

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflictive World

Acts 3:1-26

There are several interesting details in the reading from Acts, chapter 3. First, it is important to take special note that the Apostles did not abandon the usage of their Jewish piety. They observed the Jewish hours of prayer. And so, it is important to understand that Christianity is not a different religion from the Old Testament but a continuation of the faith – a continuation of the faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Too often, we look at past traditions and want to cast them off. However, the traditions and piety of the past should only be cast off if they obstruct or interfere with the Gospel.

And so, when dealing with traditions, we have an ethic that we must follow. It goes like this:

1) Is the man-made tradition Christian? Does it promote or prohibit the Gospel? Will the

tradition undercut the doctrine of Justification or promote it clearly within the church?

2) Does the man-made tradition respect the historic faith, and does it honor the wisdom of the faithful saints that traveled before us?

3) Is the handling of the man-made tradition handled with respect and love towards one's neighbor and fellow churchman?

Looking at the criteria above, it helps us understand why Luther opposed indulgences but at the same time did not abolish the use of other Catholic traditions. Using the criteria above it helps us understand why the Apostles still prayed during certain hours while at the same time called out hardened unbelief.

Keep in mind that when dealing with aspects of the Christian faith that there is a certain amount of Catechesis that is required of new believers. In other words, one cannot look at our traditions and say, "That is too difficult for new believers to understand, so we must change our liturgy and traditions!" No! Catechesis (teaching) is what we use to bring new believers into the faith and traditions of those who have come before us.

Secondly, in our text, we notice that the lame man was brought before people to receive alms. Peter and John did not have gold or silver to give him. But the man was healed in the name of Jesus. So, three things: A) The church is not about giving bling! The church has never been about making people rich or prosperous in worldly things. The church is about Christ! B) The healing that was conducted was not done by the power of Peter or John. It was done according to the 'name' and 'power' of Jesus. C) As stated before, there were many miracles done by the Apostles. These miracles were done for the sake of establishing the Gospel. The miracles were signs meant to grab peoples' attention so that they could listen. But listen to what? The answer, to listen to the news of Christ – crucified and resurrected. Tragically though, people throughout the ages want miracles but not the Christ. They want the hand out but not the one who gives.

Finally, in our text, it is important to note Peter's address. Note that in verses 11-12 that Peter made sure to point away from himself and John. Then in verses 13-ff that he preached – Law! And then, in verse 17, Peter calls them brothers. He shifts to Gospel!

As a special note, consider the words "repent" and "turn" in verse 19. Repent is to have a change of mind; turn is to come back. Reflect on these words a bit more within their context.



