

Monday - Week Thirty-two

Acts Three: Peter Heals and Preaches

Summary: This miraculous healing gave Peter an opportunity to preach Christ to the people who had gathered.

Background and Comments

- Peter and John were going to the temple at the time of prayer. There were three times of prayer in Judaism (9 AM, 3 PM and sunset). God has not set times for us to pray; we can pray anytime! At the same time it's a good habit to pray at certain times (before eating, when we get up, when we go to bed, before we take a trip, etc.).
- Peter had a way of weaving in Old Testament passages and accounts into his sermons. Peter's mind had been opened by the Holy Spirit to the truths of God's Word. Is this something that you are praying for on a regular basis?
- The phrase "in the name of Jesus" is in this reading. Jesus' name stands for everything about Him. If someone believes in the name of Jesus they believe everything about Him (that He saved them, that He died on the cross and that He will take them to heaven.)

Lessons for Today

- When God performs a miracle He does a good job! This paralyzed man went from being bedridden to jumping and running for joy. Imagine, no extended treatments, no therapy and no bills! Think back to some times in your life when God's hand was very visible.
- Peter loved to preach the law and the gospel. He wasn't too concerned with winning the crowd with eloquence or making them like him. Peter told them that they handed the Son of God over to be killed and that they had killed the author of life! Peter followed the sharp preaching of the law with a call to repentance. Does your preaching resemble Peter's preaching?
- Peter talked about times of refreshing from the Lord (v 19). What a great picture of God's love that is! Are you a refreshing person ... do people love to be around you because your Christian joy rubs off on them? If you want to be a refreshing person you must first be refreshed by the Lord.

Read: Psalm 135; 2 Peter 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, help me to be a refreshing person to those around me. I pray in the Great Refresher's Name (Jesus); Amen.

Tuesday - Week Thirty-two

Acts Four: The Early Church Grows Stronger

Summary: The early church grew stronger in two ways: in numbers of Christians and in depth of faith.

Background and Comments

- Imagine how upset the Jewish leaders were. They had put Jesus to death only to see the Christian religion explode with popularity. They decided that the only thing they could do was to haul the leaders to jail!
- The disciples' prayer in verses 24-30 tells us what was in their hearts. They did not pray for deliverance from the Jewish leaders; instead they prayed that God would give them more courage to proclaim the name of the Savior. What an example for each of us.
- The early church put their money where their mouth was. They gave freely to all who had needs.

Lessons for Today

- When we read about Peter and John's courage we almost feel like standing up and clapping! Peter stood in front of these powerful people and told them that they had killed Jesus ... but that God the Father had raised Him from the dead. They in effect said that if the leaders didn't believe in Jesus they would go to hell. Finally after they had been beaten they announced to the leaders that they would not listen to their order to stop preaching; God had told them to preach. Peter and John were so courageous because they were so possessed with the message they had to proclaim. Their message was more important than anything else... God had given them the task of proclaiming it. "Little" things like powerful people, death and physical beatings couldn't take their minds off their task. Do you want this kind of purpose in your life? Focus on the great news that has changed your life.
- Verse 13 has incredible insight. The Jewish leaders realized that the disciples had been with Jesus. It was this time spent with Jesus that had laid the foundation for their courage, wisdom and enthusiasm. How much time do you spend with Jesus in prayer and Bible study? This time with the Lord will give you courage, wisdom and enthusiasm too.

Read: Psalm 136; 2 Peter 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, strengthen my faith so that I can courageously tell others about You. In Jesus' name I pray; Amen.

Wednesday - Week thirty-two

Catechism Review

Read the essay immediately after question 264 about the Means of Grace as well as Questions 265-271

1. What would you say if someone asked, "What do you Lutherans mean when you talk about the means of grace? Why is the means of grace so important?"

2. What would we do if someone wanted their baby to be baptized by immersion (assuming that they understood that it was OK to baptize by sprinkling)?

What would we do if someone wanted their baby to be baptized by immersion (assuming that they said immersion was the only valid form of baptism)?

4. The Baptist church teaches that people must make a decision for Christ before they are baptized and confess Jesus. Why do you suppose they don't baptize little children?

Why is this false teaching so dangerous and evil?

Read: Psalm 137; 2 Peter 3.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of baptism; Amen.

Thursday - Week Thirty-two

Acts Five: deceit, healing and Persecution

Summary: Ananias and Sapphira wanted to deceive the church about their gift. In contrast to their sin we see that the apostles were willing to be persecuted for their Lord.

Background and Comments

- Ananias and Sapphira were not wrong in wanting to keep some of the money from the sale of their land. God had not demanded that they give everything they had. Their sin began when they wanted to “look good” before everyone else in the church.
- Ananias and Sapphira’s instant punishment caused a great fear to come over the church. No doubt everyone became honest quickly.
- The Sadducees wanted to parade the apostles into the Sanhedrin as prisoners who had broken the law. This did not suit God’s plans. As things turned out they came into the Sanhedrin as courageous proclaimers of the truth.

Lessons for Today

- It’s a good thing that God does not strike us dead when we pridefully try to make ourselves look good before others. We would have been dead many times over by now! This sin starts in our hearts and quickly affects our actions. When we concentrate on trying to please God instead of people then we have begun to find victory over this sin.
- Sometimes we think that life in the early church must have been wonderful because there weren’t as many problems as today. That is just not accurate as this chapter painfully shows us.
- Verses 41 and 42 are beautiful. The apostles were joyful because *they counted themselves worthy to suffer for the Name*. They were joyful in suffering! Verse 42 shows us that they took every opportunity - whether house to house or in larger groups - to preach the Gospel. May God give you this kind of courage and determination today.

Read: Psalm 138; 1 John 1.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, please guide my pastor as he prepares for this weekend’s church service. Make him faithful in his study of the sermon text; give him insight as he writes his sermon. Also bless our organist and any other musicians who are also preparing for the service. Amen.

Friday - Week Thirty-two

John - Lesson Three: the ministry of John (John 1:19-34)

1. The Jews asked John if he was Elijah. In Malachi 4:5 we read, *See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes.* The Jews believed that Elijah would come back right before the Messiah came to rescue them from all of their physical hardships. Jesus tells us in Matthew 11:14 that John was the Elijah who was to come. Why did John say that he was not Elijah? (Hint Luke 1:17).
2. John told the Pharisees that they didn't know him because they didn't know Jesus. Jesus Himself said the same thing in John 8:19. Why don't some people understand us?
3. John consistently led people to Jesus. He didn't want to talk about anything except the Messiah. How might you follow John's example if someone made the following statements while you were trying to witness to them.
 1. All the church wants is my money.
 2. I don't like your pastor.
4. The reason John came was that Jesus might be revealed. To reveal means to make clear something that is hidden. How is Jesus hidden today?

How can He be revealed through you?

Read: Psalm 139; 1 John 2.

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, John the Baptist was a fearless proclaimer of Your Word. Thank You for such men and women who are willing to be on the front lines in the great battle. Give me a measure of John's faith so that I can faithfully witness in the places You put me. I ask this in Jesus' name; Amen.