upon a man who could not by his own strength get to the temple to pray or to even beg people for help. He's being carried and he sees Peter and John.

Acts 3:3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Acts 3:4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

Acts 3:5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Acts 3:6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

This beggar thought his greatest need was money. Wrong! Peter and John were going to give him something he never expected to get! Something he didn't believe he could ever have. He had been crippled from birth! They were going to offer him a freedom that money couldn't buy. They were going to offer him a freedom which would replace his physical weakness with a new strength. Listen...

Acts 3:7 Taking him by the right hand, he (Peter) helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

Peter and John had what the man really needed, not what he thought he needed! What do you think is your greatest need today? You may be thinking, "If God would only do this or that, or give me this or that, or fix this or that, or change this or that!" Truth is, you may have it all wrong! Maybe today you need to ask God to give you what He knows you really need, not what you think you need. Are you willing to trust that God knows what you really need? That He knows what is best for your life? That He knows what will fulfill His purpose for your life? He knows you need the freedom that only He can give you. This man had a serious physical need, but thought his greatest need was financial. You may be here today with a physical need and to you this is the most pressing need in your life, but your greatest need could be a spiritual one. Are you willing to ask God to show you what your greatest need really is and trust the message of the New Testament Church that God has what you really need. You may be here today and just feel mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and even physically tired because of your struggles in life. The message those early followers of Jesus had discovered was that God has what you really need and it's pretty amazing how the message of the New Testament Church fulfilled the message of the Old Testament! This is especially true when you understand that God desires for you to

have the strength to overcome weakness. Listen to this Old Testament passage which is fulfilled in the message of the New Testament...

Isa 40:29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

Isa 40:30 Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall;

Isa 40:31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

This is literally fulfilled in our text when this crippled man finds the freedom that turns sorrow into joy.

Acts 3:8 He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

Acts 3:9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God,

Acts 3:10 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.

I don't know about you, but I could use a little jump n' joy in my life! This joy comes when you allow God to heal your spirit and give you freedom from the sorrow and guilt that has haunted you over past failures, or when He heals you of doubt or fear, or insecurity, or a feeling of inadequacy! Let me say this, I know God doesn't always give instant physical healing when we face health issues, but I can promise you this: If it takes a miraculous healing for you to accomplish God's will and work in your life, then He will grant that.

But if God chooses to give you a miraculous grace and strength to endure the hardship instead of healing you, then you will have a testimony and witness to the world of faith in the midst of difficult circumstances! This will inspire and encourage others to want to know the God who gives you peace that defies human understanding! Not long after I became a follower of Jesus I had my foot crushed in a freight elevator. As I was being transported by ambulance to the hospital, through the groans and gritting my teeth, I managed to tell the EMT that Jesus loved him. I had long hair and was a teenager, so he thought I was going into shock. I assured him that I wasn't and that I knew God was going to help me get through everything! He probably still wonders about that young hippie kid that talked about Jesus on the way to the ER! I wasn't healed overnight, not that God couldn't have done it that way, He could have, but it was a long process for me! I soon discovered that there were more medical people who needed ministry. One nurse pulled up a chair and asked me if she could talk to me about something. Remember, I was a teenager. She wondered if I would pray for her grandson who had gotten involved with drugs. We prayed together! God didn't cause me to crush my foot, but He sure used it for good! During my many months of recovery, my grandparents sent me some flowers and a little book plaque that contained the serenity prayer. It says... **“God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.”** And this leads to our next and very important aspect of the message of the New Testament Church...

3. The Message of the New Testament Church was that the power of man alone cannot accomplish the things of God!

Acts 3:11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

Acts 3:12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, 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?"

And then down in verse 16 Peter says...

Acts 3:16 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 given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.

There's a lot of things we humans can do and accomplish. When you look at the amazing medical breakthroughs modern medicine has brought to us you realize just how far we have come in the last 100 years or so. However, there's still much we don't understand and even with all of our technology, uncertainties exist! If you don't believe me, go in for surgery and read the documents you have to sign giving them permission to operate. There's several pages about all the things that could go wrong! That just reminds me that we still need God to be our great physician and to add His blessing to everything the earthly doctors and surgeons do to help us! I thank God for their talents and the years of schooling and training they went through to do what they do and for all the researchers who have developed some of our modern miracle medicines. However, when our story in the book of Acts took place, what occurred could have only happened miraculously. They simply didn't have the medical advancements we have today. So this story reminds us if we're to accomplish the things of God, God sized achievements, it takes the God sized power of His grace, His mercy, His wisdom, and His love! And I'm not just talking about physical health issues, but all aspects of our lives. And here's a pretty awesome thing: When God accomplishes His work in our life and does it in a God-sized kind of way, the world scratches its head! They don't understand. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 1:27 and following...

1 Cor 1:27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.

1 Cor 1:28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things--and the things that are not--to nullify the things that are,

1 Cor 1:29 so that no one may boast before him.

1 Cor 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

1 Cor 1:31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

God used a beggar in our story to display His power and glory. This happened at the temple and puzzled those in positions of power. They passed this beggar on their way to work every day at the temple gates. He didn't have the ability to do the works of righteousness many said he

would need to do to have a relationship with God. Part of their issue can be explained in this statement:

“For some of the Jewish people, who had long thought it was by their own righteousness that they were going to earn God’s love and heaven, for them this new message was quite difficult to explain or accept.”

Paul alludes to this in Romans 9:30-32...

Rom 9:30 What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith;

Rom 9:31 but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it.

Rom 9:32 Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the "stumbling stone."

People are still stumbling over Jesus and the message of grace today! One of the reasons people are so drawn to far eastern religions and philosophies, as well as some of the very legalistic middle eastern religions is really a human pride thing. You say “how so?” Many times people don’t want to humble themselves and admit they’ve made mistakes, are in need of a savior, and must call on His name for salvation! It’s appealing to our human pride to think we can do it on our own, work our way to God, do enough good to deserve our spot in glory, or meditate our way to enlightenment. But Biblical Christianity knows no other way but the way of Amazing Grace. The way of amazing grace is the unmerited favor of God given to those who are willing to admit they need it, believe Jesus gave the sacrifice for it, and call on His name! Which takes us to this foundational truth...

4. The Message of the New Testament Church was that God was in Christ reconciling the world!

Peter says as much when he says this in our text...

Acts 3:13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.

Paul explains it beautifully in his second letter to the Corinthian Church...

2 Cor 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

2 Cor 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

2 Cor 5:19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

And I absolutely love the following passage...

Rom 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
Rom 8:2 because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 8:3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man,

Rom 8:4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

And then there's John's words in his first letter...

1 John 4:13 We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

This is the message our church needs to be taking to the world and a message the world desperately needs! But the problem back in the days of the New Testament Church was that many in the religious establishment had rejected the message that God was in Christ reconciling the world! In fact Peter, with great courage and risk to his own life speaks very boldly to the religious people gathered there at the temple gates. Listen to what he says...

Acts 3:13 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.

Acts 3:14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you.

Acts 3:15 You killed the author of life,

Whoa! Remember this is the guy that had previously denied even knowing Jesus. But as I've said in last week's message, something radical had happened to Peter and he was a new man! He continues his message and gives us the reason for his renewed confidence and courage to share the message of Jesus...

Acts 3:15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.

This takes us to the final aspect of our message today...

5. The Message of the New Testament Church is that Faith and Repentance are keys to being made right with God not works of self Righteousness!

Acts 3:16 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.

Acts 3:17 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.

Acts 3:18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer.

Acts 3:19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,

Acts 3:20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus.

And then verse 26...

Acts 3:26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Peter made it plain that even though the Hebrews were God's chosen people, they could never be good enough or do enough to earn God's love, mercy and forgiveness. Peter makes it plain, just as Jesus did, that they must be willing to repent of their wicked ways and turn to God. This doesn't mean that you've got to be perfect or without sin to come to God! No! You come to Him just as you are. Bring your sin, your struggles, your fears, your doubts, your questions, your everything, admitting your sin has separated you from a Holy and loving God! Jesus made a way for you to be reunited with your Creator God! In repentance we exercise faith and acknowledge God offers what we really need! By repenting we are believing that the power of God can accomplish what we could never do on our own! By repenting of sin you are making the decision to believe God was in Christ reconciling you to Himself! Repentance is admitting the role your sin had in the crucifixion of Jesus! Repentance opens the door to a confession of faith and belief that God raised Jesus from the dead, that He lives today and will come into your heart if you invite Him in! The Message of the New Testament Church can be summed up in these words in the Book of Romans...

Rom 3:20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Rom 3:21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

Rom 3:22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom 3:24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

Rom 3:25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood...

Let's pray!