

The Message of the Mission: Peter's Proclamation

1. Intro & Context

- This week I've heard numerous stories of tragedy, hurt and suffering
 - Cyclist > accident Como walk path > broke his neck
 - Friend > father and grandmother died within 12 hours of each other
 - Friend of one of our boys > mother is dealing with cancer and few days ago his older son died in his sleep

- My circumstances are not unique
 - We all have people around us who are hurting and suffering
 - Some you here this morning are going through pain and suffering in your life right now

- How do you deal with suffering in life?
 - Do you shrug your shoulders and say "that's just how it is ... I can't do anything about it"?
 - Because if there's nothing we can do or if there's nothing that can help us .. we're just left to despair

- In Acts Ch 4... we have a lame man who was suffering and in despair
 - And as we look at the chapter this morning we'll see how Jesus
 - Not only has the power to heal those who are suffering
 - He gives us the power to deal with suffering in our life

- As you encounter suffering in your own life and in the lives of those around you ... then this is a word you and I desperately need to hear

2. Miracle of Authentication (v1-11)

- Disciples have received the HS
 - Emboldened and empowered them to get on with the mission Jesus has given to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth

- We get another example of that here in Acts 4
- This time Peter & John going to temple at time of prayer
- On their way in they encounter a lame man being carried to the Temple to beg for money
 - The many is dependent on others

- To be carried Temple day by day
- To survive on the charity of others

- The man asks Peter and John for money
 - v6 – *"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."*

- Luke wants us to understand that this is utterly miraculous
 - He does this by repeatedly telling us this man who'd been a cripple from birth ... his legs are now strong enough to walk and jump
 - His healing was instant and complete!
 - Amazing!
 - 1st century medicine could've done nothing for him ... in fact **21st** century medicine could've done nothing for him!

- Totally outside the realms of normality

- Of course as they enter the Temple, everyone is amazed to see this man ...
 - who'd never walked in his life
 - who they'd passed every day at the temple gate begging

- Now walking and jumping and praising God

- **Illustration – Dylan Alcott**
- Dylan Alcott is one of the best wheel chair tennis players in the world
 - Won 4 Aust Open titles, 1 US Open, Olympic Gold Rio 2016
 - Ads on TV – Toyota, Swisse vitamins
 - Everyone knows him as the wheel chair tennis guy

- Imagine at next year's Australian Tennis Open, Dylan Alcott plays Round 1 – Semis in his wheelchair ... and on the day of the final comes bounding out on court running and jumping leaping around like he's Roger Federer!
 - Crowd would go nuts!
 - Thinking ... what on earth is going on here??
 - Reporters, photographers, video cameras all clamoring around him wanting to know how this happened

- That's the type of thing that is happening here in the Temple
- People come running from everywhere wanting to understand what and how this lame man can now walk and jump

- And Peter's quick to tell everyone,

- "It's not by my power or godliness that this happened, but let me tell you how it did"
- Uses it as an opportunity to point people to Jesus

- He starts off saying
 - "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
 - Peter's way of saying your God / our God ...
 - The same God you know and worship and come into this Temple to pray to
 - "He has glorified Jesus"
 - "But by contrast
 - You handed him over
 - You disowned him
 - You asked a murderer to be released his place
 - You killed the author of life
 - That's what you did to Jesus ...
 - but God raised him from the dead

- This is what I call a 'Peter Smack Down Sandwich'
 - Book ends of what God has done > God glorified & raised Jesus
 - In between ... the filling ... but you killed and disowned
 - BAM!

- And Peter says ... we're witnesses to all this
 - What you did and what God did
 - We're witnesses to his death, resurrection and ascension

- And Peter finishes by saying ...
 - v6 – *By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong*

Application

- Lots of modern people will hear this and scoff
 - They'll say
 - These are just stories put in the Bible by superstitious primitive people based on legends and myths
 - Not really true, no one can do these things ... it's just a fairytale

- Some Christians will look at miracles like and be embarrassed
 - They'll say that it didn't really happen

- What you need to do is look to the principle of the story and look for the higher spiritual meaning
- But you can't just say that and ignore the evidence
- First ... who's writing this?
 - Luke > not a disciple > researching and documenting the claims of Jesus like an investigative journalist
 - He's an outside witness
 - Not one of the 12 > therefore he had no agenda or prejudice
 - He's just there stating the facts
- Secondly, if you read closely ... Luke includes lots and lots of little details that point to the fact that this is history and not legend
- Luke tells us
 - This all happened at 3pm in the afternoon
 - Tells us the actual name of the gate where the man was healed is called Beautiful
 - Man was holding onto Peter and John
 - People came running to them in Solomon's Colonnade
- These are all small and in many insignificant details
 - But what they point to being the details of
 - an eyewitness
 - a person who was actually there
 - who can recall the details of what and where it all happened
 - You read any legend or myth and you'll see they don't contain unnecessary and specific details like this
- So we can be confident it happened ... but what's the significance?
- It helps to know that many times, Jesus healed people like this
- The gospels record many times where Jesus heals the lame
- And just as God accredited Jesus by signs and wonders, so now the apostles are being accredited
- The miracle is an indication of Jesus approval of his messengers and what is being said
 - It authenticates them as Apostles
 - It authenticates their message

- By giving them the power to do the same miracles as Jesus ... the implication is the message they're preaching is same message as Jesus message
- It shows the message they're preaching is true ..
 - It's the true gospel ...
 - It's the message that Jesus wanted them to take out and proclaim as they witnessed to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth
- And it's not just an authentication for them ... it's an authentication for us
- Because it gives you and I confidence that the message they proclaimed ... and the message that has been recorded for us in the Bible ...
 - is the message of Jesus
 - it's is the true gospel ...
 - it's not a fake gospel ...
 - its not something they made up
- Its' true, you can trust it
- It is a Miracle of Authentication

3. Messiah of Reconciliation

- Having explained that the miracle happened by the power of Jesus ... Peter then takes the opportunity to preach the gospel
- He explains to the crowd that their ignorance in disowning and killing Jesus was actually the means by which God fulfilled what he'd promised long ago in the prophets ... that the Messiah / Christ must suffer
- Then he goes on to say
 - *v19-20 – 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 Christ, who has been appointed for you-- even Jesus.*
- You see what Peter's doing here
 - He's linking the suffering of the Christ ... who he says is Jesus ... with forgiveness of our sins and times of refreshing
- What does he mean by this? What's the link?
- The clue is there in v13 & 26 where he refers to Jesus as God's servant
- This is the same language that is used in the Old Testament in Isaiah 52-53
- And in Is 52/53 ...
 - Isaiah is describing the Christ / Messiah figure as God's servant
- In particular he says in 53:3-5

- *Isaiah 53:3-5 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and **familiar with suffering**. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*
- You see what Peter is saying?
 - Jesus is the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who would bring peace and healing and forgiveness of sin
- How?
 - By suffering in the place of those who deserve to suffer
 - By bearing the punishment of those who should be punished
 - By being crushed in the place of those who ought to be crushed
- And he's saying to the crowd ... this peace and healing and forgiveness is possible for even you!
 - You who disowned Jesus
 - You who rejected him as the Holy and Righteous One
 - You who killed Jesus
- If ever there were a group of people who were enemies of God ... it was those who rejected, disowned and killed God's Christ
- And yet Peter says ... if you repent and turn back to God
 - You will be reconciled to God
 - The sin that fractured your relationship with him ... will be wiped clean
- That phrase – wiped clean ... means more than just wash clean
 - It means to erase or obliterate without a trace
 - It means our sins are treated as if they had never been committed
- How? Through God's Messiah / Christ who brings you reconciliation with God

Application

- It's very easy to read this account and distance yourself from what Peter is saying here ...
 - "That's good for them"
 - "This doesn't really apply to me"

- Until you realise you and I are the crowd
 - You and I are just as responsible for disowning, rejecting and killing Jesus

- It's just as we sing in the song - How Deep the Father's Love
 - *Behold the man upon a cross,*
 - *my sin upon His shoulders;*
 - *ashamed, I hear my mocking voice*
 - *call out among the scoffers.*
 - *It was my sin that held Him there*
 - *until it was accomplished;*
 - *His dying breath has brought me life -*
 - *I know that it is finished.*

Application

- If you're here this morning and you're not a Christian
- I pray you will
 - see that the gospel ... the message about Jesus is one that's historical, and can be trusted > you can trust that its true
 - understand you're very real and deep need to be reconciled to God and only Christ's suffering in your place can do that
 - conclude that the right response is to do what Peter urged the crowd to do ... which was to repent and turn back to God so that your sins might be wiped clean

- If you're a Christian here this morning ... all those things still apply to you
- There's also some principles to be learnt here about being a witness for Jesus
- First is ... take the opportunity
 - Notice how Peter took the opportunity of the crowd's curiosity as a bridge to then go on and share the gospel
 - When people ask you a question or start a conversation ... take the opportunity to not JUST answer their question ... but use it as a bridge ... to keep going and point them to Jesus and the gospel

- Second is ... when you're sharing your faith you need objective evidence as well as subjective evidence
 - Objectively, Peter points to the historical events and the evidence of Jesus death and resurrection
 - He doesn't make a purely emotional or pragmatic appeal

- He doesn't say ... "I know he's risen because he lives within my heart"
- No, he points to the **objective** evidence

- But on the other hand, Peter also appeals to **subjective** evidence
- He points to changed life of the lame man

- The point is ... that evidence of changed lives (be it yours or others) cannot all by itself prove that Jesus is real
- On the other hand, objective arguments do not persuade the whole person
- A combination of both is needed
 - Share the gospel AND share your testimony
 - What Christ has done AND how Christ has changed you

- Thirdly, be gentle and direct
 - In v17 Peter shows a great deal of respect and sympathy for the crowd
 - He calls them brothers and that they acted in ignorance
 - He respects them and their doubts
 - On the other hand, he doesn't say that because they were ignorant they're not guilty or responsible
 - He still says they need to repent and that to ignore Jesus means to be cut off from his people
 - As a witness to Jesus ... you need to be both gentle and direct
- Jesus is the Suffering Servant ... and because of his suffering he is the Messiah of Reconciliation

4. Message of Restoration

- Given Peter is preaching in the Temple, those who were there would've been very religious and they would've known their OT scriptures really well
- So when a man crippled from birth miraculously begins walking and leaping
- ... then it would have been nearly impossible for anyone there to see that and not think of Isaiah 35
 - *Isaiah 35:5-6 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.*

- Is 35 is describing what's going to happen when God comes back and is going to restore everything in this world

- It's describing a time in the future of blessing and rejoicing that will happen when both the creation and people are restored and renewed
- And God's people will rejoice and sing and be filled with gladness and sorrow and sighing will flee away
- It's a wonderful picture of total restoration

- And Peter is drawing this connection from the miracle
 - His first point was it points to the Messiah of Reconciliation
 - His second point is it points to the Message of Restoration

- Have a look at v21 ... Luke writes ...
 - *He [Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to **restore everything**, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

- So Peter wants us to see that the miracle points us forward to God's promised restoration

- Have you ever noticed that Jesus miracles .. or in this case the Apostles miracles ... were never naked displays of power?
 - If the purpose of miracles like this were just about authenticating the message and the messenger – whether that was Jesus or the Apostles and affirming that they have the power of God and the message of God ... if that was all ... there was a lot of things they could have done

- Why is it that Jesus or the Apostles never did anything like sky writing?
 - "Hey watch, I can write my name or Jesus name in the sky with my finger" and all the crowd would've gasped
 - "Watch this ... watch me fly ... watch me levitate 5m, 10m, 50m above the ground" ... that would have impressed people
 - It would have been so easy to impress people

- Why didn't they do that?
- Why is it that most the miracles Jesus and his Apostles do were about alleviating suffering or trouble of some kind? Why?
- Because they are pointing forward to the end of all things ... to the end of history ... when God is going to restore all things
- God didn't create blindness
 - He didn't create lameness

- He didn't create suffering
- He didn't create a world full of death
- Go back to the Garden of Eden and you'll see that's not the way things were when God created the world

- There in the Garden ... God made us to serve him and care for his creation ... and when, as a human race, we turned away from God ... everything fell apart
 - The good world God made and blessed us with was broken and fractured
 - That's why we now have
 - Poverty > injustice > sickness > disease > cancer > death
 - All of these exploded into existence

- And Peter here is helping us to see that
 - Just as God's not happy with you and I turning our back on him
 - He's not happy with a world full of suffering, sickness and death
 - And he didn't create a world with suffering, sickness and death in it
 - And one day he's going to
 - deal with all those things and
 - restore things back to its natural order ...
 - the way things should be ...
 - the way he created it and intends it to be

- Put it this way
- You know when people say that miracles are a suspension of the natural order
- Not really ... biblical miracles are actually a **restoration** of the natural order
 - When the lame man is healed
 - When a dead person is raised
 - The natural order is restored!
 - That's the way God wanted the world to be!
- And the miracle shows us that Jesus is an enemy of suffering and brokenness we see in this world
- And the healing of the lame man is a reminder that he's going to restore all things just as he restored the man and just as he said he would in Isaiah 35

Application

- Can you see how this miracle gives you incredible hope?

- Because the healing of the lame man is pointing us forward a restoration ... that if you believe it ... will help you to deal with your suffering now

Illustration – Allan Tibbles

- Tim Keller tells the story of a friend of his who died about 8 years ago called Allan Tibbels who was a strong Christian leader in Baltimore, US
- In his younger days he'd been very athletic ... but in his 20's he had an accident and broke his neck and he spent the rest of his life paralysed in a wheel chair
- After years of ministering amongst the poor in that city, he died relatively young, aged 55
- Because of the massive impact he had on his community, his funeral was huge
- The brochure that was handed out at the funeral had lots of photos of Allan from throughout his life
- On the back was an older photo of Allan, taken earlier in his life, before his accident ... and he was leaping ... just leaping in the air

- Now unless you believe Jesus is going to return and restore all things ... then a photo like that is just a memory of better times
- How can a man like Allan Tibbels be a wheelchair almost his entire adult life knowing that in your 20's you're never going to be able to walk or run or play sport or kick a ball with your kids?
- How can you face that?
 - Because you know for sure that someday, I am going to leap for joy
 - And if you have that kind of hope ... you can face anything
 - And the miracle points to that
 - The promises of God point to that
 - And Jesus power points to that

- And if you have that kind of hope you can face anything
- It helps you therefore handle the suffering now ... knowing that someday it's going to be over and God will restore all things

5. Conclusion

- It was a miracle of authentication
 - We can trust that the gospel is true
- It pointed to the Messiah of reconciliation

- Jesus is the suffering servant who takes our sin upon his shoulders so that our sins may be wiped clean even though we disowned and killed him
- Points to the Message of Restoration
 - In the face of suffering, the healing gives us sure hope, that Jesus will return and make all things new
 - To the extent you believe that ... it will equip you to deal with your suffering now

PRAY