

Acts 3 – The Power of Jesus at Work

In Acts 2:43 Luke tells us that “many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles”, something he repeats in Acts 5:12. The story we are about to read in Acts 3:1-11 is, however, the only detailed account he provides of a miracle in Jerusalem. It is perhaps significant that he gives us much more information about the apostle's preaching than he does their miracles. “This miracle story is similar in style and structure to many in the gospels, particularly Jesus' healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:17-26. A dire need is identified and met by Jesus, in this case the risen Lord working through the agency of Peter and John.”¹ As in Luke 5 the onlookers were filled with wonder and amazement. It seems that Luke wants us to see that the Jesus who was at work in the gospel is the same Jesus working through the apostles in Acts.

In his description of the healed man “walking and leaping and praising God” (ESV) Luke wants his readers to register that this is one of the signs of the restoration that the Messiah brings, as foretold by Isaiah “Then will the lame leap like a deer” (Isaiah 35:6). A theme that is taken up in Peter's sermon.

As in Acts 2 when the crowd gathered because of the miracle Peter seized the opportunity to preach Jesus. He proclaims that the miracle was the work of the glorified Lord Jesus and then describes him “in terms of the fulfilment of various Scriptures”² His listeners are presented with their involvement in the death of Jesus and challenged to repent and turn to God. If they did they would receive forgiveness of sin, times of refreshment from the Lord, and the return of Jesus Christ from heaven with the restoration of all things. But with this offer of salvation Peter also gives a warning about continuing to reject Jesus so becoming cut off from “the people”. He points out how Jesus is the fulfilment of all the prophets, how they are the “heirs of the prophets” to whom the risen Christ has come first to turn each from their wicked ways.

Open

- How do you respond when someone in the street asks you to buy the Big Issue?

Study

Read together Acts 3: 1-26

1 David G Peterson, 2009, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Acts of the Apostles, Apollos Nottingham, England

2 David G Peterson, 2009, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, Acts of the Apostles, Apollos Nottingham, England

Acts

1. If you had to give a report on the man who spoke to Peter and John in verse 3, how would you describe his condition, medically and socially? What did he perceive as his great need that afternoon? (Acts 3:1-3, see also Acts 4:22)
2. How did Peter and John grab the man's attention, raise his anticipation and change the focus of his need? (Acts 3:4-6)
3. Peter took his hand to help the man to his feet but what does he say was the power that would make his feet and ankles strong? How did the man exercise his faith? (Acts 3:6-8)
4. How did the people react to seeing the man walking and praising God? To what extent do you think they understood the significance of what had happened? (Acts 3:9-12)
5. How does Peter divert the attention of the crowd from him and John to Jesus in a way that is relevant to the people? What does he say about who Jesus is? (Acts 3:12-16)

Acts

6. What does Peter say the people have done? But what has God done that the apostles are witnesses to and how does this miracle demonstrate this? (Acts 3:13-18)

7. What does Peter call on the people to do and what three blessings would result for them if they did? (Acts 3:19-21)

8. Having told the people the blessings of repentance why do you think Peter now quotes Moses? (Acts 3:22-23 – note “from among his people” is better translated “from the people”.)

9. How does Peter emphasise the significance of the days his hearers are living through and the implications for them first, then for all the nations? What response is he seeking? Acts 3:24-26)

Commit

- Peter and John were able to see beyond this man's presenting problem and were confident that “in the name of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth” his life could be changed. To what extent do you think we fail people because of a lack of confidence in the name of Jesus the Messiah? What should we do about it?

Acts

- In Acts 3:20-21 Peter refers to the return of Christ “to restore everything” as one of the blessings of repentance. How much is this a blessing you are anticipating? To what extent is it already impacting your life?

- What lessons do you take from the way Peter proclaimed Jesus Christ in this chapter for the way you share the good news?