

Acts 3:11-26

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[0 : 00] Welcome back. We started two weeks ago a short series on looking at Jesus in Acts. How does the book of Acts, that we often read to learn about the early church and all kinds of things, but it actually has quite a lot to say about who Jesus is and what he was like and what he came to do and what that means for us.

So last week I was away, but we're continuing with the series this week and the next couple of weeks. We're in Acts 3 today. Acts 3 from verse 11 to 26 on your handouts there.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 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? This is a lame beggar that Peter healed.

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.

But you denied the Holy of Abraham, but you denied the Holy of Abraham, but you denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

[1 : 35] 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.

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Repent, therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 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.

Moses said, That is the living and active word of God.

So, last week, or two weeks ago really, in Acts 1, we saw a very important thing, didn't we?

[3 : 31] That we must see Jesus as the Jesus who has been taken up into heaven and will return. That is fundamental for how we understand who Jesus is now, isn't it?

Jesus dying on the cross is not all there was to him. Neither was even the incredible, utterly astounding, unheard of, rising from the dead.

The angels told the disciples to get on with what Jesus had told them to do, because he is coming back as he was taken up into heaven. He is the risen and exalted king of all creation, isn't he?

And he is coming back. And this Jesus, they said, will come back. That very same Jesus. That is how we must relate to him. But there is still a question.

Who exactly is this Jesus who was taken up into heaven and is coming back? Who was he even before he was taken up into heaven? How did the people in his time relate to him?

[4 : 37] And how should they have related to him? And that is what this passage tells us about, doesn't it? In this passage we are looking at today, we join the action just after Peter, as he was a layman, Peter and John were at the temple.

This lame beggar was there, they asked him for money. And Peter said, silver and gold I don't have. But what I do have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.

We'll look more at the name of Jesus next week. You know, people are amazed. People are utterly astonished at what happened here. They've known this man, he's been lame all his life. And at a word, he gets up and he walks.

And not just walks, you know, he leaps and bounds. Just because Peter said he should stand up. And so it's unexpected, isn't it, that he tells them, why are you surprised? Why do you wonder at this? I mean, I would be pretty astonished if that happened right in front of my eyes, wouldn't you? Just outside here on the piazza there, you know, there's a lame person begging.

[5 : 46] Someone tells him, get up and walk. And that happens in front of your eyes. That would be utterly astonishing. And yet he rebukes them almost for doing that, isn't it? He rebukes them.

Why do you wonder at this? Didn't you hear that we said this is in the name of Jesus? Verse 12. It wasn't us.

Do you still not realize who Jesus is? They knew their Bibles, the Old Testament as we know it now. They should have known better.

Because just as we need to understand that Jesus is now the exalted, glorified King over all, we need to understand that there was many promises about this Jesus.

He is the eternally promised Son of God. The Saviour. The servant who would be the Saviour of the people of God.

[6 : 48] And he would not just live himself, but he would give life to all who believed in him. That's the promise that we read through the Old Testament.

That's why Peter tells them about Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And he said, don't you remember all of these things? Who is this Jesus? Well, Peter reminds them that God had long, long, long ago promised to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob that the patriarchs of the Jewish people, that he would send a Saviour for his people to rescue them from his sins.

And how does the Saviour look like? Well, not the conquering military hero that many of them kind of started to think eventually would come to set them free politically from under the Romans.

No, the Saviour would be a servant. The servant of God. Isn't that what he says? Servant of God.

The servant Jesus. Verse 13. And his language in this passage is not random. Now, I want you to keep your eyes on verses 13 to 19 there. Listen, if this, what I'm going to read now, sounds familiar.

[7 : 56] He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

[8 : 57] And they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

And that's famous words from Isaiah 53. The prophet who spoke about this servant who would come 700 years before Jesus was born.

Jesus is the promised servant who would be handed over and denied by his people, who would be killed, whose own generation wouldn't recognise him, who suffered and died and was killed, to blot out, to take away our sins.

And for that, verse 13, he is glorified. Isn't he? Only God is ever glorified in the Bible. That sort of prompted them to think again.

[10 : 06] Jesus is the servant, the one who would carry out God's will. Who would perfectly obey his will and commandments. Who would do what we couldn't and stand in our place. Jesus is the fulfilment of this prophecy.

That's the language that Peter is bringing out here, isn't it? He's not just a good teacher or a good person. He died and was raised from the dead and blotted out our sin.

And you're surprised that a lame man can walk when he's healed in Jesus' name? God saves people through this suffering servant dying in their place.

That should amaze us. That's not what we would expect. We would expect, like those Israelites, you know, a conquering military hero of some sort. You know, someone powerful who comes and deals with our problems right here and now.

Wouldn't we? We realise two things, I think, there. If Jesus is the fulfilment of this prophecy, in fact, of all that God has promised about him before, we can't understand fully who Jesus is unless we pay attention to how he's been described and promised before.

[11:19] God has told us who he is going to be when he is born, when he lives, when he fulfills all of these prophecies. We need a humble servant to die in our place for our arrogance and our thirst of power, really.

That's the astonishing thing, that God has done that in Jesus. Not that he's able to heal lame people. And the Jewish leaders and the people there shouldn't have been surprised, because they knew the Old Testament scriptures.

So the second thing we see there is this, and it might seem obvious, but it's worth pointing out, if we forget it very easily.

If we need a servant like that, and Jesus is the one who is that servant of God, who blots out our sins, then we are not that servant.

We are not the one who blots out our sins. And by implication, we are not God. We forget that very easily. And that leads us to some of the other descriptions of Jesus in this passage.

[12:24] He's not just described as the servant of God, is he? He's also, verse 14, the holy and righteous one. And verse 15, the author of life.

That's incredible. I mean, if there was any doubt before that Peter is describing Jesus as God, he takes it away right there, doesn't he? In the Bible, God is holy.

People and things are holy when they belong to God. But there is only one holy and righteous one. And there's only one author, one source, one beginning of life in the Bible, isn't there?

In the beginning, God. Genesis 1, verse 1. See, it becomes worse. Not only did they not recognize who Jesus was, this promised servant, that they should have recognized with everything that happened to him, they actively, and listen to this, handed over the author of life, the beginning of life, the source of life, to be killed.

And they chose a murderer to be released, so that the holy and righteous one can be handed over and killed. That is running a red light, so that you can commit a speeding offense, so that you can run someone over.

[13:50] That is compounding things, you know, on top of each other. And it's not just that they don't realize who Jesus is, the very God who created life, who came to give them life from the death that we get from our sins.

They went and killed him. They denied him when they killed him. And they're denying him now, really, even. When they turn to Peter and John, they say, it was them who did this.

There's a danger for people who know Jesus, even. People who go to church, people who call themselves Christians. But we align ourselves with a particular person, or a ministry, more with that than with the one about whom that ministry or that preaching is.

Isn't there? Big name preachers, all over the world. They're only servants of the servant of God, aren't they? And they should preach in his name, like Peter does here.

But that's the reaction of people who don't fully recognize who Jesus is. And that's why it's so important to recognize who he is. And that's why we're looking at who Jesus is.

[15:04] Because unless we recognize who he is, that he is the true and living God, that he deserves all that praise and honor, we will want all that praise and honor in our own lives.

There can be only one God. And we raise ourselves up as little gods, don't we? If we don't recognize who he is. Peter doesn't hold back in showing them this, does he?

He doesn't tread around the niceties of not wanting to offend people. And we're kind of guilty of that sometimes. We want to be polite, part of the culture.

He says to them, verse 13, you delivered him over. You. You all. Not a singular, you all. You denied the Holy and Righteous One, verse 14, and asked for a murderer to be freed.

That's paradoxical, that's nonsensical. You killed the author of life, verse 15, but God raised him from the dead. What you did is nonsensical.

[16:09] It's a nonsensical thing to do, but you did it. You ignored every warning through the centuries which God's prophets have said, telling you he'll come. He talks about that in verse 18, verse 21, doesn't he?

He talks about the prophets quite a lot. And then the stinger, and it always hurts more when it's someone close to you who knows which buttons to push, doesn't it? Verse 17, Look, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your rulers.

Brothers, fellow Jews, who have the scriptures. Rulers, people especially responsible to teach the people well. I don't think he's just going to be positive there or absolving them of responsibility, really.

He's making a point, isn't he? That they should have known. Ignorance is no excuse. Poor you. I know you didn't know better, but that's okay. It's not what he's saying.

Who is this Jesus? He's the one who came to do what none of us could do. Obey God's will, live a holy and righteous life in our place, and die in our place. He came to life where naturally we wanted to kill.

[17:23] And we experience death in our world because we disobey God. But despite that, he died in our place, rose from the dead, was taken up into heaven, and he will return.

That is something to be astonished about. Whether you hear it for the first time or for the hundredth time. Moses, the prophet, he talks about there, doesn't he, foretold that a greater prophet would come.

Would be raised up. And Jesus has now been raised up twice, hasn't he? From the dead and into heaven. To him you must listen.

To everything which he says to you. I'm paraphrasing verse 22 there a bit to get the emphasis right. To him you must listen. Throughout the whole Old Testament there was this anticipation for the greatest prophet of all who would come, who would speak God's word directly, who no one would surpass because he would be the final word.

And as much as many prophets have spoken beforehand about this prophet to come, he is the one. He is the one on whom it all hangs. Do you believe him?

[18:35] Because he doesn't just talk about God. He is God. Peter is speaking to a crowd who were amazed that a layman could walk.

He didn't just walk, he leapt and he praised God. But like I said earlier in the book of Isaiah, he wrote about this servant to come. But he also wrote about people leaping and praising God.

In the midst of beautiful language, Isaiah wrote about how the wilderness and the dry land will be glad when this servant comes. How the desert will rejoice and blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing.

And he writes about how the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped and the lame man will leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. Now Isaiah 35. That's the reality for people who listen to this prophet. The greatest prophet to have ever been raised up by God. Jesus himself. That is a picture of true new life.

[19:43] Of things restored, isn't it? And that's what we have if we have faith in Jesus. You've seen what he does. You've seen before your eyes now what he's done in his name even.

Now repent and believe. That is the right response to seeing who Jesus is. Now we don't live in that time. We don't see Jesus raised from the dead or the empty grave or have the apostles performing miracles in front of our eyes in his name.

But we have people coming to faith when it would make no earthly sense for them to do that. We've seen changed lives because people come to the servant, to the author of life, and stop trying to be righteous but worship the holy and righteous one.

Alcoholics becoming sober, promiscuous people becoming faithful, prejudiced people open their hearts to people they used to hate as a group. We see people who are persecuted for believing in Jesus who have to flee their home countries and sometimes they're lucky if they're able to do that alive.

even when healing isn't instantaneous he gives grace to endure the pain and the harsh often circumstances of life.

[21:03] And the only explanation for all of these things is that this is the prophet who has spoken truth. Isn't it? In that same chapter on Isaiah he writes Peter didn't just give them a description of who Jesus was for academic purposes.

Knowing who Jesus is is crucial to live in a world that hates him especially for Christians who are persecuted. Knowing that there will be justice is what sustains them.

But there's also a warning in there if you and Peter makes a point here doesn't he that you must willfully and deliberately maliciously even ignore everything about Jesus not to recognize who he is that is the Jesus you will come to know when he returns.

To ignore Jesus' resurrection to ignore every prophecy about him coming true to ignore these prophecies is as paradoxical and as nonsensical as murdering him to free a murderer to kill the source of life.

And so he calls on them to repent and turn to Christ. And he calls on us to do the same thing. And the reasons follow from who he is. Because as we've seen before how we relate to someone depends on what we know about them doesn't it?

[22 : 32] This is how a sinful people who has rejected God must react when they see who the Jesus of Acts 3 is. Verse 19 Turn to him because he is the suffering servant who has died to blot out your sins.

Verse 20 Turn to him because he is the author of life who brings life to what was dead that the desert of your dead life without him may miraculously come to life.

Verse 20 Turn to him so that the Jesus who will return is the one who was appointed for you as your saviour and not the one who comes to ask why you rejected and denied him because verse 26 God raised up his servant so that we may be blessed by turning from our wicked ways.

That is why the servant was raised up. Let's pray.