



Bible studies for disciples who make disciples

Loudonville Community Church

Volume 1 - Number 6

Do You Believe in Miracles?

Acts 3:1-26

THIS WEEK'S CORE STATEMENT

TANGIBLE COMPASSION - Actions marked by showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself. From the earliest beginnings of the Church, people noticed how much Christians cared for other people.

Profiles of Compassion in the Early Church:

In the early part of the 4th century A. D., the city of Caesarea in Palestine was ravaged by war, famine and plague. Eusebius (c. A. D. 263 – 339), who served the church in Caesarea, made the following statement in his book entitled, *The Church History*:

“All day long some of them [the Christians] tended to the dying and to their burial, countless numbers with no one to care for them. Others gathered together from all parts of the city a multitude of those withered from famine and distributed bread to them all ... [the Christians’] deeds were on everyone’s lips, and they glorified the God of the Christians. Such actions convinced them that they alone were pious and truly reverent to God.”

Later that same century, the Roman Emperor Julian the Apostate (A. D. 332 – 368) noticed the compassionate acts of the Christians and called for the pagan priests of Rome to emulate them. Emperor Julian stated that *“when it came about that the poor were neglected and overlooked by the [pagan] priests, then I think the Galileans [Christians] observed this fact and devoted themselves to philanthropy ... [They] support not only their poor, but ours as well, all people see that our people lack aid from us.”*

Christians are known for many things today. If you were to stop a stranger on the street and ask him or her to tell you what Christians were known for, the answer would likely catalogue the things Christians are “against” rather than what they are for. Imagine what would it be like if Christians around the world were best known for their tangible acts of compassion?

This Week's Complementary Passage

2 Corinthians 1:3-7

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴ who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. ⁵ For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. ⁶ If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort.

appointed

baptized

Caesar

enemy/demons/Satan

eternal life

fathers & children [in one color
different from Moses]

Gentiles

gospel

grace

Holy Spirit

in the name of Jesus Christ

Jesus

Jews

Law (of Moses)

men of the council

Moses [in different color from
fathers & children]

prayer

repent (repentance)

resurrection (raised up)

salvation

suffering

the Way

the promise of the Father

witnesses

word of God

This Week's Text for Study - Acts 3:1-26

STEP ONE . . .

READING what the passage says
(Read it at least three times)

¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "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!" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ 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.

¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: "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?" ¹³ 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. ¹⁴ But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 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.

¹⁷ "And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 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. ²² 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. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people." ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. 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." ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

STEP TWO . . .

OBSERVING how the passage moves

Return to the passage and mark key words, phrases and movements:

- Circle all of the words in this passage that speak of the Triune God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit, etc.).
- Underline the significant verbs/action words in this passage.
- Put brackets around the word 'temple' and any of the words that denote specific places related to the temple.
- In verses 9, 11, and 12 highlight the words "wonder," "amazement," and "astounded."
- In verse 15, highlight the word "witnesses."
- In verse 19, highlight the word "repent."

STEP FOUR . . .

UNDERSTANDING what the passage means

This commentary is intended to enhance your own study of the text.

Commentary on Acts 3:1-26

3:1 - going up to the temple. A reference to the ongoing practice of the disciples to still attend temple daily. The early church worshiped (1) in the temple (at least on special days if not daily); (2) in the local synagogue (every Sabbath); and (3) with believers on Sunday.

at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. Denotes 9 hours after sunrise. A reference to the time of the evening sacrifice, or 3 pm. Many would have been present in the temple.

3:2 - lame from birth. He was well-known by all regular worshippers at the temple. There was no chance of a trick being involved in the healing.

the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate. Its exact location is uncertain. Possibly the Nicanor Gate which led from the Court of the Gentiles to the Court of the Women. On the eastern side of the temple, facing the Mt. of Olives, close to Solomon's Portico.

to ask alms of those entering. Almsgiving, giving to the poor. A required practice in Judaism. Money was collected weekly in the local synagogues and then food was distributed. Apparently some still begged daily in the temple area.

3:3 - he asked to receive alms. The man's request was originally only monetary (cf. v. 5).

3:4 - directed his gaze at him ... look at us. Peter and John wanted his undivided attention.

3:5 - I have no silver and gold. The Apostles were not wealthy but they had access to the spiritual resources of God (cf. v. 6).

3:6 - In the name of Jesus Christ. Someone's name is a Hebrew idiom for referring to one's character. Jesus was a recently condemned and crucified criminal, yet He is now proclaimed the Messiah.

rise up and walk. This miracle confirmed the gospel message and also demonstrated God's love and power. This miracle was told to Luke by an eyewitness in vivid, detailed terms.

3:8 - And leaping up he stood. This man began walking all around this section of the temple.

3:10 - and recognized him. They knew this man. Many had seen him at the gate day after day, and passed by. The disciples did not just pass by. They acted in the power of the Spirit.

they were filled. Used by Luke often. We can be "filled" with many things (i.e. characterized by). Peter and John wanted those who were amazed to be filled with the gospel!

wonder and amazement. God's love and acts always cause amazement.

3:11 - while he clung to Peter. Apparently, he held on to Peter the way Mary held on to Jesus in the garden.

the portico called Solomon's. A long covered area along the eastern side of the court of the Gentiles supported by many columns. The old foundations of Solomon's temple were located in the same general area. Jesus taught there often.

3:12 - when Peter saw it. They saw the amazement and curiosity of the crowd and seized the opportunity to share the gospel.

why do you wonder at this. Jesus had performed similar kinds of miracles over the course of His ministry and during the last week of His life. This was a sign of the trustworthiness of the gospel and the power of the name of the resurrected Messiah.

3:14 - the Holy and Righteous One. The innocence and sinlessness of Jesus. An OT Messianic title. Even the demons called Jesus the Holy One of God.

asked for a murderer. Ironically, Barabbas was guilty of the exact crime of sedition for which they had accused Jesus.

3:15 - the Author of life. A title with three possible meanings: (1) the author or originator; (2) the agent of creation; or (3) the one who goes first, a trailblazer. It is an obvious contrast to "murderer" (v. 14).

God raised from the dead. Usually in the NT it is the Father who raised the Son from the dead as a sign of His approval of Jesus' life, ministry, and substitutionary death.

3:16 - by faith in his name. The Greek term "faith" can be translated into English as "faith," "trust," or "believe." It is our response to God's unconditional grace. It is trusting in the trustworthiness of God (i.e. His character, His promises, His Messiah).

3:17 - I know that you acted in ignorance. Recall Jesus' words from the cross. Even in their ignorance, however, the people were still responsible! It is used here to help people accept their own responsibility.

as did also your rulers. Luke often makes a distinction between the people and their rulers.

3:18 - foretold by the mouth of all the prophets. The gospel was not an afterthought with God. It is His eternal, purposeful plan. Early sermons in the book of Acts present Jesus as the fulfillment of OT promises and prophecies. Jesus showed Himself to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus and how the OT prophecies pertained to His suffering, death, and resurrection. They shared this with the Apostles, who made it part of their preaching.

Christ. The Greek translation of the Hebrew word “Messiah,” meaning the Anointed One.

suffer. Although the Messiah’s suffering was alluded to in the OT, a suffering Messiah was scandalous to the Jews. They expected a conquering general.

3:19 - repent therefore and turn again. The Greek term “repent” means a change of mind. The Hebrew term for repentance means “change of action.” Repentance and faith are the two sides of the same coin. Repentance is indispensable and is marked by a willingness to change. It is both a gift of God and an act of the will.

sins may be blotted out. To “erase” or “wipe away.” In the ancient world, ink was acid and impossible to erase. When God forgives, God forgets (erases)!

3:20 - times of refreshing. Or, “breathing space, relaxation, relief,” “refresh by air,” or “treat a wound with air.” This metaphorical extension can refer to either physical or spiritual refreshment and restoration. God was going to bring a widening, refreshing period of spiritual activity. The “times of refreshing” had come in Jesus of Nazareth.

the Christ appointed for you. Refers to God’s fore-choice of Jesus; His incarnation and death had always been God’s eternal plan. Sending Jesus was God’s choice of blessing and redemption.

3:21 - time for restoring of all the things. The time of re-creation. The evil of human rebellion in Gen. 3 will be nullified and creation will be restored; fellowship with God is reestablished. The initial purpose of creation is finally fulfilled.

about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets long ago. Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection fulfilled OT prophecy. God is fulfilling His will for all creation.

3:22 - Moses said. The Law of Moses (i.e. the most authoritative part of the OT for the Jewish people).

3:23 - who does not listen to that prophet. This prophet is Jesus. This was a serious word of warning. It is an allusion to Deut. 18:19. Rejection of Jesus was, and still is, a serious, eternal matter. Those who reject Him are rejected by God. The issue of salvation is one’s faith response to God’s Messiah. Family, race, ethics, and meticulous performance of rules are not the basis for salvation, but faith in Christ.

3:24 - these days. The “times of refreshing” (v. 20) and “time for restoring of all things” (v. 21) refer to the consummation of the Kingdom of God at the return of Christ, but this phrase refers to the inauguration of the Messianic Kingdom, which occurred at the incarnation of Jesus at Bethlehem or at least to the whole period of the latter days, which is the time between Christ’s two appearances on planet earth. The OT primarily understood only one coming of the Messiah. His first coming as the “Suffering Servant” (v. 18) was a surprise; His glorious return as military leader and judge was expected.

3:25 - all the families of the earth be blessed. A reference to God’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:1–3.

3:26 - having raised up His Servant, sent Him. The Father’s actions were confirmation of His acceptance of Jesus’ life, death, and teachings. This was a major aspect of the early preaching of the Apostles.

to you first. The Jews, because of their Covenant heritage, have the first opportunity to hear and understand the message of the gospel. However, they must respond in the same way as everyone else: repentance, faith, baptism obedience, and perseverance.

to bless you. This is what God wants for all mankind. However, He first sent Jesus to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

by turning every one of you from your wickedness. Salvation involves a change of mind about sin with a resulting change of actions and priorities. This change is evidence of true conversion! Eternal life has observable characteristics.

STEP FIVE . . .

SUMMARIZING the message

Peter and John were going up to the temple for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. A man crippled from birth was being carried to the Beautiful Gate where he then sat every day in order to beg from those entering the temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him. Peter and John not only talked to this man but they also gazed at him. They respected him and gave him value. Then they said, "Look at us." The man gave them his attention fully expecting to get something from them.

Peter didn't give the man what he wanted, but he gave him what he needed. Paraphrasing Peter, he said, "I don't have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I'll give you. In the name of Jesus Christ, get up!" Then 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. 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 Beautiful Gate. They were amazed at what had happened to him.

We must be always looking for situations where an act of compassion can make a big difference in someone's life. Opportunities to show compassion often occur in the mundane moments of everyday life. Such a moment seldom occurs in front of thousands. It's usually a split-second decision to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and show God's compassion to someone else - just as freely as we have received it.

Peter and John were humble enough to make sure the credit went where the credit belonged. After the miracle occurred and every one had seen it, Peter was intent on giving Jesus all the praise. He understood that attention for this miracle didn't belong to him. It belonged to Jesus.

Peter used this opportunity to point people to Jesus. In his early preaching Peter was a master at this. In his sermon Peter quotes Moses, Samuel, and a conversation that God had with Abraham, but ultimately, he wanted to point people to Jesus.

This Week's Memory Verse

¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 3:18-20a (ESV)

STEP SIX . . .

EXPLORING the passage through discussion

1. In Paul's message he defined a miracle as, "God poking into our world to make Himself known." Why does God do this? How does this help you, at least in one way, to understand the miracle in Acts 3?
2. Ultimately, what is the purpose of this particular miracle? Should miracles like the one in Acts 3 be our everyday expectation? Why or why not?
3. We tend to see people as interruptions. Someone has a question. Another person has a need requiring our time and attention. How did Peter and John handle this interruption in their quest to get to the temple?
4. Think about the ministry of Jesus. Someone has said, "Take a look at the life of Jesus. If it weren't for interruptions, Jesus Christ would not have had a ministry." How does this help you see the interruptions in your own schedule in a different way?
5. How important is it that we actually look at those in need? (Note: One of the meanings given for the word 'ignore,' is to close your eyes to). Could your spiritual influence improve if people saw you use acts of kindness just to show the love of God?
6. Compassion was demonstrated every day by those who brought this man to the temple. Why do you think he sat outside? Why do you think Peter and John gave him physical healing instead of charity?
7. When we show compassion, how can we be sure that Christ gets the credit? Do you have an example you can share?
8. What do you make of Peter's second sermon? What was the result? See Acts 4:1-4.

STEP SEVEN . . .

APPLYING the passage to my life

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the Word but doers ~ James 1:22

You're encouraged to journal your answers to the following questions in order to apply what you've learned this week.

1. How is God making Himself known to you?
2. What is going on beneath the surface of your life that Jesus is trying to change?
3. How is God calling you to serve your family, community, and world?

THE MISSION OF LOUDONVILLE COMMUNITY CHURCH

We are committed to reaching and teaching people to become devoted followers of Jesus Christ, connecting them to one another and sending them to serve their families, communities and world.

10 CORE BELIEFS OF A DISCIPLE

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

The Godhead *2 Corinthians 13:14*

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Deity and Sinlessness of Christ *Colossians 2:9*

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life.

The Sufficient Atonement of Christ *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*

We believe in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood.

The Resurrection and Return of Christ *Acts 1:3, 9-11*

We believe in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful man, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential and that a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit *John 14:16*

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

Unity in Christ *Ephesians 2:14-17*

We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Eternity *Revelation 21:22-27*

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

We believe that everything we have or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES OF A DISCIPLE

Undiluted Worship *Matthew 22:37-40*

Loving the Lord God with all of our physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual vigor and, my neighbor as myself.

Constant Abiding *John 15:1-11*

Abiding in Christ in order to be faithful and bear fruit.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

Reading the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for daily life.

Desperate Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

Praying to God to know Him, laying requests before Him and, finding direction for daily life.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

Fellowshipping with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, other people's lives and, in the world.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

Using my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Total Forgiveness *Ephesians 4:30*

Practicing forgiving others as God has forgiven me in Christ.

Tangible Compassion *Matthew 25:31-46*

Showing compassion to those in need and so minister to Jesus Himself.

Generous Giving *2 Corinthians 8:7*

Giving away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

God Space *Ephesians 6:19-20*

Increasing the quantity and quality of our gospel conversations.

10 CORE VIRTUES OF A DISCIPLE

Love - a sincere affection for others *1 John 4:10-12*

Love is acting in someone else's interest no matter who they may be, no matter how you feel, and no matter what it costs.

Joy - a delight unaffected by circumstances *John 15:11*

An inner delight in God that is sustained in spite of the changing seasons of life.

Peace - an abiding sense of harmony *Philippians 4:6-7*

Relationships are free from friction. Positively, it describes harmonious relations with others in the church.

Patience - a willingness to stick with things *Proverbs 3:3-4*

Being willing to live with a difficult situation for a long time—even if things are slow to change or never change.

Kindness - a sense of compassion in the heart *Job 6:14*

An inner disposition that puts others at ease and out of which kind actions flow.

Goodness - a goodness that flows outwardly *1 Thess. 5:15*

Choosing to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Faithfulness - an unwavering loyalty *Psalm 26:3*

Being the kind of people who keep our word to one another.

Gentleness/Humility - an attitude of humility without any entitlement; a lack of self-awareness *Philippians 4:5; 2:3-4*

Gentleness is power and strength under God's control. Humility is considering others above myself, if I consider myself at all.

Self-Control - an ability to direct your energy wisely

Titus 2:11-13

The strength to restrain our desires, emotions, and actions has to come from within rather than from some outside source.

Hope - a certainty of what is to come *Hebrews 6:19-20*

Coping with the hardships of life and with death because of hope in Christ.

Each week this Bible Study will feature either a core belief, practice or virtue vital for growing disciples.

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