

Sermon followed by Service - July 20, 2025 - Acts 3

Have you ever seen a dead man walking? A number of years ago at a pastor-teacher conference we saw a dead man walking. He wasn't really dead, but the way this world works, he should have been dead and if he were back home in Pakistan, the way the world works, he would have been dead. You might know a thing or two about Pakistan. Pakistan is a Muslim country, a country constitutionally committed to Allah. In some ways a modern country with modern weapons, in other ways more like the old west with old west or inner city rules - the one with the gun is the one who rules. The way this world works, Pakistan is not a safe place for Christians. The dead man we saw walking, he was a Christian living in Pakistan, and he was kidnapped. Now, as a general rule, Christians kidnapped in Pakistan aren't set free. Even when their ransom is paid, they are killed. But somehow, by God's grace, he was set free.

He was at our conference on stage with his sister and her husband - they all had to flee Pakistan or lose their lives. Why? His sister coordinated a Bible correspondence class program in Pakistan. Using our WELS materials, they had some 40,000 Pakistanis learning and teaching about Jesus - in Pakistan. Her husband spoke to us; he's something of a regular at our seminary. He's a Christian, a medical doctor with a heart for Jesus. So he set up a hospital in Pakistan where the poor can get affordable medical treatment. Why? Not just to be a good neighbor with the heart of Jesus, not just to be a great humanitarian with the heart of Jesus. If that were the reason he built his hospital - to be a good neighbor with the heart of Jesus, to be a great

humanitarian with the heart of Jesus - we should think: “Wow! What a good neighbor, what a great humanitarian, what a fine Christian!” But he didn’t build his hospital just to be a good neighbor or a great humanitarian. He told us he built his hospital for the poor so that he and his wife could share Jesus with them. As people who appreciate what Jesus has done for them, they want everything they do to be about Jesus. They live their lives about Jesus.

Why do I tell you that story? He built his hospital to bring people in so he could share Jesus with them. As soon as I heard the doctor say that, I thought of our lesson - it’s all about Jesus!

In our lesson, Peter heals a man who wasn’t able to walk. From the time he was born, his legs didn’t work. From his earliest years, he had to beg for money and beg for food. Now he asks Peter and John. They don’t have money, but they do have something, someone else. Peter says: “**In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.**” And that man who had never been able to walk in his life, he got up, walking, and jumping, and praising God! Wow! Amazing! Look what Peter can do! No! Peter wouldn’t have any of that. For Peter it was all - Look what Jesus can do!

Peter had the attention of the crowd. What does he say? What does he talk about? Medical care for the crippled? Care for the poor? Making the temple ADA compliant, accessible for the disabled? No. Does he talk about peace and politics? Race relations, equal rights? Restoring the borders and getting rid of foreign intruders, turning back the clock on culture to a time when Jews could live like Jews and their neighbors looked like

Jews, talked like Jews, lived like Jews? Does he talk about minimum wage, getting the government off the backs of small business? No, Peter didn't talk about any of that. No, Peter talked about Jesus.

Why? Because those things aren't important in some way? No. Peter didn't not talk about those things because they are unimportant or because they might be controversial. What Peter said was more controversial than any of those things I mentioned. No, Peter didn't talk about them because the message of the church isn't peace, politics, and prosperity for all. Peter didn't talk about them because they aren't the one thing needful. Peter knew what the people in front of him needed. He knew what Jesus offered. And he knew his job in representing Christ and his church. So Peter talked about Jesus.

It's so easy to get side-tracked, isn't it? It's so easy to stop short. It's so easy to make life about this, that, and the other thing, about the here-and-now, about ourselves. When we see people hurt, people in need, it's so easy to get side-tracked, to stop short of sharing Jesus. Even when we love with the heart of Jesus, and look to give care with the heart of Jesus, it's so easy to get side-tracked and to stop short of actually sharing what people need most - Jesus.

We might think that Jesus and showing people that they need Jesus is too controversial. That didn't stop Peter, did it? Peter didn't sound like so many graduation talks - "be yourself and change the world." No, he said: "You need to change! Without Jesus you are without God. Without God you are lost

and damned.” Peter said what needed to be said. He didn’t get side-tracked; he didn’t stop short.

Another thing that might side-track us or stop us short is - We might think that Jesus doesn’t fit the need of the moment. Peter showed that Jesus cares for the needs of the moment ... and so much more! More than peace and prosperity in our time ... more than the politics we want ... more than a fix for whatever is broken in our lives today ... Jesus is God’s answer. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all of us looking for a better home than what this world can offer, Jesus is God’s answer. For Moses and all of us who are looking for a better Truth than “Get it right or else,” Jesus is God’s answer. For a people who so often bash and trash God’s good blessings, for a people who so often reject God’s way to go their own way, for a people who so often cross God, for a people facing God’s judgment, Jesus is God’s answer.

Do you see yourself there? Looking for something better than what this world has to offer, looking for something more hopeful than “Get it right or else”? Do you see yourself there, seeing how you have crossed God? Peter wants you to know, God wants you to know - Jesus is the answer. Even though we have crossed Jesus, by his death on the cross, Jesus wiped out your sin and mine. Raised to life with God, Jesus gives you this truth: “You are forgiven. God sees you right by him and he will make your life right.” With Jesus we get to know a better life is coming; we get to look forward to life the way it’s supposed to be, with God in heaven.

Some times life here is so good, some times we get so distracted we forget what Jesus means. Can I tell you something else from the other side of the world? Some of you might remember how Nepal was hit with earthquakes. The first reports were so good - our churches survived, our people were all well. Later we found out, in a different part of the country, the news wasn't so good. Villages up in the mountains where our missionary contacts go were flattened. Our churches flattened. The homes of our Christian brothers and sisters flattened. Thirty-nine - at least 39 - of our brothers and sisters in Christ killed. Days later, maybe even weeks later, our people got up to those mountain villages with tents and food supplied by sister churches here in the States, tents and food those villagers so desperately needed. But before they set up the tents, before they opened up the food, what did those villagers with the flattened homes and broken lives want? They wanted to hear the comfort of the Gospel. They just had to hear the Good News of Jesus. More important to them than food, more important to them than shelter, they wanted to hear Jesus.

Why? People who know Jesus, know this: **“Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”** And people who know Jesus best, know this: **“It’s all about Jesus!”** Amen.

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we have so many distractions in us and around us – distractions that seem to offer a better solution, comfort, joy, life ... than what Jesus offers.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... we see Peter work a marvelous miracle – how tempting to be distracted and to distract others to focus on him. But Peter kept the main thing the main thing – and he pointed to Jesus.

OPENING HYMN

“Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation”

Hymn 920

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ, our head and cornerstone,
chosen of the Lord and precious, binding all the Church in one;
holy Zion’s help forever and our confidence alone.

To this temple, where we call you, come, O Lord of hosts, and stay;
come with all your lovingkindness, hear your people as they pray;
and your fullest benediction speak within these walls today.

Grant, we pray, to all your faithful all the gifts they ask to gain;
what they gain from you forever with the blessed to retain;
and hereafter in your glory evermore with you to reign.

Praise and honor to the Father, praise and honor to the Son,
praise and honor to the Spirit, ever three and ever one:
one in might and one in glory while unending ages run!

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY – *Sung*

In peace let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST - SUNG

CW 176

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. *Refrain*

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer. *Refrain*

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father. Amen. Amen. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Holy Spirit, help us to receive it with joy and bring forth fruits in faith, hope, and love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Acts 3:1–10

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 31E

Refrain



Sure - ly, it is God who saves me; I will trust in him and
not be a - fraid. For the LORD is my strong-hold and my
sure de-fense, and he will be my Sav - ior.

Tone



In you, LORD, I have taken / refuge;
let me never be / put to shame.
Be my rock of / refuge,
a strong fortress to / save me.
Into your hands I commit my / spirit;
deliver me, LORD, my / faithful God. *Refrain*

My times are / in your hands;
save me in your un- / failing love.
How abundant are the / good things
that you have stored up for those who / fear you.
Be strong and / take heart,
all you who hope / in the LORD.
**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

SECOND READING

Acts 3:11–20

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia! These words are written that we may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Alleluia!

GOSPEL

John 5:36–40

“I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to finish—the very works that I am doing—testify that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

“You are the Way; through You Alone”

Hymn 514

You are the way; thro’ you alone can we the Father find;
in you, O Christ, has God revealed his heart and will and mind.

You are the truth; your Word alone true wisdom can impart;
you only can inform the mind and purify the heart.

You are the life; the empty tomb proclaims your conqu’ring arm,
and those who put their trust in you nor death nor hell shall harm.

You are the way, the truth, the life; grant us that way to know,
that truth to keep, that life to win whose joys eternal flow.

SERMON

Acts 3:1-20

HYMN

“We Give Thee but Thine Own”

Hymn 750

We give thee but thine own, whate’er the gift may be;
all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive
and gladly, as thou blessest us, to thee our firstfruits give.

OFFERING

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PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that you forgive our sins in Christ. Lead us to see clearly the path you have laid out for us. **Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.**

Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach your Word. Fill them with a love like yours as they proclaim your grace to us and all people. **Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.**

Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single, and make them a blessing to others. **Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.**

Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves. **Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.**

Give us passion to share the story of your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief, and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven. **Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in you.**

Extend your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. [Pour out your special blessing on . . . *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying. **Lift the eyes of the distressed to your love in Christ.**

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence. *Silent prayer*

Gracious God, you govern and direct all things and you love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in your wisdom and grace. **In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

Preface - Sung

CW 183

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who promised that wherever two or three come together in his name, there he is with them to shepherd his flock until he comes again in glory. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY - SUNG

CW 184

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power, God of might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest!

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD – SUNG

CW 186

Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.
Jesus, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us your peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"The Church's One Foundation"

Hymn 855

The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord;
she is his new creation by water and the Word.
From heav'n he came and sought her to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Elect from ev'ry nation, yet one o'er all the earth;
her charter of salvation: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
One holy name she blesses, partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses, with ev'ry grace endued.

The Church shall never perish. Her dear Lord, to defend,
to guide, sustain, and cherish, is with her to the end.
Tho' there be those that hate her and strive to see her fail,
against both foe and traitor she ever shall prevail.

Tho' with a scornful wonder the world sees her oppressed,
by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes up, "How long?"
and soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war
she waits the consummation of peace forevermore
till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
and the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN – LAST PAGE

"Be Thou My Vision"

Let All the People Praise You: A Songbook pg. 18

