

# Peter's Second Sermon

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Littlebourne - 24th July 2022 - Acts 3:11-26

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Back in chapter 2 of Acts, we saw Peter's first sermon to those in Jerusalem, right after Pentecost. You might remember that he had some harsh words for the people of Jerusalem - that they were responsible for the death of their Messiah. Many believed, but many yet remained in Jerusalem who didn't believe. This week we'll see more harsh words for the people of Jerusalem - Peter takes it up a notch in his condemnation of them.

Last week we saw the lame beggar healed, verses 1-10. You might remember that he was probably someone well known, hence why he was recognised when he was healed. Later, the Jewish religious leaders recognise that he has been healed, so they probably knew him too. This all causes quite the commotion. Peter takes the opportunity to again speak to the gathering crowd.

## v11

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

The portico called Solomon's was a porch built by Herod the Great along the east side of the temple platform. Jesus taught there on occasion, as seen in John 10:22.

The apostles will continue to use Solomon's Portico - we will see them there again in chapter 5 verse 12, even after they are warned not to teach by the Jewish council in chapter 4.

In the next chapter we also see that the healed man sticks with Peter and John - in chapter 4 they are arrested and brought before the council, and the healed beggar is with them - chapter 4 verse 14 the council sees the healed man and can't argue that he wasn't healed.

This man *clung* to them - not because he needed any more support to stand, but because he was so transformed that he didn't want to leave those that had so changed him.

So many people come to hear what Peter and John have to say, given that this clear and obvious healing had taken place. They are astonished. They're in the temple, and two men at the outskirts of things, at the edge of the temple are what is demanding all the activity.

## v12

*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?"*

And so Peter says - why are you astonished?

Peter starts with the most important thing to clear up - it wasn't their own power that healed the man, rather it was the power of God. Their own power was not what made him walk, their righteousness was not the source of such healing.

Peter goes on to tell the crowd who was responsible for what they have seen - God, and more specifically Jesus. He says why are you staring at us? Rather, look to God.

## v13

*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.*

Peter describes who it is that did this astonishing thing - he says 'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our Fathers, glorified his servant Jesus'. Interesting that Peter here describes Jesus as God's servant - not as the Son of God, or the Messiah, but the servant of God. Maybe he does this to contrast those listening to them - those who were not servants of God at all, those who put Jesus to death, Peter says 'You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go'. Peter is almost saying 'there's no way out of this' - you can't blame Pilate for this, it was your doing.

Jesus is God's servant, the model servant of God who is glorified by the Father, in great contrast to those around in the temple.

## v14-15

*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.*

You might remember when we went through Mark that one of the first times Jesus is identified as being more than just a man, was when a demon recognised him. Mark 1 verse 24 the demon possessed man says "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the *Holy One of God*".

Peter calls Jesus "the Holy and Righteous One". Throughout the Old Testament this name is used to refer to God, 'The Holy One'. Psalm 89 for example: "For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king." Isaiah uses the phrase Holy One 30 times to refer to God. Similarly, 'The righteous One' refers to God. In using this description of Jesus, Peter indicates the deity of Jesus. Jesus is God.

Those listening have heard that they are totally unlike Jesus, now they hear they are totally unlike God and Peter is telling them they didn't recognise God when he was right in front of them. Not only did they reject him, they chose someone who was very definitely not holy or righteous over him, and worst of all, they killed him, the very Author of Life.

## v16

*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.*

Just as happened in verse 6, when the man was healed, Peter recounts that it's by Jesus's name that healing took place. To the extent that Peter and John were involved, it was by their faith, but at the heart it was Jesus that healed the lame beggar.

Peter then moves on - he's explained the situation, now what should those listening do? What is the correct response to seeing such a miracle?

## v17-20

*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,*

Paul starts with their sorry state - their ignorance. They acted in ignorance, they did not recognise who they were murdering, they could not see what was foretold by the prophets was taking place in front of them.

But this doesn't let them off the hook - ignorance is no excuse here. Paul makes clear that the ignorance stems not from lack of evidence - 'What God foretold by the mouth of the prophets', v18 - the prophecies, that those around in the temple would have well known and studied, told them that their Messiah, their Christ, would suffer. Peter could have quoted from Isaiah 53, or Psalm 22 to name some more obvious examples of this foretelling.

Paul says that having been ignorant, they should therefore repent, turn back, turn to God. Verse 19 tells us what is required - repent, that is turn away from sin and put it behind you, and turn to God. The result of this is the washing away of sins, peace with God, and receiving Christ. It's the same kind of formula we saw in Peter's last sermon. Guilt and grace - that's the gospel as proclaimed by Peter and others throughout Acts, that's the pattern we'll see time and again.

Calvin's commentary on this made a really good point that repentance without the accompanying hope of forgiveness is ineffective - you can't have true repentance without the corresponding forgiveness of sins to rely upon. It's only when you can actually throw yourself on Christ, who really forgives and truly atones for your sin, that you can let go of sin in a real way. Who could acknowledge their sinfulness, really truly, unless they know there is some sure solution?

So when Peter talks of repentance, he immediately follows up with the hope that goes with it, the forgiveness of sins that comes too - it's not only man's effort that saves, nor does Jesus just meet us in the middle, but rather Jesus comes all the way to us and offers all the forgiveness in totality, enabling us to repent at all.

## **v21**

*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.*

Peter alludes to what we saw at the beginning of Acts - the ascension. Jesus has returned to heaven for the time being, until he comes again. And when he comes again, he will restore all things, make all things new.

Romans 8:19-21:

*For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

All creation will be set free from the effects of the fall - restored to it's right condition.

Peter says this was also foretold by the prophets. The Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah predict both the arrival, the advent, of the suffering servant who dies and the triumphant King who judges. Both the first coming and the second coming of Christ are predicted. When we looked at Mark, we pointed out that many were expecting just the latter - the conquering King, but downplayed the prophecies about the Messiah that didn't fit their preconceptions. Jesus for us revealed to us that there is no contradiction in the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah - all will be fulfilled.

So Peter appeals to the knowledge of the prophetic by the people listening to show that the whole of scripture makes sense, in the light of Christ. He goes on with his looking at the prophetic:

## **v22-24**

*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.*

Peter says, quoting Moses in Deuteronomy 18 (verse 15, 18,19), that there's going to be another prophet come, that is like Moses, a mediator between God and man, who they should listen to.

Peter shows that it's their own prophets that foretold Jesus - that it's their own religion, their own beliefs that should be pointing them to Jesus and they are not following their own teachers when they reject Jesus.

And the warning comes with this - if you don't listen, you will be destroyed. As we've discussed before, that's just what happened to those unbelieving in Jerusalem in 70 AD, as many many of them were destroyed, as well as the temple.

## v25-26

*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."*

Peter moves from Moses further back to Abraham. Peter has told them that they rejected their Messiah, they didn't follow their own prophets, they need to repent, but he ends on this note of hope - God has promised them, they who are sons of Abraham, whom God made a covenant with, that they will be blessed. God sent his Son to them first, that they might first be blessed - they have access to the truth and the forgiveness of sins before anyone else. There is great hope for them, and further great hope for all the world, through the promises given to them.

## Conclusion

Now the next chapter tells us that many believed and also many opposed what Peter was saying - Peter and John are arrested because of what they are saying, but 5000 believe.

We aren't that different than those people that were there looking at the healed beggar. We too can't rely on ignorance as an excuse. We too require repentance and the forgiveness of sins. We too need to acknowledge the truth that's in front of us and put our trust in Christ.