

Acts 3

The Jesus Story Breaks Out

Introduction: Luke in here in chapter 3 gives us one example of how the Jesus story and community broke out into the surrounding community - i believe as an example of the kind of effects this new community was having in Jerusalem as described in Acts 2:42-47

Before we get into our text we must discuss the idea of the miraculous.

We live in a world, we are told, of natural laws, that we are now told came about by total accident... But nonetheless a world in which we believe everything that is "true" can be substantiated by our rational. We live in a world or culture that completely rejects the idea of the miraculous or the supernatural. Ours is a natural world...

Two things: How do we know that the natural world is all there is? "All possible knowledge, then, depends on the validity of reasoning...Unless human reasoning is valid no science can be true."

We are so confident in our secular age that we are right, but have we truly figured it all out where millennia of generations have failed?

This all out confidence in the mind/rational, for all it's boasting and accomplishments of technology has not made us a happier or a more peaceful people. If secularism is all there is - why do we long for something beyond this life? Why are we so unhappy?

C.S. Lewis referred to this as chronological snobbery.. seeing past generations and cultures as ignorant and unenlightened. He described it as - "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited."

Also, we often fail to realize that our Western view of the world, as totally secular/natural, is a truth claim - another faith, faith in Mankind's learning and reasoning, rather than in God and the supernatural. This is a truth claim against a majority of the world's population. Are Americans and the

western world so superior to those of other culture's. What a closed minded and prejudiced way to think... shame on you.

Many times when we (christians, living in this secular age) come to the miraculous in scripture we are embarrassed by it, and we often try to get the higher or deeper meaning out of the passage....But

“A naturalistic Christianity leaves out all that is specifically Christian.” (Lewis) -Creation, providence, redemption/salvation, virgin birth, resurrection... If you believe in God at all then it is unreasonable not to believe in miracles. The Bible says that God created everything, and that he sustains everything by the word of his power. That means that what we call the natural laws of nature are just God's customary way of sustaining his creation, so when God does something miraculous it is just God acting in a different way than is customary.

Besides all that this passage won't let us get around the miraculous. The apostle Peter says in his sermon that this miracle proves that the message they are preaching is Jesus' message, and the power that they are demonstrating is Jesus' power. this miracle points to Jesus. This miracle is an accreditation of the Jesus story - and so also the rest of the miracles in the NT.

And this is our first point -The miracles that we see in scripture are never an end in themselves they always point to something bigger, greater, deeper. This Miracle points:

1. Forward: The Restorative Plan of God

1. This Miracle and all the other miracles of the NT points forward to the restored kingdom of God.
2. Luke tells us something very significant for anyone who knew the Old Testament scripture. He tells us, (Speaking of the man being healed) **“And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”** The Old Testament said that when Messiah had come, when God began to

restore the world, as he promised to do, these are the sort of things that would take place.

1. **“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus; it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you.” Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.” - Isaiah 35:1-6**
3. Peter’s whole sermon is an explanation of the miracle - About what has happened and how it happened. Peter goes into a heavy theological explanation of what the miracle means. And one of the things he says is in verse 21, **“Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things.”**
4. The Miracle is pointing forward. Notice how the miracles in the NT are never about power for the sake of power, they always relieve suffering. why is that? Because it points forward to the new creation - to a restored creation, when the curse of sin and all the effects of sin on the world will be removed..
5. Often we talk about miracles as being supernatural but that is because we are living in a world under the curse of sin. Miracles, like sight to the blind, the dead being raised, are actually the most natural things the world.. they are not the suspension of the natural order but a restoration of the natural order.. Because God did not make a world with sin, and cancer, and blindness, lameness, suffering and death.
 1. “Jesus' healing's are not supernatural miracles in a natural world. They are the only truly 'natural' things in a world that is unnatural, demonized and wounded.” - Jürgen Moltmann
6. All the suffering we see in the world is a result of mankind turning away from God - The miracles of the NT tell us that God hates sin

and suffering even more than we do and that one day he's going to get rid of all of it.

1. If we have this hope in us that one day our suffering will be ended, that our lives and the whole earth will be restored we can face anything.
 1. I read an interesting article about the slaves of America and their ability to endure great suffering, hold their heads up, and keep their dignity through it all. This was not because they believed that history would progress, that slavery would be abolished for their children and grandchildren - It was their christianity that gave them their hope. " Hope does not require a belief in progress, only a belief in justice, a conviction that the wicked will suffer, that wrongs will be made right, that the underlying order of things is not flouted with impunity." -Lasch

2. Inward: The Sacrificial Work of Jesus

1. The Miracle points inward. For instance - the lame man wants to walk, the blind man wants to see, so let's say that miracle takes place - give it a month and he'll be just as miserable and hopeless as everyone else. Even in our own lives sometimes we act as though physical healing, or physical filling is all we need, and I'm not trying to be unsympathetic with those who are suffering but only to say that our biggest problems in the world are not physical suffering - that is simply a symptom to our greater problem. Do you ever look at the thing that you are longing for whether healing, relationship, money, career and ask, are those people that have what I want any happier, any more peaceful than I am? It's not wrong to want those things, but guaranteed, they won't satisfy for long, they cannot make you whole. They cannot heal what is truly wrong with you.
2. You see the Bible teaches that we don't just need physical healing - but spiritually our eyes need to see. That we don't need just physical healing, but spiritual healing.
3. Think about Peter's words - "I have no silver and gold but what I do have I give to you."
4. Peter essentially says to the man -what you're looking for is only superficial, it's only temporary, go deeper. I'm going to give you something better, something deeper..

5. The Miracles always point us to a deeper reality of the sin sick soul, of our separation from our creator and heavenly Father. (remember the story of the four men that lower their friend through the roof to be healed by Jesus? Jesus tells him first - his sins are forgiven - then afterwards he heals his lameness) This is the true healing that everyone one of us needs. We can and we do pray for healing, and God does do miracles but the greatest miracle is that we are born again, forgiven of our sins, and given the gift of eternal life - life in healed, whole bodies, that will go on and on and on in a perfect world.
 1. “We once had the world we all wanted-a world of peace and justice, without death, disease, or conflict. But by turning from God we lost that world. Our sin unleashed forces of evil and destruction so that now “things fall apart” and everything is characterized by physical, social, and personal disintegration. Jesus Christ, however, came into the world, died as a victim of injustice and as our substitute, bearing the penalty of our evil and sin on himself. This will enable him to some day judge the world and destroy all death and evil without destroying us.” -Tim Keller
6. The same healing power that God is going to bring to the whole earth at the end of time can be brought into your life presently. The removal of guilt and shame, the cleansing of your conscience, the filling up of your hopes and desires, peace with God, peace with yourself, peace with those around you. That healing can take place today through the power of Jesus.
7. Notice Peter’s whole message is pointing to belief in Jesus. Peter appeals to the crowd that this miraculous healing power is through the “name of Jesus, By faith in his name.” Jesus, God’s anointed servant who was rejected by them, handed over to be killed but whom God raised from the dead. But notice Peter does not say, now who else wants to be healed of their infirmities? Offering the crowd more healing- he doesn’t say so line up if you want to be healed. Peter offers the forgiveness of sin, refreshment, peace rest, from the presence of the Holy Spirit, a turning from wickedness, through faith in the name of Jesus.
8. This is the offer for us today from the word of God - that through the power of Jesus, by faith in his name - we can have our sins forgiven,

we can experience refreshment and healing from the presence of God.

9. God is recreating all things but in the recreation he is starting backwards. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..culminating in the creation of Mankind. This time he Begins with human beings (“If any man be in Christ he is a new creature”) and he will culminate the work with a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. God invites each of us to experience that healing work presently.
 1. But understand this - to reject his offer is to reject your own soul healing, it is to reject any sense of true hope for your life. As peter says, **“it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people”** - it is to be forever in a state of decay, breakdown and death, it is to be eternally apart from the presence of God, who is life.

3. Outward: Enemies of Suffering

1. As I said a moment ago, almost all the miracles of the New Testament alleviate suffering..
2. Walking out the Jesus story - we cannot live lives of insulation. Jesus always moved towards suffering not away from it. He didn't ignore it though he could have - especially he, who of all people has the right to justly overlook the sin and suffering of others -It's God. As we discussed we brought sin into the world, we ruined God's creation, we hurt and exploit others... God had every right to ignore our suffering, to let our suffering eat us, destroy us, but he doesn't. Because of his great love for us, he moved toward us, embraced our self inflicted suffering, and bore our sin and suffering at the cross.
3. Everywhere Jesus went he relieved the suffering of those around him... Jesus' people don't avoid suffering and sin - they move toward it. Look at Peter at John - “They stared intently at him and they said "look at us.”.. They didn't ignore sufferers, they move toward them .
4. Example: The early church's love for sufferers during the plague that hit the Roman empire... why did they do it?? This was the way of Jesus.
5. When we realize that Jesus is going to someday destroy hunger, disease, poverty, injustice, and death itself, it makes Christianity what C. S. Lewis called a “fighting religion” whether we are

confronted with a city slum or a cancer ward. The things that are now wrong with the material world he wants put right. It will make us enemies of suffering

Conclusion: How do we practice the Jesus story in our daily lives? I think that this story is such a beautifully simple picture of how we do that- Peter and John we're on their way somewhere and we're interrupted when they saw a need, when they saw suffering. Obviously, they had been trained by Jesus to see the way that he saw... (You can think of all the times the disciples were impatient with Jesus in the Gospels because he was always getting distracted by helping people that were suffering) But now they think, they see, and act just as Jesus did.

Pray to see people as Jesus saw people, to be moved by suffering, pain, and sin, to be interrupted by God, to be used as you're on your way, as you make your daily, weekly, monthly plans, subject them to the plan of God to build his kingdom, to put the person of his glorious son on display.