**Acts 3:11-16**

**God’s healing power**

We are continuing with our series of sermons on the 3:16s, which are those chapter 3 verse 16 parts of the Bible that seem to be particularly important verses because they outline for us the key tenets of the Christian faith.

We’ve looked at quite a few so far and today, we are looking at Acts 3:16, which says 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 see.”

And this is an important verse from an important passage because it is telling us something about the healing power of Jesus and how he can bring healing to our lives. That can be physical healing, of course, but it can also be emotional healing or psychological healing or the healing of memories, or spiritual healing. We are all frail, vulnerable and broken human beings and all of us need the healing touch of Jesus in our lives and that’s what God offers to us today.

But in order to think a bit more deeply about this promise from God, let’s put this passage into a bit of context.

We are joining the story in the Book of Acts in which Peter and John had gone up to the temple to pray and they had healed a lame man, who was sitting at the Temple Gate. And all the people round about had seen this incredible miracle of healing and they were completely amazed at what they had witnessed. And here, in verse 12, Peter addresses the people and he asks them the question: “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?”

Peter had a sense of their amazement at this miracle but he was also concerned about a situation that was starting to arise in which those who had seen the miracle were starting to think that Peter and John had healed the man in their own power. The crowd around them didn’t really believe in a God who could perform miracles. Instead, they were ready to put their faith in Peter and John as miracle workers and Peter wants to prevent that situation arising.

And what Peter does is to call the crowd back to their heritage. He starts by saying, “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you?” He reminds them to consider their own history. He reminds them to look back over the history of their people. He reminds them to think about their own Scriptures, all of which attest to the fact that the God they worshiped was a God who has constantly brought healing in the past. So why should they be surprised if he did the same again that day?

And the same can be said for ourselves, of course. Why would we be surprised if God brings us healing? Why should we not expect God to bring us fullness of life? As we look back over our own personal experiences, as we look back over the history of the church, as we read the Bible, we see that we worship a God who constantly heals and renews. So why wouldn’t he want to do that for each one of us today?

But then Peter takes a really surprising approach. If he was wanting to convince the crowd of the healing power, the renewing power of Jesus, then we might expect him to say words of peace and comfort. But, in actual fact, he takes a completely different approach. Listen to what he says in verses 13-15: “The God of our ancestors has glorified his servantJesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead.”

Peter’s approach is to present the people with the facts of their guilt before God. Why on earth does he do that?

Well, Peter’s intent is that the crowd should receive the grace of God, freely offered to them. and receive God’s healing and new life. But in order to bring them to that point of acceptance, they first need to acknowledge their *need for grace*. Peter is saying to them that it is a fact that they rejected Christ Jesus. Peter is saying to them that it is a fact that they killed Christ Jesus. And as a result of their guilt, they need to receive healing by God’s grace.

For each one of us here today, we need to receive God’s grace. But in truth, we need first to recognize our need for it.

The problem for many people is that they want God to act in their lives, but treat God like a Genie-in-the-lamp who is there just to grant our every wish. And we get angry with God when he doesn’t.

Peter is saying that this is not appropriate.

We can only receive God’s healing power and grace when we are first convinced of our need for it and we are prepared to come before God in humility and prayer, recognizing our own weakness and frailty. As Peter says, these are the facts – they are the facts of faith. As he says in verse 15: “To this we are witnesses”.

So Peter introduces the theme of God’s healing power by making the crowd feel guilty. And guilt, as we know, is not a healthy emotion and it needs dealing with before it turns to fear and despair.

Now, each one of us, when we reflect on how unfaithful to God we have been, could succumb to a deep sense of guilt. We might even become fearful of God’s judgment on us, or despair that we will ever be acceptable to God. But for that spiritual sickness, there is a medicine: which is the grace of God and the healing power of God in our lives through which we can receive the healing of our souls and fullness of life in a relationship with Jesus Christ.

And that’s what Peter brings us to in Acts 3:16, where he says this: “And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesushas given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.”

Peter is stressing to the crowd that God responded to the brokenness of this lame man by bringing him healing and new life. And that healing acts as a sort of metaphor for how God deals with each of us in our own brokenness and frailty.

The man was not healed in his own strength.

The man was not healed by Peter and John.

The man who healed solely through the power of Jesus Christ, in whom he had faith.

And many of us here today will testify to the fact that when we have felt broken and vulnerable and weak or when we have been consumed by guilt about the past or when we have felt complete and utter despair, we have not been able to get through that in our own strength. The only way through these dark, dark times in our lives is through the graceful intervention of God.

As the Psalmist writes: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me…”

Through this healing, God is showing how he responds to human brokenness: he doesn’t leave us in a pit of despair. He doesn’t leave us in a state of brokenness, anguishing over our own guilt…

Instead, God meets us with grace and love and compassion and offers us healing through the powerful name of Jesus Christ.

The great truth of the Christian faith is that Jesus is God’s answer to our guilt.

Jesus is God’s answer to our brokenness.

Jesus is God’s answer to our despair.

Jesus is God’s answer…

And we all need to recognize that fact and respond to it.

There is no point in any of us trying to live a life pleasing to God in our own strength. We just can’t do it. There is no point us trying to work for self-healing or fullness of life in our own strength. We will never achieve it. That’s not because of lack of effort, but just because none of us are strong enough or good enough or wise enough to put ourselves right with God. As Paul says in Romans, “All of us have fallen short of the glory of God…”

But our weakness is no barrier to us because Jesus has done all the work for us by dying on the cross and defeating the power of sin and death. As the writer says in Isaiah, “By his stripes we are healed…”

Jesus is God’s answer…

Jesus is God’s answer to our brokenness and failings and our innate human weakness.

So what is there for us to do if we want to know God’s peace and healing in our lives? What is there for us to do if we want to be free of our sense of guilt about the past and our sense of fear or even despair for the future? The answer, from this verse in Acts 3:16, is very simple:

Have faith in Jesus.

Trust in what Jesus has done for you by dying on the cross.

Come before Jesus in humility, come before him in all your brokenness, and thank him for what he has done on the cross and receive by faith the healing that he has for you.

And as we realize afresh the power of what God has done for us in Jesus, so we will know what it is to experience new life, a fullness of life, that is only made possible for us as children of God.

Whatever weaknesses we are holding in our hearts today – Jesus is God’s answer…