

The Second Sermon in Church History, part 1

(Acts 3:1-11)

9/4/19; Wed PM Pine Grove

Introduction

Church names are always interesting to me.

Even Baptist churches have some very interesting names.

There is Halfway Baptist church in Halfway, Missouri.

There is Stranger Baptist Church in Ocala Florida.

But then my personal favorite is Little Hope Baptist church in Canton Texas.

It is also interesting when I come to a town that has a First and Second Baptist church.

I have never attended a Second Baptist church, but that is a fairly frequent name.

In fact, there are Second Baptist churches in Aiken, Barnwell, Columbia, Laurens, Augusta, and Rock Hill, SC and many more towns that I didn't have room to list.

But I always wondered if Second Baptist was as good as First Baptist.

It almost seems like there should be a let down at a place called Second Baptist Church..

But I am sure that some Second Baptist Churches are just as pleasing to the Lord if not more pleasing than the First Baptist Church.

Well, tonight and next week, we are going to take a look at the second sermon in church history.

We've already examined the first sermon in church history that Peter preached in Jerusalem the day that the Holy Spirit arrived.

But Peter is not done preaching.

And his second sermon will just as good as his first one was in Acts 2..

In fact, preaching and sermons are going to occupy much of the book of Acts.

Peter will preach to the Jews.

Paul will preach to the Gentiles.

And that will set the pattern for all of church history.

Preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ will be the focus of the church.

It will be the primary means through which sinners are convicted of their sin and called to belief in Christ alone.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the Spirit inspires Luke to record the second sermon ever preached in church history right here in Acts 3.

We will look at this second message over the next two weeks.

Now preaching is an interesting event.

We have talked about how sermons are really unusual occurrences.

They are not just lectures that offer information.

They are passionate speeches that seek to persuade listeners and drive them to a decision.

Biblical preaching always urges listeners to respond to the word of God.

But the difficulty of preaching is often gathering a crowd and then grabbing their attention.

These first sermons were not aimed at believers.

They were aimed at unbelievers.

Today, we have church and we have preaching and God draws you by the work of His Spirit.

And you have an interest in the Word of God.

But even then, I try to convince you very early of the importance of a passage that we will be examining..

I try to grab your attention today through an introduction even though you are believers..

But imagine trying to grab the attention of unbelievers to listen to a sermon.

That was the problem of the first sermons.

Now the very first sermon was introduced by a loud sound and by the sound of people speaking in foreign languages.

In a sense, God provided the introduction to the church's first sermon by the arrival of the Holy Spirit and the miracle of believers speaking foreign languages that they had never studied..

But in Acts 3, a second sermon must be preached.

So how will Peter gather a crowd and then grab their attention?

Simple.

God will do another miracle in Jerusalem through the disciples.

Instead of Peter having to draw a crowd to hear him preach, God will once again draw the crowd to Peter by giving Peter and John the power to heal a lame man.

Now, let me make a very important note here before we read these verses..

You see, miracles are not for sake of making people say “Wow.”

Miracles are a sign to point to Christ or to point to the gospel of Christ.

Jesus didn’t do miracles just to amaze the crowd.

Jesus did miracles to draw the crowd to him and then give them truth about how to be saved.

Jesus did miracles to prove that HE was God.

Now that Jesus has ascended back to heaven, miracles will continue for a short time to prove that the disciples are God's messengers..

You see Judaism was filled with teachers and scribes and others who all claimed to speak for God.

But proof of who God's spokesman really were came through the miracles that these disciples did for a while in the early years of the church.

Peter and John are going to heal a man in Acts 3, but the focus is not on the man or the miracle.

The focus is on these men who will perform the miracle and then speak for God.

So let's begin in verse 1 and just let it unfold for us..

We will call the opening 2 verses..

I. The Moment (1-2)

Let's set the stage in verse 1..

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the [a]ninth hour, the hour of prayer.

The Jewish day begins at 6 am, so the ninth hours is 3 pm.

Jews would come to temple for morning prayer at 9 am, an afternoon prayer at 3 pm, and an evening prayer at sunset.

Such a gathering of Jews was a fantastic opportunity for evangelism.

So Peter and John head to the temple as well.

Now, they know that the temple is representative of a false religious system.

They have witnessed Jesus clear it out because of all the corruption in it.

They have heard Jesus' prediction that the temple will be destroyed.

They knew that the whole Jewish religious system was not pleasing to God.

When I read this verse, I often wonder if the curtain in the temple has been repaired.

Remember, 50 days earlier it was ripped from top to bottom as Jesus died on the cross, which symbolized the coming destruction of the entire false religious system.

Peter and John knew the system was wrong, but they also had compassion for the people still trapped in it.

So they head to temple not to pray but to preach.

They aren't there to take part in a ritual, they are there on a rescue mission.

A crowd of people is going to be there, so they just are just looking for the opportunity to speak.

And God will provide the opportunity.

That leads us to verse 2..

2 And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg [b]alms of those who were entering the temple.

Medicine was non existent in this culture.

They were doctors but they were limited in what they could do.

I am sure they were home remedies and other care that you could provide people with, but no medical technology.

As a result, birth defects and physical disabilities were life sentences.

There was also no government welfare or disability, so disabled people begged for money.

And there was no better place to beg than at the temple.

The entire temple complex had a wall around it, and there were gates on all the sides which really funneled the crowds down.

Beggars knew this so they gathered by the gates.

The Beautiful Gate, as it is called here, was most likely on the eastern side of the temple complex..

According to ancient historians, it was set apart from the other gates because it was overlaid in bronze.

And as a result of its unique appearance, it was the favored gate of many going to the temple.

Well, that also made it a favorite spot for beggars.

On this occasion, we meet one of the beggars who sat by the beautiful gate.

WE don't know his name.

He is simply described as man who had been lame from his mother's womb.

In other words, he was disabled from birth.

The Greek word for lame means loose or slack.

His legs were too loose or slack to support his body weight.

So his family cared for him, but they also brought him to the temple with them.

They would lay him at the gate so that he could beg for alms.

And it must have been a very effective plan.

WE are going to learn in chapter 4 that the lame man was over 40 years old.

So we can assume if people weren't generous to him, his family would have stopped bringing him some time ago..

But it was very profitable for the lame man to come.

And that makes sense in a religious system like Judaism that focused on good works.

If your religion teaches good works as the way to heaven, you will constantly find yourself trying to earn heaven with good deeds.

Certainly, Jews coming to pray would be thinking of heaven and how to get there.

So a lame man by the gate would be a great opportunity for a good work before prayer time..

That is the moment, but now let's look at the message..

II. The Message (3-6)

Verse 3..

3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. 4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" 5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

On this day, it is business as usual for the beggar until Peter and John walk by.

By the sovereign work of God, the beggar looks at Peter and John and ask them for money.

And by the sovereign work of God, they see him.

Peter calls for his attention because they lame man would simply be looking for his next customer.

However, he sets his eyes on Peter and John because they appear ready to give him something..

And it the best gift that He ever received..

Verse 6..

6 But Peter said, “I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!”

A lot to note here in this one verse but let me offer a few thoughts...

#1 - If the spread of the gospel is always on your mind, everyone is a potential recipient.

Peter and John are consumed with evangelism.

They have a heart to see people come to Christ and be saved.

This is why they are walking in the temple.

This is why they are prepared to preach if given the opportunity.

The spread of the gospel consumes their life, so their eyes are always open for a chance to preach the truth.

#2 - If the spread of the gospel is always on your minds, numbers and appearances are not relevant.

The fact that his man is an outcast doesn't matter to Peter and John.

Lame people need the gospel.

Deaf people need the gospel.

Blind people need the gospel.

People of all shapes and sizes and disabilities need the gospel.

But also note that numbers don't matter.

This was one man, but for Peter and John, it was the right man.

They had already seen 3000 get saved in one day, but that didn't mean that one man was less important than the crowd.

He was important.

He was made in God's image, and now he is going to get God's message to him, which lead to a third note.

#3 - The message of believers is Christ.

Look, the physical disability is simply an opportunity to offer a spiritual remedy to a bigger problem.

This man has legs that dont work, but worse than that, he has a heart that is desperately wicked.

Peter and John are going to miraculously heal him, but the physical miracle is secondary to the spiritual truth of who Jesus is.

And the spiritual truth of who Jesus is can be seen in the power that the disciples have been given by Him for a time.

#4 - This is the fulfillment of promise that Jesus made to the disciples.

In John 16:23-24, Jesus told the 11 men around him..

23 In that day you will not question Me about anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you ask the Father for anything in My name, He will give it to you. 24 Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Jesus told these men that they would do incredible things once the Holy Spirit arrived.

Jesus told these men that he was do incredible things if they would ask in His name..

So far, these men have spoken in foreign languages that they have never studied.

And now they are about to give new legs to a lame man, which lead us to outline point #3, which we will call..

III. The Miracle (7-8)

Verse 7...

7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. 8 [c]With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

This is great picture to keep in your mind as you encounter supposed faith healers today.

Notice that when God heals, it is instantaneous and complete healing.

People don't slowly rise and stagger a few steps.

People don't slowly fall as they are supposedly slain in the Spirit.

When Gods, the healing is immediate and full.

This man had never walked in 40+ years, but now he stands, he walks, and he even leaps.

Phony faith healers knock people down or make them rise slowly, but God heals instantly.

You must also notice that this man's healing is not based upon his faith.

The con men on TV tell you that people aren't healed because they have no faith.

Well what a convenient excuse that becomes when someone sin't healed.

You simply say that their faith is lacking and no one knows.

But nowhere in these verses is this man is even asked if he believes.

God healed him despite any evidence of faith or belief.

But then also notice where this man heads after his healing..

He heads toward the temple praising the Lord.

He had never been in the temple as a lame man, but now that he is healed, he heads straight for it.

He doesn't know the corruption of it like Peter and John do.

To him, it is the place of God and that is where He wants to be.

What a beautiful picture.

I think we see his physical healing, but I think this also reveals his spiritual healing.

When the lame are made to walk by the hand of God, they walk straight to God.

And then, let's look at the final aspect of this scene..

We will call this..

IV. The Marvel (9-11)

Look at verse 9..

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God; 10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called [d]portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

The reaction to the miracle was immediate.

The lame man was walking but the people were talking...

In fact, Luke tells us twice that the crowd was filled with amazement..

And we would be too, considering that a lame man in his 40s was now walking and leaping and praising the Lord.

At this point, the crowd is now filled with questions.

I am sure were wondering what was happening..

I am sure some were wondering if the man was truly lame and truly healed.

I am sure some were wondering who Peter and John were..

But questions are a good in terms of truth.

People looking for answers are more receptive to preaching.

It is the people who have it all figured out that turn a deaf ear to preaching.

And so now get to the point of the healing.

Yes, it is fantastic that the Lord has healed this man through the disciples.

Yes it great that he can now walk and leap and praise God.

But the miracle was not the point.

The miracle was simply a way for the Lord to gather a crowd filled with questions.

And Peter was going to stand and preach the second sermon in church history in order to answer those questions..

Now, we won't get to that sermon until next week.

But we have heard the introduction to it tonight..

Now let me end with a few thoughts..

Conclusion

#1 - Look at every situation as an opportunity to preach Christ.

John and Peter put themselves in a place where they could speak to lots of people..

They knew that the temple would be a place where people would be.

If our mission is to make disciples of all the nations, we must find ways to interact with others.

Take your blinders off when you go to the store or the doctor's office or to work.

Think about ways to strike up conversations and ask spiritual questions.

#2 - Don't ignore evangelism at church.

The irony of the temple is that people were going there to obey God but none knew God in a saving way.

We often that everyone at church is a believer but that is not always the case.

The temple was a place to do evangelism and the church is also a place to do evangelism.

#3 - Put spiritual needs over physical needs.

So many churches today seem to lose focus in this area.

Remember, Jesus fed people but he did to prove that He was the bread of Life.

Jesus healed people but he did it to prove that he was the son of God.

There is nothing wrong with meeting people's physical needs, but we do it as a way to address spiritual problems.

Look, a lame with new legs is an incredible miracle, but a sinner with a new heart is far more incredible.

In the end, you can go to heaven lame.

But you can't go without faith in Christ.

One of the fears of my life and ministry is to be a believer who addresses physical needs without addressing spiritual needs.

#4 - Understand the focus on the preaching of truth.

It is so easy to lose sight of the importance of preaching.

And I don't say that out of any personal interest.

I would elevate preaching even if I weren't in pastoral ministry.

Though preaching is simply a means to an end of seeing people saved, it is the most important means.

In the early church, the focus wasn't on anything but the proclamation of the gospel by the men of God.

Sure, the church fellowshiped.

WE saw that last week.

Sure the church observed the Lord's supper and prayed together.

We also saw that last week.

However the focus of the early church was the proclamation of the word of God.

And it must be the focus of the church today.

There are two missions we are own in the church.

To grow believers into the image of Christ.

And to call unbelievers to put their faith in Christ.

That is it.

And the preaching of the Word accomplishes both.

In a day and age where preaching is overshadowed by other things in the church, may we never underestimate its importance to the health and life of a church.

Let us pray.