**Jesus Continues His Ministry**

**Acts 3:1-26 (ESV)**

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When Luke began the book of Acts, he wrote in verses 1 and 2,

**Acts 1:1** In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to doand teach,

If you haven’t underlined that yet in Acts 1:1, just take a moment to underline that in your Bible; all that Jesus began to do and teach. Luke, of course, is speaking of his gospel that he wrote. That’s the first book. He is saying that the first book is the story of Jesus; all that Jesus said and all that Jesus did while Jesus was on earth in His physical body. Now, Book Two that Luke writes is still telling the story of Jesus. It’s still telling all that Jesus now is continuing to do and to teach. So the focus is still on Jesus’ actions, Jesus’ words, but Jesus is not physically here on earth. He is seated at the right hand of God in His resurrected body. But nonetheless, it is Jesus who is still ministering here among the people of this broken world. And He does so not through His physical body, but through His spiritual body, the church.

In Acts 2, we see the church begin. That’s how Jesus’ ministry from that point forward, carries on. It’s through His body, through His church, through His people. Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to indwell this spiritual body so that this spiritual body might be able to do the works and might be able to teach with the same kind of power that He did and that He taught. So, Peter then, at the end of chapter 2 preaches this sermon and he preached it to people, at least many of whom were there at the crucifixion, crying out, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” But now at the end of the sermon, the Holy Spirit does a work of transformation. They are now people who are bowing their knees to Jesus as King and Lord. Let’s read about that. When they heard Peter’s sermon talking about Jesus; His crucifixion, His resurrection, His ascension into heaven,

**Acts 2:37-39** Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.

The promise is the promise of salvation.

**Acts 2:41** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls.

Added to what? The answer is, to the new church, the church that had just begun. So the church now has some 3,000 plus members in it. What did this 3,000 member church do? Well, what they did not do is they didn’t take a weekend retreat to decide upon their vision and values and church name and church motto. They didn’t hold a seminar to talk to everybody about how to relate to God and to each other. What happened was the Holy Spirit was filling them. The Holy Spirit just began to transform their hearts to be God-centered. So what did they do?

**Acts 2:42** And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching. They recognized that it was through the apostles’ teaching they received God’s salvation in the first place and they needed more of that. And they devoted themselves to

**Acts 2:42** and the fellowship,

They devoted themselves to gathering together, encouraging each other, supporting each other. And

**Acts 2:42** to the breaking of bread

They devoted themselves to remembering the Lord together and to worship.

**Acts 2:42** and the prayers.

They devoted themselves to petitioning God together.

**Acts 2:43-44** And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common.

They were committed to each other, to helping each other with each other’s needs. In fact,

**Acts 2:45-47** And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people.

Wow! What a church! But then, notice this again.

**Acts 2:47** And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

So we have the initial 3,000, but now as they were continuing to devote themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to gathering together, to breaking of bread, to caring for each other, it says

**Acts 2:47** And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Notice who added members to this early church. It was the Lord; the Lord Jesus. Luke’s point is that Jesus is continuing to work and speak on earth even while physically absent. He continues His ministry on earth through this spiritual body; the church. The fact that Jesus adds members to His church teaches us a number of important ideas.

First, the fact that Jesus is adding members to the church teaches us that Jesus is still working in this world. Amen?! The King of Glory is still powerfully at work to perform miracles. We are not spiritual paupers, able to get some of the dregs of Jesus’ ministry. We’re able to receive the fullness of Jesus’ ministry to us. It’s so exciting to see Jesus work, but even more, to be part of Jesus’ work! We, the church, get to be the boy who gives Jesus five loaves and two fish. Have you ever read that story and said, “Boy, wouldn’t it be great to be the boy”? Well, Jesus is telling us we are the boy. We get to do that. We get to be Simon of Cyrene who carries Jesus’ cross. I know that’s a painful service, but we get to be that one carrying Jesus’ cross, carrying about in our bodies the marks of Christ, suffering for Him. We get to be the disciples who bring the lame man to Jesus. We get to be sent out by Jesus on His mission. There is nothing more fun in life than watching Jesus take our feeble selves with feeble efforts and do miracles for the glory of God and for the advance of His Name. Jesus Himself, personally, is still working in our world.

Second, as we consider Jesus adding members to His church, we observe that Jesus’ work is centrally important. There is no effort of man, no labor of love, no endeavor for good, no work for change that compares to the priority of the work Jesus is doing. Jesus’ work is centrally important. That’s why we as God’s people who are now united to Christ are so excited about life. It’s because we get to be part of Jesus’ work. We’re not just sent out on our own and told, “Do a good work. Do find something that’s purposeful to do.” Jesus is already working in the world. He’s still working in the world, and we get to be part of that. Nothing compares to the satisfaction, to the nobility, to the purposefulness, to the lasting nature of Jesus’ work. Whatever Jesus does, it lasts! It’s not a work that pops up one day and then the next, sort of diminishes and is forgotten. Whatever Jesus does is eternal. We must all connect every labor that we are about in this world, to Jesus and to Jesus’ mission.

I know that there are many things that God would have us to do. There are mundane things like mowing our lawn and taking care of our house and there is the noble aspect of an occupation. There are all of those things. But God would have every other labor that we do, to connect to the labor of Jesus. That there is some way that ministry to Jesus is applied, whether it’s mowing our lawn, painting our house, or going to our occupation. If we don’t connect all our other efforts and labors to Jesus and His work, then all those other labors will fall flat. They are all vanity. They’re all really empty. They don’t have any lasting element to them. They’re like striving after the wind.

The third idea that this fact of Jesus is the one who adds members to His church teaches us is that Jesus works and teaches today through His spiritual body. The church is so precious to Jesus. We are the body of Christ, joined to Christ. We are His feet and hands. That’s more than words. That’s a reality that Jesus Himself creates. We cannot do Jesus’ work independent from Jesus’ body. That means we are privileged and blessed to be part of His people, part of His family, part of His spiritual body, the church. It’s vital that as we do the ministry of Jesus, we connect to His body in that and not think that we can be sort of independent of God’s people and still participate in Jesus’ ministry.

The last idea of Jesus adding members to His church, that Jesus is about that, that that’s what He is doing, that’s His work, is the simple idea that all true ministry is Jesus’ ministry. So whatever we do in ministry as an act of worship before God, all ministry is from Jesus. In other words, it’s His calling. It’s all for Jesus. It’s to the advance of His name. It’s all through Jesus. He is the abiding life through which we can have any impact. I like what Romans 11 says.

**Romans 11:36** For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

In our ministry and our service to the Lord, we are not building a name for ourselves or for a denomination or for a local assembly. All we do, we do in the name of Jesus, through Jesus, unto Jesus. So let’s open up our Bibles to Acts 3. We’re right to keep in mind Jesus’ words to Peter some six to nine months earlier in Matthew 16.

**Matthew 16:18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

The rock is Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The certainty of the success of Jesus building His church is such that He says the gates of hell won’t be able to prevail against it.

So let me ask you, doyou desire to be instruments of Jesus whom Jesus uses to continue His work in this world? Is that a longing of your heart? I believe that if you are a disciple of Jesus, the answer to that is easy for you. You’re going to say, “Yes! Yes!” If that’s not a strong passion of your heart, I would say to consider where your soul is with Christ. Are you truly united to Jesus? We’re going to consider three truthsabout Jesus’ ministry through us now as we look at the story in Acts 3.

**Truth #1: God sovereignly opens doors to ministry opportunities.**

You might ask, “I don’t know where to begin. If I was excited about being part of Jesus’ ministry in the world, where do I start? Well, the story tells us that God makes a way for us, that God opens that door of opportunity.

***1*** *Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.*

Peter and John are the two key apostles of this church. It’s about 3:00 pm.

Remember that before the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John spent about ten days, along with about one hundred other people, waiting for the Holy Spirit. They were waiting in an upper room and waiting in prayer. During these ten days of praying for God to send the Holy Spirit to empower them to do the work of Jesus, they learned that they were utterly helpless without God’s intervention and that they needed God if they were to connect to Jesus’ ministry. They’d already been commissioned to go and make disciples. Jesus had already said that to them. “You’re going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea and the uttermost parts of the world.” But they recognized that they were utterly helpless to do that apart from God. They were praying and God sent the Holy Spirit. Now we find that they didn’t just move on and say, “Now we have the Holy Spirit. We don’t need to be dependent daily.” But we find Peter and John going to the temple at one of the three appointed times where people gathered to pray. They went in the afternoon to pray, to confess their neediness before the Lord.

For the last two weeks, Kimberly and I have enjoyed having a baby in our house, as our daughter-in-law, Lizzy, and one year old grandson, Asher have been with us while our second son is deployed with the military. Asher, this little one year old, reminds me of the prayer posture that God wants me to have before Him. This little guy is always needy. And he is also really bold to express his needs. Just this morning, he’s very interested. We have an electronic piano, a clavinova, and he really is excited about it. He comes over to it, he points first and then he says, “Unh! Unh!” Well, he’s communicating to me that he wants that clavinova turned on so that he can tap on the keys. He expresses his needs when he’s hungry. He has this little sign language (Pastor Ritch opened and closed his hand). This is pretty good. I haven’t tried that with Kimberly yet. When I’m hungry, I don’t have to say anything. I’ll just open up my hand (Pastor Ritch opened and closed his hand). That’s what he does. It’s really cute and you know, okay, he’s hungry or he wants something to drink. But he’s really bold about it because he knows, “I have needs and I can’t provide my needs for myself. I need somebody else.” What do you do when you’re in that state? Well, you ask somebody else. If you really have a real need and you can’t meet that need but somebody else near you can, you ask them. That’s really what prayer is. Beloved, we are needier than infants and our Father in Heaven is more interested to hear us express our needs than a loving mom or a loving grandma and grandpa is for their son or for their grandson.

Oftentimes, we as believers ask this big question: How might I grow in my prayer life? The simple answer is we need to learn helplessness. The essence of prayer is helplessness. The essence of prayer is not skill in saying the right words. We don’t grow in our prayer life first and foremost by learning how to pray more beautiful prayers. The essence of prayer is not even spiritual maturity. It’s not as though people who are mature have necessarily a stronger prayer life than those who don’t. Sometimes people who have grown in spiritual maturity lose the edge of their prayer life. It’s not through stronger discipline, though discipline is a part of a growing Christian life. It’s a noble thing. The essence of prayer is helplessness.

If we’re not growing in our prayer, there is a reason. That is self-sufficiency. The truth is we’re all helpless, but our pride keeps us from realizing it. We have come to believe sort of that we’ve got life covered. We’ve kind of figured out things. We become that third little pig. I read that story to my grandson recently. The first pig had straw. The second pig had wood. The third pig had bricks. And sure enough, trouble comes. This wolf blows down the house of straw. The little pig runs to the house of sticks. The wolf blows down the house of sticks. But then the third little pig built his house of bricks. The trouble came, but guess what? The trouble couldn’t break through.

Oftentimes, we believe we’re that third little pig. We’ve created a life that is so strong and so sure that the troubles won’t really reach us. And it feels that way for a time. That is a spirit that is the death of prayer. We need to realize that no, I’m the little pig in this house of straw. Of course the moral of that story is good. Work hard and try to prepare for this day of trouble. That’s a wise thing. But let us not take that as sort of the idea about our life is that if we do work hard, we’ll be sufficient in ourselves. We’ll have everything we need to handle all the struggles, all the problems we’ll face. Because that’s just simply not true. It’s not true emotionally. It’s not true physically. And it certainly is not true spiritually. Let us ask that God would grant us a sense of our utter helplessness.

This week one of the couples in our church asked for the elders to gather around them. You know, we do that. We as elders love for people to call on us and say, “Could the elders come and pray over us?” And we anoint with oil. This family had a specific need and they brought their grade school son and he asked us to pray over him, too. It was such a sweet conversation. We shared some verses with them to encourage them. Then this little guy shared a couple verses with us. One of the verses just nearly broke me as he was expressing it. He said one of the verses that has become very special, and I don’t even know if he said the reference, but he said

**Matthew 5:3** “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

I needed to hear that. Here, I was, the pastor and wanted to minister to them, and here is this little guy quoting a verse that is so important. Blessed are the poor in spirit. You see, the spirit of helplessness drives us to dependence upon God. It’s when we’re the weakest then we’re the strongest because that’s when we have a neediness before the Lord. People who are poor in spirit pray and they ask others to pray for them.

Helplessness is something that Peter and John understood from their time with Jesus in the Garden. Remember that Jesus told them to “watch and pray with me.” But they fell asleep. Jesus said, “The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Watch and pray with me.” But they fell asleep. I think they learned how self-sufficiency captured their heart and brought ruin. Peter told Jesus, “I will never deny you,” thinking he is strong and sufficient in himself. A little girl asked him, “You were one of those who were with him.” Peter said, “I never knew the man.” I think Peter and John understood their helplessness through the things that Jesus brought them through.

***2*** *And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.*

There’s a needy guy. There’s a guy who is helpless. Think of his plight. In Acts 4:22 we’re going to read that this guy is forty years old. So he’s been lame from birth. For forty years, he’s been in a culture where there are no security nets. There’s not Social Security. There’s not certain charity agencies. In fact, to get to the temple in order to beg for alms, some friends had to carry him. That was his plight. If he was going to go anywhere at any time, he needed somebody to pick him up and take him there. That’s his life; day after day, week after week, month after month. He lay daily at the gate of the temple. That was his life.

***3*** *Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.*

Every day throughout his adult life, he sat at the temple, unable to walk, unable to get up and move about, unable to go into the temple because he’s lame. Lame people are not allowed to go into the temple. And he simply cried out, “Alms for the poor! Alms for the poor! Please have mercy!” I imagine he was one of those guys who got used to being ignored even as he called out. How many people were used to seeing him and just walked right by? I imagine this was not the first time that Peter saw this man, but I believe it was the first time Peter saw this man.

***4*** *And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.”*

Peter saw him. Peter had been to the temple often. He’s a religious Jewish man. This man was there every day. Peter saw him. What changed for Peter? Well, what changed was the Holy Spirit grabbed hold of his heart and he saw the man with Jesus’ eyes. You see, this is a story of the continuation of Jesus’ works and words. If we’re to be people who continue Jesus’ works and words, we have to be people who see with Jesus’ eyes. Peter saw with Jesus’ eyes. In Matthew 9, it tells us about Jesus’ eyes.

**Matthew 9:35-36** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them,

He saw something that other people didn’t see. He saw that

**Matthew 9:36-38** because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

I think all these things that Jesus taught earlier to these disciples are now just flooding their hearts. Take note that Peter was looking for a prayer meeting. He was not looking for a ministry opportunity. Healing a lame man that day was not on his Things To Do list. What was on his Things To Do list was, “I need to get to the temple to pray,” but God sovereignly ordained for him to be Jesus. He was to be Jesus’ feet and hands and minister to this man.

The principle we learn is that God often opens ministry opportunities for us to do Jesus’ work when we are pre-occupied with other things. Those other things are often good things, in fact. And when God opens the door of ministry, we often have to put aside these good things that we had planned in order to be part of Jesus’ ministry. Remember that Jesus is sovereign. He is the Lord. He determines ministry. But God here sovereignly opens up a door for ministry from Peter and John to this man.

Friends, can we pray, “Lord, open my blind eyes to see the open doors you make for me to minister in Jesus name!” Could we pray that? Wouldn’t that be great to just pray that each day this week and just watch what God does? Open my eyes to see the doors you open for me to be part of Jesus’ ministry in this world. I think that simple prayer would change us.

Some may protest, “But I don’t have much to offer Jesus. I don’t have a lot of talents. I don’t have a lot of abilities. I don’t know how to minister. I feel weak every time an opportunity does come my way. I feel unequal to the task.” Again, let’s remember that Jesus loves to work miracles through weak vessels. That’s when He is most glorified. This leads us to the second truth that we’re going to discover from this passage.

**Truth #2: God sovereignly transforms lives through ministry opportunities.**

God does the work!

***5*** *And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.* ***6*** *But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold,*

That had to be a big disappointment because that’s what the man is asking for.

*but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!”*

Again, Peter is acknowledging that this is Jesus’ work. It’s not Peter’s work. It’s not John’s work. This is Jesus’ work. Jesus is continuing to do and teach. This is not Peter’s ministry to this man. This is Jesus’ ministry to this man. Peter is simply a weak vessel. Peter is unable to help him. He doesn’t have the abilities to meet this man’s need, but Peter knows that Jesus is not unable, that Jesus Himself is not helpless or weak. Peter makes clear who the one ministering to this man is. It’s Jesus.

Now, think about this man for a moment. He’s 40 years old. He’s been lame all of his life, from his birth. Undoubtedly, his parents prayed and asked God to heal him. Undoubtedly he, early in his life, prayed to ask God to heal him. That wasn’t even a prayer request anymore. That wasn’t even a thought that that was possible. He was just wanting to get lunch or dinner later that night with some money that others might have given him. That’s what he was asking for. But know what Jesus does.

***7*** *And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.*

I like Dr. Luke because Dr. Luke actually records a physical aspect. He uses the word “ankles,” which is a word that is not used anywhere else in Scripture. It’s kind of a medically technical word that he uses. He’s a physician and he notices that his feet and his ankles were made strong.

***8*** *And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.*

When Jesus ministers through us, Jesus does more than we can ask or think. That’s the point.The man praises God, not Peter, because the glory is due to God not Peter. So he is praising God. He doesn’t say to Peter, “Thank you! Thank you! You’re so wonderful! You’re amazing!” Because Peter’s ministry is such that it’s Jesus’ ministry, all the focus, all the glory is going to Jesus. We’re going to see that doubled down, here in a moment as we just take a glance through the sermon that Peter preaches.

Friends, when we minister in Jesus’ name, we’re really not concerned whether anyone notices us. We’re concerned that Jesus would receive glory for the miracles that He would bring about. That is why we minister. We minister for the honor of Christ. We have a passion for His glory. A passion for Jesus’ name leads us to a life commitment to Jesus’ ministry. So, if we’re not passionate about Jesus’ ministry, it’s because the root sinks deeper. There is something wrong with our heart where we’re not passionate for the glory of God, the glory of Christ.

Today is Superbowl Sunday. Over 20 years ago, one of the families in our church was super passionate about the Green Bay Packers. I’m a Chicago Bears fan and I’m not passionate for the Green Bay Packers. But this family was. Every Sunday, I think there were four children and mom and dad, they all had, complete from head to toe, both coats, along with their shirts and pants, were all Green Bay Packers. They would take their cheese heads off and put them on the coat rack before they entered the Sanctuary and then they would all walk together, when the Green Bay Packers were playing. Do you know what? I actually began to enjoy a bit, the Green Bay Packers, because of their passion. I just appreciate passion. I would talk with them. They loved the Lord, too. Now, they have moved away to Wisconsin. So they’re up in Wisconsin now. But they had a passion.

I think almost everybody appreciates passion. If you’re excited about something, somebody is interested in listening because passion is unusual in this world. For the believer, we have the opportunity to be passionate about the thing for which there is the most reason to have passion. A glory that is eternal. A glory that is infinite. Let me ask you a question. How long does it take for people in your life to see your passion for Jesus? It took me one Sunday with this family, that I could see they were passionate about the Green Bay Packers. How long in your life before someone meets you, whether it’s at work, in your neighborhood, before they realize “that person is passionate about Jesus”? Peter and John and this early church, it didn’t take them long because they were filled with the Holy Spirit. One of the evidences of that is a passion for the glory of His name. Mark 9 tells us a story of Jesus taking a little child and He puts him in the midst of the disciples,

**Mark 9:36-37** And he took a child and put him in the midst of them, and taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me.”

In the next set of passages,

**Mark 9:38-41** John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in yourname, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

The idea is that if we do even a simple service, like giving a cup of water to someone in Jesus’ name, there is eternal value to that act, that ministry. Jesus will take that simple act and do amazing things through it. Our goal in life is to help others see the worth of Jesus. Think about this. What’s the equivalent of giving a cup of cold water? Well, in the winter, it might be shoveling your neighbor’s sidewalk. But you notice how Jesus was careful and Peter was careful here in this story to say, do it in Jesus’ name. In other words, we’re called not to be silent about who we’re doing it for and who is working through us; in the name of Jesus.

If you bring a co-worker who has gotten sick or who has had a baby or some other event in life, a meal, bring that meal, but bring it in Jesus’ name. Even if someone is behind you in a long grocery line and you say, “I’ll let you go ahead of me,” do that act in Jesus’ name. The idea is this most simple act, a cup of cold water. But what makes that significant is not the cup of cold water given to someone who is thirsty. What makes that eternally significant is that we’re doing it in Jesus’ name. My concern is that we Christians have become so bashful. We do a lot of good things, but we don’t mention Jesus, and it’s lost.

Someone might ask: Do I really have to say that; “In the name of Jesus”? Again, I don’t want to be legalistic about this, but if we do not find some way to tell others that we are acting on Jesus’ behalf for the sake of Jesus’ glory, I don’t know how these others will connect the dots. That’s what’s important. It’s that they connect the dots from any act that we’re doing, to Jesus. We minister in Jesus’ name for two reasons. One, we long for Jesus to be recognized as the glorious King and Savior that He is. And two, we know that only Jesus has the power to transform lives.

***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.*

More than that Jesus made this man into a walker, Jesus made this man into a worshiper. This lame man illustrates this true condition of our soul. If Jesus only helped this man for the next 20, 30, maybe 40 years he’s going to live on earth, that’s not much. But Jesus did more. He changed his soul so that his soul was a soul that praised God, that knew God, that understood God.

God sovereignly opens doors to ministry opportunities. God sovereignly transforms lives through ministry opportunities. And finally,

**Truth #3: God sovereignly creates the message for ministry opportunities.**

Let’s just briefly look at this message that Peter preaches.

***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.*

So he says all those promises all throughout Scripture, by the prophets, that the Messiah was going to come and had to suffer, Jesus fulfilled those prophecies. What are we to do in light of that? The message is simple.

***19*** *Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,*

That your soul may be clean.

***20*** *that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,* ***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.*

The message that God sovereignly ordained is a message about what Jesus did in the past. He died on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for sin. He was buried and He rose the third day, declaring Himself victorious over sin and death. He ascended into heaven, where He is seated as our High Priest, interceding for us at the right hand of God, and He’s coming again. He’s going to restore all things to the proper order. That’s this Jesus! That’s this message that God sovereignly creates for us to share as He opens up Jesus’ ministry to us. The church suffers when her means to ministry moves off the message. The message that connects us to Jesus’ ministry is a message about Jesus and a message from Jesus. The heart of the mission of the church is the message of Christ.

The Lord sovereignly creates a message. It’s a wonderful message, a beautiful message! Let’s not move away from it. Let’s not move away from it in order to pursue political ends, in order to pursue philosophical ideals, in order to pursue social good. The mission of the church is to do the ministry of Christ. The ministry of Christ is tied centrally to the message that Jesus Christ has given us and that God has sovereignly created for us to share. Jesus is the hinge upon which the soul of every person turns.

***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.’*

Of course, Moses was talking about the Messiah, Jesus.

***24*** *And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.* ***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.’*

He’s speaking to the Jews. He says God, raising up His servant, the Messiah, the prince, the King, the Savior,

***26*** *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”*

The whole Bible shares this common theme. Jesus the Messiah is sent by God to bring God’s blessing to Israel and to the world! So what are the applications? I want to close with just a couple practical encouragements.

First, if you do not have Jesus as your Messiah, your Savior, your King, your Lord, if you look in your heart and say, “I really don’t have a passion for the glory of God in my life. I don’t even know if I know God. I don’t know if times of refreshing have come to my soul. I don’t know if my sins have been blotted out.” Friend, the greatest need that you have is spiritual. It’s that you’ve been disconnected from God by your sins. That’s true of every one of us. All of us have sinned. We’ve all fallen short of God’s glory. We’ve all been separated from God as a result of our sin. God sent His Messiah to reconnect us, to reconcile us to God. The call of God in order for us to be reconciled now, is to repent. That’s what Peter preached here in Acts 3. It’s what He preached in Acts 2. It’s going to be what is preached in Acts 4. Repent every one of you, for the forgiveness of sins. Believe in Jesus Christ. Trust in Him as your Savior and Lord.

Repentance does not mean a commitment to clean up your own life. It’s simply a willing and a longing for Jesus to forgive us of our sins and then to cleanse us. It’s His work that we’re longing for when we repent. It’s a turning away from our own life, our own self-sufficiency, our own self-will and turning to Christ and saying, “Christ, I am utterly wretched and helpless in my sin. Save me! Rescue me! Grant me life.”

For you who are believers, here’s the one central encouragement I want to give to you from our story today. It’s been a story about how Jesus is continuing to work and to teach. He uses you and me. He uses His church to do that. I want to encourage you to devote your life to Jesus’ ministry. I’m not talking to full-time pastors or people who will go to Seminary or Bible College. That may be you, and that’s great if it is. But, I’m talking to every one of you. Every believer is right to devote their life to Jesus’ ministry. Make Jesus’ ministry your work, your passion, your labor. Paul would say

**Ephesians 2:8** For by grace you have been saved through faith.

Isn’t that wonderful?

**Ephesians 2:8-9** And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

That’s our salvation. It’s a free gift, freely granted through Christ. And what happens when we receive that gift?

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

That would be our life. Whatever you do in your life, whatever job you have, whatever responsibilities God has given you, as you do that job and as you hold onto those responsibilities, say, this is what my life is about. These other things are important, but centrally, underneath, surrounding it all is to be part of Jesus’ ministry. This is the thing that is eternal. And as you devote yourself, I just want to close with three prayers.

First, Lord, open my eyes to see the doors you open to Jesus’ ministry. I believe that if you pray that in the next 24 hours, I believe you’ll see a door open. Could you test me on that? Email me 24 hours from now, if you pray that prayer, say, “No, it didn’t happen. No doors were opened.” Or, “yes, doors opened.” I believe that you will respond by saying, “I asked God to show me open doors and there are open doors all around me for ministry; these cups of cool water in Jesus’ name, that I didn’t see.”

Secondly, Lord teach me to speak and act in Jesus’ name. I know that takes boldness. I know Jesus’ name is often considered with spite and resentment and rejection. Lord, teach me to speak and act in Jesus’ name.

Then finally, Lord, as you do that, as God opens up doors and then you take those doors and you walk through them in Jesus’ name, the last prayer is Lord, use my weak efforts to transform lives. I want to be part of your work in this world!