

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, April 14th, 2024
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Repent and Turn Back
Third Sunday of Easter
Acts 3:1-21

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship

Sing praises to the Lord, you faithful;
We will give thanks to God's holy name.

Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning.
We will give thanks to God's holy name.

God has turned our mourning into dancing! Let us praise and not be silent!
Lord our God, we will give thanks to your holy name, now and always!

Prayer of Adoration and Invocation

God of the Risen Christ and the rising earth,
we come before you this day
giving thanks for all the wonder in your creation:
for the tiny perfection revealed in a baby's fingers grasping ours,
in each flower unzipping its jacket to greet the spring,
and each rock face worn by wind and water,
bearing its rugged beauty with your praise.
These details lift our hearts to praise you, too.
So let the Risen Christ lift our hearts this day,
that we may greet a new week
as an occasion to discover him in our midst,
making all things new with the springtime of your Spirit.
Receive our heartfelt worship, O God,
Creator, Christ and Spirit,
ever Three and ever One,
now and evermore. **Amen.**

Children's Hymn: "He's Got the Whole World in his Hands"

Call to Confession

Prepare the way of the Lord!
Let us make our confession to God.

Prayer of Confession

God of each and every life,
week by week we lay our lives before you,
acknowledging ways in which we fall short of your hope for us.
Today we confess we sometimes find it hard to forgive ourselves.
Things done long ago still haunt us.
We hear your forgiveness proclaimed,
yet your promise of a fresh start can ring hollow.
Forgive us if we think we are the one sinner who cannot be forgiven.
Forgive us when we cannot find the peace you offer.

Assurance of Pardon

Friends in Christ, while it is true we have all fallen short of God's intentions,
it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love in Jesus Christ.
To all who humbly seek the mercy of God, Jesus offers forgiveness and new life.
So be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another.

The 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Opening Hymn #275: "Jesus Shall Reign Where're the Sun" (V 1,2,5)

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run;
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

For him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head;
his name like fragrance sweet shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

Let every creature rise and bring
the honours due our glorious King;

angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the long Amen.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 116

I love the LORD, because he has heard
my voice and my pleas for mercy.

**2 Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**

**3 The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.**

**4 Then I called on the name of the LORD:
“O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!”**

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
our God is merciful.

**6 The LORD preserves the simple;
when I was brought low, he saved me.**

**7 Return, O my soul, to your rest;
for the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.**

8 For you have delivered my soul from death,
my eyes from tears,
my feet from stumbling;

**9 I will walk before the LORD
in the land of the living.**

10 I believed, even when I spoke:
“I am greatly afflicted”;

**11 I said in my alarm,
“All mankind are liars.”**

12 What shall I render to the LORD
for all his benefits to me?

**13 I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD,
14 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.**

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his saints.

16 O LORD, I am your servant;
 I am your servant, the son of your maidservant.
 You have loosed my bonds.
 17 I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving
 and call on the name of the LORD.
 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
 in the presence of all his people,
 19 in the courts of the house of the LORD,
 in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Music Ministry: “My Hope is Built On Nothing Less”

Prayer for illumination
(Congregant Prepared)

Scripture

Acts 3:1-21

3 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.

Sermon

Imagine being that beggar, sitting outside the temple every day, hoping to get enough to eat a little and maybe put a roof over your head. Along come two men, and you ask them for a bit of change. One of the men tells you that he has no money for you, instead he says that he has something better, some thing in the name of Jesus Christ, and he tells you to get up and walk.

You have been lame your whole life, never walked a day and here is this man proclaiming the name of another man you never knew telling you that somehow you are going to gain the ability to do something that you have never been able to do a day in your life. Hogwash.

Then he reaches his hand out to you and offers to help you up, you begin to experience a feeling in your limbs you have never felt before and suddenly you are standing. You're not leaning on people who are supporting you, you are standing on your own two legs, they are not the lame legs they were before, they are somehow strong and able to carry your weight as you walk. Unbelievable, a miracle.

It is just that a miracle, the lame legs of the beggar restored to the way that God hand intended them to be. This is the promise that God has given to his people when he returns.

Isaiah 35:5-6

**⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;**

**⁶ then shall the lame man leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.**

**For waters break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;**

Miracles change the way we live in wonderful ways; they bless us by restoring us to the way that God intended us to be when he created mankind.

Did you ever notice that every miracle that is performed by Jesus or of the disciples in the Bible is not like the superheroes in comic books, they are not leaping building in a single bound, or running faster than lightning. They are instead always things that alleviate suffering, things that restore the order of God into a world that has been corrupted by sin.

Why do you think that is? Why are all the miracles in the Bible about repairing what was broken in the fall and bringing peace to mankind that is suffering? It is simple, when God created the garden of Eden and placed mankind in it, the world was made perfectly in his image. Man was created to serve God and care for all of God's creation. Then man turned from God, questioned his word, and fell into sin. The corruption of sin entered into the lives of mankind and all forms of sickness and disease began to plague mankind, death became our fate, not eternal life, and we began to allow all forms of depravity and sin to take control of our hearts and minds.

God did not create blindness, or lameness or suffering. God did not create evil, greed, or perversion. All these things came about into our world not because God created them, but because we allowed them to take the place in our lives where God should have been. Every miracle in the Bible reminds us that God is not happy with the state of the world and seeks to return it to how it was meant to be.

Every miracle in the Bible points to the end of times, when God will restore the entirety of this world to Him, and there will be no more tears, no more suffering, no more illness as we live in His presence in New Jerusalem. The lame beggar had been healed because God was showing His faithful what life will be like in His eternal kingdom.

Now because this particular lame man was well known, everyone was surprised to see him up and walking. They are all curious about how someone who was lame from birth could make such a miraculous recovery. So, they gather around in curiosity, and Peter offers the truth behind the miracle.

Acts 3:11-16

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.

Peter wants to make it abundantly clear that he was not the man who healed the lame beggar and healed his limbs. Jesus is the one responsible, Jesus is the only one capable of restoring the broken and lost to their proper place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

He then drives home the point to those gathered around marveling at this miracle by telling them quite directly that they had a hand in releasing a murderer and in the execution of the

Son of God, the Author of Life, and the only one who can Restore this world to the way in which God intended it to be when it was created.

He then reaches a critical juncture.

Acts 3:17-19

¹⁷“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,

Repentance. **‘¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,’**
What is repentance?

In Acts 2 Peter says to people.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then in the Scripture today he describes what Repentance is, **‘Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,’**

Repentance is a heartfelt hurt, a sorrow about your sin, not because of the consequences that you may incur in this world, but because of the damage that you have done to your relationship with your creator.

Repentance and conversion to faith means to change your mind about what is right and wrong in this world and to begin to live your life according to the Word of God. Repentance means giving up your old way of life that is governed by the whims and ways of this world, and converting your way of living to one that is reflecting the truth of who Jesus Christ is into the world around you every day.

This is something that many people struggle with. They think that they can be followers of Christ without repenting and converting their way of thinking and living. They think that they can simply invoke the name of Jesus and lay claim to him and his miracles.

It was no different in the days of the apostles.

Acts 19:11-15

¹¹ And God was doing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched his skin were carried away to the sick, and their diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them. ¹³ Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists undertook to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those

who had evil spirits, saying, “I adjure you by the Jesus whom Paul proclaims.”¹⁴ Seven sons of a Jewish high priest named Sceva were doing this.¹⁵ But the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I recognize, but who are you?”

People say the power of Jesus, and they wanted to be part of the movement, but they also did not want to change their own worldly ways. I often quote Matthew 7 where Jesus says he does not recognize the false believers when they come to him in heaven, but as you can see it is also the powers of the devil himself that recognize the false believers in this world. These seven Jewish religious men thought that they could invoke the name of Christ in the world with repenting and converting, without changing who they were, and for it they paid a great price.

Acts 19:16-20

¹⁶ And the man in whom was the evil spirit leaped on them, mastered all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.¹⁷ And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled.¹⁸ Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices.¹⁹ And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver.²⁰ So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.

The evil spirit knew that the protection of God was not upon these men, even though they proclaimed his name. The evil spirit knew that they had no power because they were not true followers of Christ and it mastered them all, overpowering them and embarrassing them.

Yet, even in this show of evil there were some who came to faith. Some of those who had gathered to witness the Jewish religious leaders invoke the name of Christ, and some of the magicians, charlatans and sorcerers in the area, people who worshiped false gods and pagan rituals came together and burned their books in the presence of everyone.

Books that were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver. If those were denarii, that is roughly \$5.5 million dollars' worth of books. If they were silver talents, it would be closer to \$1.5 billion dollars' worth of books. Can you imagine the scene that this would have created in the market square where the fire was happening?

This supernatural event, where the evil spirit itself recognized the power of Jesus and his true followers, was enough to have all of these people throw out the sinful things in their life. These people repented of their ways and converting to a life of following Christ and that was the biggest miracle of the day.

They went from being non-Christians, people who lived and loved the ever-shifting ways of the world, believing in their own power and the power of false idols. To them the Gospel and Christianity seemed like a bad idea, why would they want to confess their sins, why would they

want to change the way that they live. They were enjoying their lives, they seemed to have all that they wanted, power, wealth, and pleasure. Yet when they were faced with the truth of their eternal destiny, those things of this world suddenly decreased in value.

They accept that if they wanted to have eternal life, they would have to give up the things of this world. Heaven does not allow dual citizenship. You either are with God or you are not, you cannot straddle the border of eternity.

Many modern-day self-proclaimed Christians are trying to do just that, to straddle a life between Christianity and the world. A life that is sometimes obedient to Christ and at other time fully engaged in the world. They are like the Jewish religious leaders trying to invoke the name of Christ at an evil spirit, not knowing that they do not have God with them, and that at best they will be beat up by the evils of this world and at worst they will hear from Christ 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness' on the day of judgement.

This is why the call of Paul to the crowd to '**Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out,**' is just as important in the world today as it was to the men he spoke to on that day. The church needs to return to proclaiming the call for repentance from the pulpit, the call to repent and convert your life to God.

Repentance begins by confessing your wrongs. We are all sinners, each and every one of us and we sin against God every day. Repentance is us knowing that we have sinned and coming to God and confessing. Confessing means we do not make excuses for our sin; we do not shift the blame to others for our sin. Confessing means we admit to ourselves and to God that we are indeed sinners and in need of his grace and mercy in our lives.

Confession leads to Contrition. Your emotions kick in and you are bothered by your sin, you begin to feel shame and guilt because of the sins that you are allowing to occur in your life. When you confess your sins to God, when you confess your sins to others, even when you confess your sins to yourself it should bother you. This is repentance, if you sin and feel nothing you need to spend some time in prayer to determine your own relationship with God.

Repentance is more than just the action of saying, 'I am sorry, I did wrong, I am guilty' repentance is a change of attitude. Repentance goes beyond a change of behavior; it is a change of heart.

Repentance occurs at the very heart of our being, in our roots, it changes how we live our lives and who and what we place our trust in. We give up the things and ways of ourselves and this world and trust and obey God in our lives.

Repentance means change, you have to change. You will not change all at once, but it will be little by little as the Holy Spirit works in you, making you recognize your sin, repent from your sin, and be repulsed by your sin. Repentance means you are stopping your sins before they happen, you begin to show the love of God to others in the world around you. Are you ever

sinless and perfect? NO! You will always sin, but when you sin, you repent, you hate that you have sinned, and you never want to do it again. Repentance means you begin to hate the things that you use to love, you hate the sinful things you did, and you seek God to help you to never do it again.

Repentance is like faith; it begins with an intellectual understanding that sin is wrong. Which leads to an emotional response to sin, sorrow, shame and guilt and a beginning of hatred of sin in your life and in the lives of others. Finally, it results in a personal decision to turn away from sin, to renounce it, forsake it and remove it from your life as you begin to walk alongside Jesus and to trust and obey in his Scriptures.

The truth is that we are all much more wicked than we admit, but we are also more loved and accepted by the Lord our God than we can ever imagine. All of the promises and covenants of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. People all throughout time who have been captured by this world, who live in sin, live in fear, live in hopelessness and poverty have found salvation when they have been washed clean by the blood of the lamb. The pathway to hope, joy, and eternal life lies through Jesus Christ.

Peter refers to Jesus in his conclusion.

Acts 3: 20-21

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.

Jesus is called the Servant, the Holy and Righteous One, the Author of Law, A Prophet like Moses, The Christ, and the seed of Abraham. Jesus is God and Peter wants to make sure that those gathered there listening to him understand this fact. Jesus is our only Prophet, Priest, and King.

Jesus is our Prophet. He is the only one who always tells the truth, he is the one who reveals God to us. His will is the father's will and with the Holy Spirit they rule as the One True Living God. For this reason, we can place our absolute trust and obedience in every word of the Scripture.

As the prophet he represents the Holy Trinity to us, and as the priest he represents us in the presence of God. As the prophet he speaks to us of God, as the priest he speaks to God of us. He is our holy representative in the Kingdom of Heaven the same way he was our representative here on earth when he took our place in judgment for our sins. He was our stand-in, our debt of blood for our sins in this world was paid by his blood on the cross of Calvary. He died in our place so that he could bring us into relationship with God.

This is why he is our king. He bought our freedom from the sinful nature of this world with the most precious things he had, his life. He died for our sins and for that reason we should trust and obey his commands. He is our king and should always be the supreme authority in our lives. He is all that we need in this world.

This is what Peter teaches us in the Scripture today.

Acts 3: 3-6

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!"

Every person who walked by this lame beggar would have heard him cry out for alms. On the way into temple, on the way out of temple, on the way by the temple, the beggar would have cried out for alms. Like a song stuck on repeat. The beggar cried out for money, as if by some chance he could get enough money and all of the problems in his life would be fixed.

The world is no different, people are always crying out for more money, like somehow more money will erase all of the problems that they have in their lives. The issue was not money, it was the brokenness of his legs that prevented him from living his life.

People in this world do not need wealth, power, and fame to fix the brokenness, sickness, and evils in their lives, they need Jesus.

Peter looks at this man who has spent his entire life calling out for others to give him money and tells him, 'You do not need silver or gold. You do not need money! You need Salvation through Jesus Christ, you need restoration to the plan that God has for your life, you need hope and joy in the knowledge of your Savior and the eternal life that awaits you.'

Peter says the one thing you need is for your sins to be forgiven. The only thing anyone really needs, the only thing anyone has to have in their life is a relationship with God, based on his grace and forgiveness.

All you need to do is, '**Repent, and turn back, so that your sins may be blotted out and you may enjoy eternity with God in the Eternal Kingdom of the New Jerusalem.**'

Let us Pray,

Praise, Thanks, Confession of Faith

Glory be to you, almighty Father,
you have given to those who fear you

the heavenly bread of life,
 that we may be mindful of the marvels
 which you have done on the earth,
 by sending us your only Son,
 fully human,
 born of a pure virgin.
 We give you thanks, holy Father,
 for you created us before we were,
 and while we were still sinners you made us partakers of your heavenly grace;
 through your Son, our Lord and God,
 who with you and the Holy Spirit
 makes, orders, and rules all things, now and forever. **Amen.**

Source: Dunstan of Canterbury

Hymn: "What Grace is Mine"

What grace is mine that He who dwells in endless light
 Called through the night to find my distant soul
 And from his scars poured mercy that would plead for me
 That I might live and in His name be known

CHORUS

So I will go wherever He is calling me
 I lose my life to find my life in Him
 I give my all to gain the hope that never dies
 I bow my heart take up my cross and follow him

What grace is mine to know His breath alive in me?
 Beneath His wings my wakened soul may soar
 All fear can flee for death's dark night is overcome
 My Saviour lives and reigns forever more.

CHORUS

Invitation to Offering

Offering

Offertory Prayer
(Congregant Prepared)

Closing Hymn #290: “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise” (V 1,3,4)

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes;
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish like leaves on the tree,
and wither, and perish; but naught changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: oh help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

Pastoral Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
We draw near to you in prayer this day,
trusting that your love does change lives
and your resurrection brings renewal and redemption into the world God loves.
As we lay before you the concerns on our hearts today,
we pray that you will draw near to the people and situations we name
and bring each one the gift that is needed:

We lay before you, Lord, the concerns we share from the news headlines
and the many world situations where hope and change are desperately needed.

We lay before you, Lord, those who are in hospital or care
and all those who struggle with illness, pain, or health burdens of any sort;
and we remember those facing grief and loss, bearing burdens of sorrow and worry.

We lay before you, Lord, families under stress, relationships that are strained,
friends and neighbours in need of reconciliation,
and we pray for the healing of divisions in our country.

Loving God,
we believe that you hear our prayers and will be faithful to our requests and concerns.
Use us in every opportunity that presents itself to serve you
by serving our neighbours near and far.
We pray in the name of our Risen Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Benediction

Go out into the world in peace;
have courage;
hold on to what is good;
return no one evil for evil;
strengthen the fainthearted;
support the weak, and help the suffering;
honor all people;
love and serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit in all you do.
Amen.