

Peter's 2nd Sermon: "Repent 2" Acts 3:11-26

Adapted from, "Jesus Christ. You Can Kill Him. But You Can't Even Hope To Contain Him," by Joel Pankow @ Sermon Central.com

When Peter saw this, he said to them: "*You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made this man walk?*"

There are some things you just don't believe could actually happen. Occurrences that make you stop in your tracks and stare. Actually, they now have t.v. show dedicated to such phenomena. It's called America's Got Talent and each Monday evening they showcase unbelievable spectacles from the absolutely hokey, like a blindfolded samurai master chopping vegetables taped to an assistant's body, to the absolutely sublime like a virtuoso twelve year old singer or an handsome eight-year-old member of a father/son acrobatic team waving and flirting with the judges while doing one-handed stands on top of his father's single outstretched arm. Things that make you stop and think.

Just prior to today's text - something like that happened in front of the Jerusalem Temple - something that made everyone stop in their tracks and stand there in awe. A man whom everyone knew had been crippled from birth - who was over 40 years old and had begged at the temple gates for years, was healed and enabled to walk for the first time. As the people were going about their daily routines, suddenly they see this man jumping and running around in the temple courts, joyously praising God. They would never forget what happened that day. It was a miracle.

It's at moments like these - time stopping moments - in war, sports, romance - that a tremendous opportunity arrives. It's like the blinders of everyday life are removed and we are so amazed that we are willing to stop and see what's going on - at least for a minute.

When Peter healed the lame man, Luke says that, passersby were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened. .. they stopped and stared at Peter and John and the formerly lame man dancing around them and hugging them. Everyone wanted to hear what just happened. So, Peter had them right where he wanted them; disarmed and ready to listen.

What did Peter do in this instance?

What did he say?

Did he say, "oh, it was nothing. It's all in a days work. When you believe like me, things like this happen!" Not at all. Instead, he said, "don't look at us." "Look at Jesus! *The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate ... and the faith that is through Jesus has given this man perfect health in the presence of all of you. (vs. 13-16).*

Peter did not allow the focus to be on him (talk about a changed personality after the resurrection). Instead, he gave a clear testimony as to who the Power Source was behind this miracle. It was Jesus alone. And Peter didn't just say that Jesus was "a nice guy, a great humanitarian, and a wonderful businessman" - he went far beyond that. With great detail Peter said that Jesus was raised from the dead and glorified by the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was the "Holy and Righteous One" and the "author of life."

Peter said, "you want to know who did this? It was Jesus! Your God-sent Messiah whom you traded for a murderer." Who died but is alive again now sitting in Heaven waiting *until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago.* That's who did it!" Jesus, THE PROPHET, whom Moses promised God would one day send to you. Instead of pointing at himself, Peter seized the opportunity to point them to Christ.

Opportunities like this don't come by too often - that people actually look up to you and are willing to hear what you have to say; but they do come.

- Maybe while you're tucking your child into bed, and he asks you a question about God; and whatever you tell him he will accept as the Gospel truth.
- Maybe it's to a patient you're working on in the hospital, who has become very appreciative of your help, who then asks, "do you believe in life after death?"
- Maybe it's with a co-worker who's going through a death in the family, and knows that you're a "religious person", and asks, "how come you're always so nice?"

Once in a while in life, people's blinders are removed, and they honestly will look to you for some answers. It's at that time that you have an opportunity to say something worthwhile.

One example of a time to speak boldly had earlier come to Esther - a Jewess was chosen by Xerxes to be his queen. She was put in a very dangerous position. Her people were about to be exterminated by the evil plotting of Xerxes' assistant, a man named Haman. She was terrified of talking to her "husband" without permission, since she could be put to death by such an act. But her cousin Mordecai told her, *if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?* (Es 4:14) Esther needed to take

advantage of her situation at that time, or God would raise someone else up to take her place. We should think of our life and our opportunities in the same way.

Peter used this opportunity to share Christ. But did you notice HOW Peter presented Christ?

Now that he had their attention, Peter let his listeners have it with both barrels. He didn't just tell them about Christ – instead he told them about what THEY DID to Christ.

Look at what he said again. Every verse starts with an accusatory YOU.

Why do **you** wonder at this?
you handed Jesus over
you rejected the Holy and Righteous One
you killed the Author of life,
(vs. 12-15)

Peter very pointedly told them that they had KILLED not just another man - but their own God-sent Messiah! - who was NOW again ALIVE and had just powerfully healed this man.

Think about the terror in that message for his listeners? When Herod thought that **John the Baptist** had come back from the dead he was terrified. Now Peter's listeners were being led to a similar conclusion: "we actually killed God in the flesh, and NOW he has been glorified by God, he is still alive and POWERFULLY RULING my universe." They must have thought, "what am I going to do? Where am I going to run? I'm in a world of hurt!" In a courageous way Peter made his audience see that they couldn't just disassociate themselves from this miraculous healing of the lame man.

Do you have that kind of courage? I know I don't. I wish I could learn from Peter. I wish I could apply – when needed – this fearlessness to the way I speak with some people. It's easy to talk about "sin" and "grace" - but it is terrifying when applied personally. It easy to say to people, "we're all sinners", but it is terrifying to actually say to someone,

- "you are disowning Christ through your lack of church participation."
- "You have rejected Christ by your adulterous affair."
- "You have handed Christ over to be killed by your lies."
- "You have shamed Christ by your refusal to speak in his behalf."

So we have friends, neighbors, and even our own children who know “they are sinners” - but don’t ever stop and really think to themselves, “*am I rejecting Christ by what I’m doing?*” We know specifically what and how they are rejecting Christ, but we never call them on it. You might say that we are only willing to lay generic, care-free, non-guilt trips on people; everybody is a sinner, everybody does it so don’t worry about it or change your life; nothing to repent. In the end, this kind of non-confrontation does nobody any good.

What was Peter’s purpose in doing this?

Laying such a hefty guilt trip on his stunned audience?

Repent therefore, and **turn to God**
so that **your sins may be wiped out,**
So that **times of refreshing may come**
So that [God] may send the Messiah
appointed for you, that is, Jesus
(vs. 19-20)

He answers this question with his last plea: Repent, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—namely Jesus.

The only way you can fill a jar is if it is empty first. Peter was trying to shake these Jews up - to make them see that they NEEDED Christ. They COULDN’T ignore him. As long as his Jewish audience was full of excuses or their own sense of self righteousness, they would see no need for Christ. *Well ...nice parlor trick there with the lame guy, but I’m not lame, so why do I need Jesus?* But if they could be brought to their knees - realizing they NEEDED God’s grace and mercy, then their sins could be wiped out for real! And times of refreshing could come for real.

And the next jaw dropping thing Peter said was that this was always part of God’s plan. That God both knew and told them beforehand through His prophets that the Jewish people would do this (vs. 18). That, even though they had done a terrible thing by rejecting and crucifying Jesus, God used their treachery to save the world through the suffering of Christ - their substitute!

God used their evil to pay for their evil.

He turned the worst thing they could do into something wonderful for them and for the world. So even though what they had done was terrible, if they would only confess their

sins and turn to Christ, they too could have the comfort of forgiveness through the very blood of Christ that they had helped to shed.

Isn't it great for us as well, to know that no matter what we have done to reject Christ, that he still died for our sins as well. As sinful as we are, our Savior's blood also covers all of our sins. When we come before God in repentance, He throws His arms around us, covers us in his righteousness, and refreshes our life. That's what our friends and neighbors need to know - about how they too can have comfort and hope in Christ.

When they lose a job, or experience something in life that makes them stop and ask for answers, you need to tell them the truth.

- "You can't just keep on working and accumulating possessions and living like there is no Author of Life.
- You can't continue to have sex with whomever you please and think you'll get away with it.
- You can't disown God with your vulgar language and think He'll turn a deaf ear to it.
- You can't keep killing Jesus with your words.
- If you keep ignoring God and trusting in your money or your doctors to save you or make you happy, you will pay a terrible price.

"Jesus Christ is the only Savior of the world, He is still in power - and He is coming again to judge this world. So, if you realize what you are doing, and turn to God, trusting in Christ for your forgiveness, times of refreshing will come."

When people come to that stopping point in their life, When they ask us for answers and are willing to listen, they need to know there still is hope and forgiveness in the death and resurrection of Christ; and times of refreshing that can come from him.

Finally did you notice the result of Peter's very pointed message?

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, the priests, the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came to them, much annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming that in Jesus there is the resurrection of the dead. So they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who heard the word believed; and they numbered about five thousand. (Acts 4:1-4)

Some people were "greatly disturbed" by what Peter was publicly saying, but many who heard the message believed. That is what should happen when you really preach the gospel. People shouldn't walk away and saying to themselves, "hmm, that was a nice story about Jesus." **No!!! When you truly preach the gospel** – as Jesus warned his disciples in advance – **people will either hate you and your message or repent and believe. That's what God's Word does - it cuts to the heart. And**

sometimes it divides. Either you will have to harden your heart, or the Holy Spirit will cut through it.

- So the question now is, in this day and age, are we willing to put our friendships on the line?
- When the opportunity arises, are we afraid to risk having people hate us; get angry at us?
- Do you just want to talk to your spouse about “church”, or do you want to get personal and really speak of your relationships with Christ?
- Would you rather keep your relationships with your friends and family on the surface, where you both agree to enjoy cars or sports but not address spiritual weaknesses or need of forgiveness?

Peter took a chance that day when he said, “you killed the Author of Life.” He took a chance and he suffered in jail because of it. But God blessed his words, some rejected them but many more received them, believed them, repented and received God’s forgiveness for their sins.

The future of the Church - of your friends and family - is in your mouth - through the declaration of Christ. God left you and me here to be His messengers, his ambassadors to this fallen and very needy world. Will we courageously share the full message they need to hear? Or just some watered down half-gospel? That’s something to pray about.
