



Peter Preaching in the Portico (part 2)

Acts 3:12-26

1. The Pivot (verse 12)
2. The Power (verses 13, 16)
3. The Problem (verses 13-15)
4. The Plea (verses 17-21)
5. The Peril (verses 22-23)
6. The Promise (verses 24-26)

My message this week is "part 2" from my message last week. So, I thought that I would introduce my message this week in the same way that I did last week.

Does anyone remember what we did at the beginning of my message last week? We had some Tongue Twisters! I have some more tongue twisters for you. Only this time, I want some adults to try them. You kids can try to nominate your parents, if you want. But, I want to call on some adults this week.

We love tongue twisters. Those things that are difficult to say, because they involve similar sounds. Here are some to try:

The sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick.

Rory the warrior and Roger the worrier were reared wrongly in a rural brewery.

If you must cross a course cross cow across a crowded cow crossing, cross the cross coarse cow across the crowded cow crossing carefully.

Finally, one from last week, which helps to set up my message this week.

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked.
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,
Where's the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

I did a bit of study on this tongue twister. I discovered that it was published in print for the first time in 1813 in a book entitled, "Peter Piper's Practical Principles of Plain and Perfect Pronunciation." In that vein, my message this morning is entitled, "Peter Preaching in the Portico (part 2)."

Now, the portico where Peter was preaching was a large place on the temple mount. Lots of people could easily gather there. It was named after Solomon. Sometimes it's called, "Solomon's Porch." Our best guess is that it was on the eastern side of the temple mount, away from the temple, where the sacrifices were being offered up. It had a bunch of tall, stone columns, holding up a roof of cedar, which provided shade for all who were there. It was a nice place to gather.

And on this occasion, there were a bunch of people there. In verse 11, we read that "all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomons." The people were astounded at the miracle that Peter had done a few minutes before. He had healed the lame man.

I trust you remember the story from the past few weeks. Peter and John were entering the temple area. They saw this man, who was begging for money (often called, "alms"). Peter said those famous words, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" (Acts 3:6). The man began "walking and leaping praising God" (Acts 3:8). It caused quite a stir. The people were "utterly astounded" and "ran together to them in the portico" (Acts 3:11).

Everyone was in Solomon's Portico. Because, that's where the lame man was. He was there, clinging to Peter and John (verse 11). It was on this occasion that Peter preaches his sermon. He said, ...

Acts 2:12-26

"Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 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.

"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 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. 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. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 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.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

I want to begin this morning with a little review. My first point last week is found in verse 12. I call it, ...

1. The Pivot (verse 12)

It's where Peter transitions from the miracle to talk about the message of Jesus.

Acts 3:12

"Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?"

Then, in verse 13, Peter points out how the power rests in God to do such a miracle. In this way, Peter transitions to talk about Jesus and the gospel. Last week, I encouraged you all to pray for opportunities to do the same. In speaking with people, be thinking of ways in which you can turn the conversation to talk about spiritual things. This is what I call, "The Pivot."

Now, you won't always be successful. Nor will you always have receptive hearers. But let God do his work through your words as you pivot the conversation to speak about the Lord. As Charles Spurgeon told his ministerial students (which is applicable to all of us as well), ...

Be sociable and cheerful and all that, but labor to accomplish something. ... Consider yourself, after all, as being very much responsible for the conversation which goes on where you are; For such is the esteem in which you will usually be held, that you will be the helmsman of the conversation. Therefore, steer it into a good channel. Do this without roughness or force. Keep the points of the line in good order, and the train will run on to your rails without a jerk. Be ready to seize opportunities adroitly, and lead on imperceptibly in the desired track. If your heart is in it and your wits are awake, this will be easy enough, especially if you breathe a prayer for guidance.^[1]

So, there's "1. The Pivot." Next comes ...

2. The Power (verses 13, 16)

Peter pivoted to put forth the power behind the miracle. It wasn't Peter or John, it was God.

Acts 3:13

The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, ...

God is the one who did the miracle. He did it through faith. He did it through faith in Jesus. Verse 16 makes this clear.

Acts 3:16

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.

And this is how we will accomplish anything in our Christian lives: through faith in Jesus. Faith is what saves us from our sins, as Ephesians 2:8 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith." Faith is what ultimately empowers us to live in righteousness. Paul says in Romans 8:17, "The righteous shall live by faith." Faith is what will empower you to do good deeds. In this case, faith was the power to heal this man. But, next comes ...

3. The Problem (verses 13-15)

The problem was this: the very one who was the power behind the miracle, was the very one whom the people rejected.

Acts 3:13-15

God ... glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses.

This calls to mind the scene of Jesus before Pontius Pilate, when the Jews **delivered over** Jesus to be executed by Pilate. When Pilate claimed that Jesus was innocent, the Jews **denied him** (:14), though he had done no wrong. He was the Messiah, "the Holy and Righteous One" (verse 14). He was the "the Author of life" who had come to give life, but they gave him death.

Now, the good news for us all this morning is that dead did not hold him. He rose from the dead (verse 15). He is the power that healed this

man.

But it's also "The Problem," because these Jews put him to death. They were guilty. Then comes ...

4. The Plea (verses 17-21)

This is where Peter presents the solution to the problem. He begins with some compassion.

Acts 3:17

And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

In effect, Peter was saying to these Jews, "When you were in Pilate's courtyard demanding the death of Jesus, you didn't understand. You didn't realize that Jesus, indeed, was your Messiah. Now, that doesn't diminish your guilt. But it should help you now. Because, you have seen this man healed by the power of Jesus, who is alive from the dead. And now, you cannot claim ignorance. Realize that this is nothing new. It was prophesied to take place."

Acts 3:18

But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.

Peter was saying this, "Had you been better Bible students, you would have known that this is exactly what God had prophesied. God had prophesied of the suffering of the Messiah through the Scriptures.

Peter could sympathize with their ignorance. Remember what took place in Caesarea Philippi with the disciples? Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do the crowds say that I am?" (Matthew 16:13). After hearing a few answers, Jesus turned to his disciples to ask them, "But who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Right after this, Jesus began to tell his disciples the plan for his life, "... that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (Matthew 16:21). But Peter was having none of it. He took Jesus aside and began to rebuke him, saying "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (Matthew 16:22). To which Jesus said, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:23).

Peter didn't understand the sufferings of the Messiah before they took place. So, he could sympathize with the ignorance of the crowds. But the truth still stands, "But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled."

This is the lesson that Jesus had to teach those ignorant disciples on the road to Emmaus. Do you remember them? They were downcast after the crucifixion, because their Messiah had been killed. Their hopes were dashed. They were hoping that he came to redeem Israel. But they didn't realize that everything happened according to God's plan as revealed in the Scriptures. And so, Jesus rebuked them, ...

Luke 24:25-27

"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

That's what Peter is saying, "What God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled." Do you know any of these prophecies? Do you know of Old Testament Scriptures that predict the suffering of the Messiah?

Isaiah 53 stands out as the most prominent of all the prophecies. Isaiah prophesied that the Christ would be scourged and beaten (Isaiah 52:14), and oppressed and afflicted (Isaiah 53:7), and sacrificed like the Passover lamb, brought to slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). Daniel prophesied, simply that Messiah would be "cut off" (Daniel 9:26). Zechariah prophesied that the Shepherd would be struck down and the sheep would scatter (Zechariah 13:7), and that his body would be pierced (Zechariah 12:10). Such prophecies even reach into Genesis. Genesis 3:15 tells of how Satan would bruise the Messiah on the heel.

And the suffering wasn't merely physical. David prophesied that the Messiah would be forsaken by the Lord in the height of his suffering (Psalm 22:1). He would be mocked by the people, "He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him; Let him rescue him for he delights in him" (Psalm 22:8).

Furthermore, the suffering of the Messiah went hand in hand with the suffering of the prophets. Jesus lamented over Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" (Matthew 23:37). If all of the prophets suffered at the hand of Israel, would it not be the case that the great prophet would suffer as well?

So, getting back to Peter's sermon. And getting back to Peter's "Plea," he says, ...

Acts 3:19

Repent therefore, and turn back,

This is the only way out of your problem. It is to turn from your sin and turn to God, pleading for mercy from his hand. What was true back then is four true today. The way to God is the way of turning from our sinful ways, and turning to God and his ways for our lives. Peter follows with three results of repentance. First of all is ...

a. Forgiveness

Acts 3:19

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

The picture here is one of an eraser. When we repent of our sins, God will pull out his eraser and erase all of our mistakes. His erasing job is so good that it will be as if your sins never happened.

Is that now how an eraser works with your math? You are trying to figure out some problem, but it's not working out for you. Then, you realize your mistake. You take out your eraser, and you erase out your mistake. Then, you write over it. If you do a good job with your eraser, you cannot even tell that you ever made a mistake. Such is what God does when we repent. He forgives us our sins.

Secondly, we see the promise of ...

b. Refreshment

Acts 3:20
that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,

This is true of anyone who ever repents. When sins are forgiven, when the heaviness of sin is lifted, when relationships are restored, and when things are right in the world, there is "refreshment" that comes to the soul. It's like a cup of cold water on a hot summer's day. "Refreshment" talks about satisfaction and joy and delight.

Certainly, this is true of anyone who repents. But I do think in the original context, this is referring specifically to Israel. It refers to a time of national refreshment and revival that would come to Israel, when the Messiah is received and all the people are living in harmony. It refers to the time when all is well. I think this because of the next phrase:

Acts 3:20
... and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus,

This result of repentance can be summed up with one word:

c. Reconciliation

Peter is talking about the return of Christ. When the Messiah returns to be among his people. This time, rather than being rejected, he is accepted.

I love here how Peter identifies "Jesus" by name as the one who is coming. He was the very one who they rejected. He is the one who is coming for reconciliation with his people. In verse 13, Peter had explicitly mentioned Jesus, by name, as the one delivered over and denied by Israel. Now, in verse 20, Peter explicitly mentions Jesus, by name, as the one who will come and restore all things.

Some years ago, I remember seeing some videos online from an apologetics group. They were in Israel and talking with secular Jews about the Messiah. Of course, they rejected Jesus as their Messiah. But when asked who the Messiah will be, the flavor of all of their answers is this: "We don't know who the Messiah will be. In fact, he could be anyone. It could be a few. It could be a political party. It could be everyone. The Messiah is the one (or the ones) who will come and rescue Israel from her trials and troubles. We may not even recognize the Messiah when he comes. It may only become obvious after the fact that we see Israel restored to greatness."^[2]

This was their common answer. In effect, they were saying, "Only history will be able to answer the question of whether or not the Messiah came." This is a little bit like fans of Ronald Reagan, who understood that his days were good days. But only in looking back, do they realize how great his days were. The same thoughts come of the Messiah with secular Jews today. But Peter, here says that it is "Jesus" who will return. But now, Jesus is waiting in the heavens.

Acts 3:21
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.

One word to describe this is ...

d. Restoration.

Again, we see the ascension, that Jesus is in heaven. We saw Jesus ascend in chapter 1 (Acts 1:9-11). We saw Jesus ascend in chapter 2 (Acts 2:34-35). Now, in chapter 3, we see Jesus again mentioned as ascended into heaven. During his time in heaven, he is waiting. He is also praying (Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1). His heart is for us. He is praying for us. But there will be a time when he leaves heaven and comes to restore all things. The new heavens will come. The new earth will come. God will be our God. We will be his people.

Peter says that the prophets spoke about this. He's talking about Isaiah, who tells of the time when the wolf and the lamb will be together in harmony. He's talking about Habakkuk 2:14, when "the earth will be filled with the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea." He's talking about Jeremiah, who prophesied when "all will know [the LORD], from the least of them to the greatest" (Jer. 31:34). He's talking about Zechariah, when the "living waters ... flow out of Jerusalem ... and Jerusalem shall dwell in security" (Zechariah 14:8, 11).

This is "The Plea," in which Peter begs the people to "repent" (verse 19). If you do, Peter promises, you will experience the blessings of the LORD (forgiveness, refreshment, reconciliation, and restoration). Now we come to our fifth point.

5. The Peril (verses 22-23)

At this point, Peter returns to the sin of the people he is preaching to. Verses 13, 14, and 15 weren't enough to show the problem of their predicament. They were in greater danger than they realized. As I said it, they were in "peril."

Acts 3:22-23

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. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'

When we think of the prophecies of the Messiah, I don't think that this one comes to mind too much. It comes from Deuteronomy 18:18-19, in which Moses is telling the people that a prophet is coming. This prophet will be like Moses. He will be like the miracle-working, humble Moses, who gave direction to the people of God in how we ought to live.

Of course, this was Jesus. He was a worker of miracles. Jesus was humble, coming down from heaven, not holding onto his divine prerogatives (see Philippians 2:9-11). He was a teacher, who amazed the crowds (Matthew 7:28-29). We should listen to him (verse 22).

We know this. When Jesus speaks, we ought to listen. In our day and age, Bible printers have produced red letter Bibles, that emphasize the words of Jesus in red ink. The idea (in the mind of the publishers and in the minds of many) is that the words of Jesus are special words that we should pay specific attention to, above all other portions of the Scriptures.

We should listen to him. We should listen to his invitations. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). We should listen to his exhortations. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). We should listen to his purpose in coming. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

We know this, but the audience to whom Peter was speaking didn't listen to Jesus. Consider carefully again to what Moses said, ...

Acts 3:23

... And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.'

"That prophet" is Jesus. You could easily restate verse 23, "And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to Jesus shall be destroyed from the people." In other words, those in Peter's day, who denied Jesus and delivered him over to be crucified should be destroyed! It was only the mercy of God that they were standing there in Solomon's portico, while not being destroyed during the day of crucifixion.

It would have been totally just for fire to come down from heaven after Jesus died and consumed all of Jerusalem like Sodom and Gomorrah was destroyed, to be left in a heap of ashes. But God was merciful to Jerusalem in that day. He had warned them. But they refused to hear the warning. They deserved to be destroyed. Jerusalem was just like Adam and Eve, who were told, "In the day that you eat of it, you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). It was only the mercy of God that they remained alive in that day. And for those in Jerusalem that day, it was only God's mercy that kept them from destruction.

We can learn a little bit about witnessing to people here. We need to give them the bad news first, and then the good news. You won't understand the good news until you understand the bad news. We see that in my third and fourth points. (3) The Problem (verses 13-15) and (4) The Plea (verses 17-21). The problem is that they rejected their Messiah. The plea is for them to repent of their sins. But even after preaching the good news, it is still right to remind them of the bad news, which is what Peter does here in verses 22-23. They are in peril! They are in danger. This adds more weight to the plea. Those in Israel need to repent! (verse 19).

But Peter doesn't end there. He continues on to some more good news. This is what I'm calling, ...

6. The Promise (verses 24-26)

The promise is for blessing.

Acts 3:24-26

And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 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.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Here, we are coming again with the good news. Peter has preached bad news, then good news, then bad news, then good news. So ought we to do. When talking to people about Jesus, let's speak of the glories of Jesus. Let's speak of his work on the cross and his promise to those who repent. After bringing that message, let's remind them of the bad news, that none of us are good enough to merit God's favor. This world is fallen and lost in sin, for which we all are suffering, individually and as a nation.

Then, speak the good news again! God's blessing is available to all who call upon him. This has been the constant message of all the prophets. To be sure, when you read the Old Testament, there is much doom and gloom, especially as the prophets repeatedly called the nation of Israel to repentance. Israel had failed. Judgment was coming. It's difficult to preach hope and blessing when the nation is against the LORD. But the prophets always come back to hope.

And some prophets, like Isaiah, speak large amounts of judgment, not only against the people of Israel, but also against Babylon (Isaiah 13, 14), against Assyria (Isaiah 14), against Moab (Isaiah 15-16), against Damascus (Isaiah 17), against Cush (Isaiah 18), and against Egypt (Isaiah 19). But then come messages of hope and restoration. For instance, consider the promise to Egypt, of all nations:

Isaiah 19:19-22

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. It will

be a sign and a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt. When they cry to the LORD because of oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and deliver them. And the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day and worship with sacrifice and offering, and they will make vows to the LORD and perform them. And the LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing, and they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their pleas for mercy and heal them.

It's amazing that there is even hope for Egypt! But there is hope for all who repent! In the midst of Jeremiah's condemnation, comes hope for Judah, ...

Jeremiah 29:10-14

For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the LORD, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, declares the LORD, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

This is how all the prophets spoke. There was always hope, at least of some future day. This is Peter's point in verse 24, ...

Acts 3:24

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

The prophets all proclaimed of the hopeful days of the Messiah. This was especially pertinent to the people who originally heard Peter preach. The days of the Messiah had come to the people of God! It was a day of blessing!

Peter then reminds them who they are. They are the covenant people of God.

Acts 3:25

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.'

Peter was preaching to Jews, who were the chosen people of God. They were blessed in a great way simply because they were of Abraham's offspring. The error of the Jews is that they thought this automatically made them right before the Lord. Jesus corrected that line of thinking in John 8, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did. ... You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires" (John 8:39-41, 44). It would be an equal error to believe that there was no blessing in being a Jew. Paul said, "What advantage has the Jew? ... Much in every way" (Romans 3:1, 2). It is through the Jews that the blessing would come to the world.

For us, it works like this: we aren't children of Abraham because of our ethnic identity. The blessing of the covenant doesn't come to us because of birth. But we are recipients of the blessing of Abraham because of faith. "It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. Those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith." (Galatians 3:7, 9). The blessing comes when God grants faith and turns us from our wickedness. This is Peter's plain message in verse 26.

Acts 3:26

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

As I preached a few weeks ago, this verse is a good summary of Peter's entire message. It contains the following four themes, which are the main themes of Peter's message. The four themes are (1) God, (2) resurrection, (3) repentance, and (4) blessing. It wasn't the power of piety of Peter and John that healed the lame man; it was **God's** power. This power came through the **resurrected** Jesus. He is the one who healed the man by faith. But you (Jews) were against Jesus and put him to death, this very one with the power to heal. You need to realize your wrong and turn back. You need to **repent** of your sins. If you do, there will come **blessing** from the Lord.

This is Peter's message in a nutshell. May the Lord strengthen us to believe it.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on November 29, 2020 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Charles Spurgeon, Lectures to My Students, p. 171.

[2] Here is an example of a video that displays the wide range of views that modern Israelis have concerning the coming of the Messiah: [Israelis: How will we know when the Messiah comes?](#)