

“PETER’S SECOND SERMON.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church

August 5, 2018, 10:30 AM

Scripture Texts: Acts 3:11-26

Prayer: Holy Father, thank you for your true and eternal Word and that you have not left us in the dark. Cause your Word to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Honor your Word and edify your people according to our need for your glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

A Sign and a sermon.

In chapter three of Acts we are given a sign and a sermon, a miracle and a message.

The sign is the miraculous healing of a man who was severely crippled from birth for over forty years. After walking, running, jumping, and leaping for joy, we are told he is now clinging to Peter and John. All the people came, they were amazed and astounded.

A sign and a sermon. Which do you think is more impressive, which is more powerful, which is more important?

Let’s imagine for a moment I went to Mary K. right now and said, “Mary, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” Then immediately her leg grew back and strength returned to her legs and she stood up and started walking. In fact, even though it isn’t a very Dutch thing to do, she started dancing.

After that, what would happen? People would start talking all over Lynden about this amazing thing Pastor Robert did and people would come flocking. Am I right? Who knows, it might even make the national news.

Within months I would have a TV ministry, a mansion and a Lear Jet. And I would be a charlatan for cashing in on the miracle and using it for my own gain and glory.

If I was wise I would do what Peter did and call time out and preach a sermon explaining what happened and why it happened and what it all means and what we should do in response to what happened. In other words, the miracle is not what’s most important, what’s most important is what it points to.

Miracles are designed for a purpose, they were never stand-alone events. The miracles in the Bible were public events for a public purpose. This miracle was done specifically so that this sermon could be preached.

God wanted to say something and He used this miracle to get everyone attention so He could say it, and not just to them, but to us here and now.

What does God want us to know? First of four things (next three next week).

God wants you to know history is His story and these are the days proclaimed by His prophets.

This miracle not a one-off, random event. This is not just a blip in history. This is not meaningless. Peter uses the history of the OT to show why this happened now.

Remember those connect the dot pictures you did as a kid and how the picture would start to become more clear as you connected more and more of the dots. Notice all the dots Peter connects.

He starts some two thousand years ago with Abraham and then Moses and Samuel and all the prophets especially Isaiah. I bet you missed the Isaiah reference. Look in verse 13 there Peter says “the God of our fathers glorified His servant Jesus” and again in verse 26 “God raised up his servant Jesus.” I would expect the word Son instead of servant, but the Jewish ears would have immediately heard Peter connecting a dot with the suffering servant in Isaiah 53.

But there are more dots besides these big ones in the OT. Over forty years before this a baby is born who is severely crippled and for over forty years he was carried to the temple gate to beg for alms. Every person in Jerusalem who went in and out of the temple saw him and knew him.

Shortly after that birth another baby was born in nearby Bethlehem. He became well known to everyone in Jerusalem for the miracles He did and the things He said. He was publicly tried, sentenced, mocked and crucified. Everyone knew about it. The dots are connecting and the picture is getting clearer.

Peter is saying why are you surprised, why are you amazed, all the dots point to these days, this is what God foretold. In their ignorance the people didn’t glorify Jesus because they didn’t see the connections. And that is still turn today.

All of history is a revelation of the character and nature and purpose of God. From the beginning of time to the end of time there is a divine plan that is being carried out in each and every historical event and every personal event in our lives.

If we didn't have sinful hearts and blind eyes we would be able to see God's providence in history and know Him because of it. Because of our sin we deliberately dismiss God and come up with lies that photoshop God out of the picture. Lies like evolution and chance and fate and random accidents and mother nature. Instead of worshipping the creator we worship the creature and creation.

People who don't believe in God are stuck with believing that history is nothing but one random thing happening after another in a long string of meaningless coincidences.

And how is this important to us? Do you ever think about the dots in your life? What has happened before that has you in this place or at this point in your life right now? Have you ever connected the dots that lead to your being in Lynden or to your spouse or your job? Have you been able to connect the dots out of some difficulty or trial that led to a good place? Why crippled, why cancer, why widowed, why single, why no kids, why this and not that?

God is the connector of dots. Do you see the hand of the living God anywhere in your past, whether that past is last week or last year or twenty years ago?

How is it that you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? What are the antecedents to that? Christian parents? And the antecedent to that? Christian grandparents? A country with hundreds of thousands of churches, Christian schools, Christian publishers, Christian radio, Christian pastors and teachers and friends? Do you see all the grace and do you take it for granted?

Let me give you a bit of perspective. There are over a billion people on this planet that if they were to talk to every single person they ever knew, not one of them would know anything about Jesus, nothing, not a single word of the Bible.

Do you see how much grace has been poured out by God in your direction? Do you know how blessed and privileged you are to have so much grace and opportunity to know God and His Son? And if you don't believe in Jesus, do you realize how much you are without excuse? What have you done with that grace?

It's cause for worship and its cause for asking God what He want to do with your life at this time in this place in His story. We won't glorify Jesus if we don't see the connections.

“Jesus is no less alive today, working through and on behalf of his people, than he was in the days of Peter and Paul” (Sam Storms).

Spend some time reflecting on the grace in your life and all the privileges and blessings that have gone before and are yours now and think on these things.

When you see God’s purposes and grace in the past you can have confidence in His grace for the future and whatever hard things may come, and by faith know it glorifies Jesus.

Some might be thinking, if God is in and over it all then how do you explain all the evil and wickedness and darkness and suffering? In the midst of God’s story there is an enemy on a hell-bound mission to destroy every single thing God is doing. Along with the wheat he is sowing the seeds of heresy, lies, deception, hate, falsehood.

We will see Satan’s response to this sign and sermon next week in chapter four.

Implications and application.

This extraordinary Gospel sermon on the power of Jesus Christ to heal and forgive the greatest sins, was preached in the temple, in Solomon’s porch, in the very place where sacrifices were being offered daily to wash away sin, and Peter is preaching a greater sacrifice with greater power to forgive once and for all.

God’s infinite power is put on display to convince us that He is God, He is Lord of history, He is present and active and involved and He is glorifying His Son in everything He does.

II Corinthians 4:16-17 and Proverbs 3:5-6

May God give us eyes to see and ears to hear, and hearts to know the majesty and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Prayer: Holy Father, thank you for this sermon of Peter's. We pray very especially for anyone in here who is not a believer; for though they may have come very close to the kingdom of God, have never actually entered the kingdom of God. Grant them repentance and bring them to faith by Your sovereign, effectual, irresistible power, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.