

## The ongoing work of Jesus – Acts 3

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In Australia back in 1997 there was a “gun buy back amnesty.” An amnesty is a time when the government says that people who are doing a wrong thing can stop doing it, own up to it, and they won’t be punished. People had a certain date to hand in their guns without punishment. They’d get off scott free. But if they refused the amnesty and they got caught with the guns later...then they’d face the consequences.

Jesus has gone. The Holy Spirit has come to continue the work of Jesus. What is the work? The preaching of the message of Jesus. We are in a time of amnesty. The last days before Jesus returns is a time to turn to God. Own up to the wrong, stop doing it and you won’t be punished. The right response is people turning to him as Lord and Christ.

### 1. The Miracle – the ongoing work of Jesus

Here is a man who has a tragic life. He has been crippled since birth to 40 years old. That’s the whole of my life. He’s there to beg. Peter and John go past as do many and as he asks many he asks them. Peter gives him what he can give him. The man stands and more than that he is walking and leaping. There is no way this could be explained away. This is some out of town guy but they guy who had been sitting at the Temple for a generation. V.10

#### ***Why did these things happen then? Why are miracles so prominent in the life of the early church?***

Not because we lack faith as some may say. God can do anything at anytime. Miracle or otherwise. In the Bible miracles happen in clusters at times of special revelation and the whole purpose is to validate the truth God is revealing. For example at the giving of the 10 Commandments.

At this time in Acts it is as the Gospel is going out. This is a new era of special revelation in God’s plan of salvation. As John Stott says:- “The Apostles are laying the foundations of the church’s worldwide mission.” So God decided to extraordinarily empower the witnesses to the resurrection - the Apostles to validate their message. They are uniquely gifted by God for the task of witnessing to Jesus. This miracle is authenticating the work of the Apostles and so the message of the Apostles. They are the real deal. This is a sign of a true Apostle.

Look at the characteristics of the miracle.

Notice the **means**. By the power of the Apostolic authoritative word. The command – Get up! There is no other means. Not anointing. No prayer. No laying on of hands. No medical intervention.

Notice also it is **Instant** v.7. Not gradual. No rehab. No visiting physios.

It is also **Complete** – v.8. We are told this three times.

This is small sign pointing to a huge hope. This is a miracle that symbolizes the Gospel.

The chapter opens with the beggar outside the Temple, unclean. After the healing the beggar enters the Temple praising God. This is what Jesus does. He makes those who are unacceptable acceptable. He makes it possible for people to enter the intimacy of God’s presence.

One of the first times we went out with Siena was memorable. We were so proud especially being our first child. We had her placed in the pram like a treasured gift wrapped in a beautiful new blanket. A friend come and looked in the pram and said – “What a beautiful blanket.” A bit like kids when they receive a present in a big box and then play with the box instead of the present.

This miracle is a sign and as a sign it points away from itself. It is a sign pointing to the credibility of the Apostles and so their message. The ongoing work of Jesus is happening through them.

That is a pattern of what happens when you come to Jesus. He may not give you what you want or what you think you need but he gives you what he knows you need. And so it is so much more that you could imagine.

**The miracle is a sign of the credibility of the Apostles and so their message.  
It shows they are doing the ongoing work of Jesus empowered by the Spirit.**

## As one preacher puts it this miracle provides 'a lame excuse to preach.'

### 2. The Message – the ongoing work of Jesus

#### Read: 11-12

Peter takes the opportunity to preach. He doesn't wait to be invited. He has the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit empowers to witness. Peter boldly preaches. The work of Jesus continues through the Spirit empowered preaching of the message of Jesus. Not to promote the immediate need that was met. That is what we would love him to focus on. That is what we tend to be fascinated with.

Peter doesn't fall into the trap that we often do and give humans the glory or the credit. Peter takes the opportunity to speak of the lasting and eternal reality. JESUS.

Peter gives Jesus the glory. He gives Jesus the credit.

We don't see Jesus. We don't want to see Jesus.

The miracle that causes the gathering of the crowd creates the platform to preach.

He firstly says the miracle is about Jesus. Not about the man and not about the Apostles. We don't know the man's name. He isn't put in the spot light. He isn't hauled up onto the stage.

Notice at the end of the sermon the preacher is taken off the stage. Only the message of Jesus is left.

This miracle was done in the **NAME** of Jesus. **V.6, 16**, It is done with his authority; with his power. To call on his name is as good as calling upon Him. He does it.

Peter goes on to explain what God has done in contrast to what they did.

Read vv.13-15

Even his own people don't see Jesus in fact more than that they reject him.

Even this rejection shows God's purposes.

Read 17-18

It is the fulfilment of his word from the Old Testament.

**We cannot listen to this message like we might listen to the safety instructions on a plane.**

This is real life and death. This is the message of the risen King Jesus.

### 3. The right response - REPENT

#### Read: 19-21

#### REPENT.

This is not a word we like. Probably picture a strange person with a sign board hanging off them and shouting: "Repent the end of the world is near." We are not drawn to the word in fact we are repelled by the word. Not primarily because of the connotations but because of what it means in substance. As we thought about last week it requires a turning around in our mind and our behaviour. The assumption is our thinking and our behaviour is wrong.

It is not a SUGGESTION. Like he's saying: "Look just have a think about it and get back to me. Take it or leave it." It is a command.

There are blessings that come with repentance.

There is forgiveness. Our sins are *WIPED OUT*.

There is a future – time of refreshing and the return of Jesus and the restoration of all things.

As well as this there is a frightening future option as well.

Read 21-23.

You must to listen to Jesus the promised prophet. You are in a privileged position. You know the final and greatest prophet.

**The period of amnesty is now. Lay down all the weapons you use to disobey God and run from him.**

So there are 2 options:-

#### 1. REPENT

Please notice with me those who are Christians. He is speaking to religious people. Repentance is the way you start your relationship with Jesus and it is an ongoing practise.

What have you repented of lately? If you pictured your life like a house with many rooms is there a room with the door closed to God? An area of your life that you are leaving closed to God but an area where you need to repent.

**2. Don't listen.**

You have guilt dripping off your hands. You must repent and receive forgiveness. What else can you do about your guilt? There is no where else to go.

The only right response to Jesus is to repent.

**4. The ongoing work of Jesus - UNSTOPPABLE****Read: 4:1-4**

This makes it so clear that this is about the ongoing work of Jesus. It is not about the man who is healed. He is no where to be seen. He is not left standing on the stage. It is not about the preacher even the Apostles. Even they are not left standing on the stage. They are taken away.

It begins a theme we will pick up again on next week. Not even opposition can stop the ongoing work of Jesus.

The ongoing work of Jesus is UNSTOPPABLE.

The opposition is evidence and the results of the ongoing work of Jesus.

As well as opposition there is also REPENTANCE.

**The work of Jesus is like a run away train. People may try everything they can to stop it or even ignore it but sometimes it's just not possible.**

We love to go to Acts 2:42-47 to cherry pick what was happening in the early church to see what we should be doing. So we pick out devotion to the Word; the prayer and wonderful community life where we have everything in common. Not that we do that by the way. But we conveniently ignore other inevitable aspects – OPPOSITION and REPENTANCE.

The ongoing work of Jesus leaves Jesus standing centre stage as the triumphant risen King.

He demands repentance and offers forgiveness.

And finally brings opposition.