

Welcome to CenterPoint. Good to see you all tonight. Before we spend some time in prayer, we'll continue our study of the book of Acts for a few minutes. So we're going to pick up tonight in Acts chapter 3 and read from verse 11 through verse 26. of this chapter. You'll remember from last week that, to put this in context, Peter and James were going into the temple and encountered the lame man outside the temple and healed him. They did not have silver and gold, so they could not give the man silver and gold, but what they had They did give to him, and that was the healing power and the message of the gospel, and they gave him Christ, and he was healed miraculously. So what we read here in this passage, beginning in verse 11, is the aftermath of that, what happened immediately after this miraculous healing of the Lord. So let's pick up reading in chapter three, beginning with verse 11. While he, meaning the man that was just healed, clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. 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? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, 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. But you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you. And you killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead. To this, we are witnesses. 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. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent, therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, 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. 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. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people. And all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came after him also proclaim these days. 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. God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. This is God's holy word. Well, we see that Peter and John did not give this crippled man outside the temple silver and gold because they had none to give. That is not the treasure that they possessed. What they gave him is what they had, and that was the Lord Jesus, the saving, healing, redeeming power of Christ, greatest treasure possible. And it created quite a spectacle when this man was healed. It created a crowd. Miracles, when they happen, typically do generate excitement, and people want to see what's going on. People want miracles performed for themselves, and so they are attracted to what's just happened, begin to gather around. So it caused a bit of a frenzy outside the temple that day, as people are rushing to the apostolic team of Peter and John. Notice that Peter and John aren't off doing ministry by themselves, but following the example of Jesus Christ, who taught them to go out two by two, they are doing team ministry. And so this crowd rushes up to them in a frenzy, wanting something for themselves, to the apostolic team of Peter and John. And Peter seizes this opportunity of this gathering,

excited crowd, and launches into this magnificent sermon that in many ways is a complimenting sermon to the Pentecost sermon that he preached not long ago. Has a lot of the same themes in it, but also some different information. So it provides a perfect compliment to that sermon. Now the content of this sermon as we look at it may seem a bit counterintuitive to us. This might not be the way that we would go about preaching this sermon with the gathering crowd coming around wanting to hear something to tickle their ears. This is not a politically correct sermon. This is not a touchy feely sermon. This is probably not what we would call a winsome sermon. It's not a safe sermon. because it's not about a safe savior. But as was normally used to describe the great preacher Martin Lloyd-Jones, this is an example of logic on fire. This is Peter just preaching the cold, hard truth of the gospel. He is direct, he's clear, he's simple, and yet this is a very complex portrait of the Lord Jesus with lots of different sources from the Old Testament. So I'm just making two major points tonight. One of those points is it's not about the messenger. It is not about us. It is not about our ministries. The second point is it is all about Jesus. He is the source of this healing power. He's the source of all blessing. He is the topic of the sermon. He is what it's all about. And Peter and John are very quick to point away from themselves and point to Jesus. So notice here that they immediately, when this crowd rushes up to them in a frenzy, immediately divert attention away from themselves. Certainly they must have been tempted to seize the moment and to make a name for themselves. but they divert attention away from themselves personally, away from the miracle that has just happened. And they say, why are you looking at us as if there's anything special about us, as if the power to heal came from us? This is not from us at all. So immediately they point away from themselves to Christ. It's a reminder that it is so easy in life to get fixated on the gifts that God gives. rather than focusing on him, the giver himself. It's so easy to make idols of the benefits that we receive from Christ and end up, ironically, overlooking Christ himself, the giver of those gifts. Well, Peter and John could have made a name for themselves that day. They could have launched a ministry that was all about them. They could have milked this cash cow to death. They could have stepped up on a pedestal because this crowd was ready to put them on a pedestal and to perhaps even worship them, but they voluntarily stepped down off the pedestal and they take a demotion and they say, it is not by our power. Don't look at us. Don't expect anything directly from us. We are conduits of this power. We are not reservoirs of it. It's a reminder to us that in our ministries, in our lives, in our discipleship, we are not the points. If God should see fit to use any of us in the helping or the healing or even the salvation of someone else, it's not because there's anything inherently good or worthy about us. It's not as if we are indispensable with our gifts and talents. It is because the Christ we serve is worthy. He is all in all. He is the one that we point away from ourselves to. He's the one that deserves all the glory. So the best thing that we can do is simply be road signs along the road pointing ahead to the real destination, the ultimate destination, which is Christ. So notice here that Peter does not aspire to be a great preacher here. He aspires to be a crystal clear preacher of a great Christ. And there's a big difference there. It is not about Peter himself. He's simply the messenger pointing to the one who is the message. So it's not about us. It's not about the messengers. My second point is it's all about Jesus. Our discipleship, our ministry, our lives, our gifts and talents is all about giving Christ the glory. So Peter preaches an extremely Christocentric message, a message that's all about Jesus, saturated with Jesus from beginning to

end. He doesn't do it to appeal to felt needs, though he may start there, but he ends up addressing their ultimate need, which is for forgiveness of sins. And they may have thought, what sins do we have to be forgiven of? What do you mean, sins? And so Peter makes great use of the second person plural here, which in the South, of course, is y'all. But he uses this word again and again. You delivered Jesus over to be crucified. You denied the Holy One. You killed the author of life. What a phrase that is. You killed the author of life. And the crowd may have been thinking, okay, Peter, stop beating around the bush. Tell us what you really have on your mind here. But he tells them, as a faithful minister, that they have offended God. He doesn't try to make them feel good about it. And he doesn't do it because he hates them. He does it, on the contrary, because he loves them and needs for them to hear the real truth. Peter pulls no punches here because to mollycoddle people is not to do them any favors. To not tell them the truth about their status before a holy God is not to do them any favors at all. Too much is at stake to beat around the bush. And so when Peter did a similar thing at Pentecost, it had a great result, as you remember. 3,000 souls became believers on that day. Many, many thousands turned from their sins to Christ. So it arrested people in their tracks when he told them this at Pentecost. We would expect the same thing to happen here, and true to form, it does. These people are thinking, what shall we do? And Peter tells them, in no uncertain terms, repent. You've got to make a 180. You've got to turn from your sins. You've got to turn from your rejection of Jesus. You've got to turn to him in repentance. And it cuts people to the quick, and they have almost an Isaiah moment. You remember from Isaiah chapter six, when Isaiah gets this devastating view of the glory of God in the temple, what does he say? He says, woe is me. For I am a man of unclean lips, a dwelling of people of unclean lips. I've seen the Lord. Gets a glimpse of the holiness of God and it slays him, it cuts him to the quick, generates repentance in him. Something very similar happens here. So Peter really preaches their sins and their sinfulness to them. But it's not as though Peter is insensitive here, is it? He actually mitigates a little bit these words of conviction. He takes a step back and he says, I know that you people did this out of ignorance. You didn't know what you were doing at the time. Paul says something similar in 1 Corinthians when he says, none of the rulers of this age understood this hidden mystery of God that we as the apostles impart to you for if you had, you would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And even Jesus, when he's hanging on the cross, forgives his enemies, doesn't he? And he says, forgive them, Father. What was the basis of Jesus asking that? Because they know not what they do. They're sinning out of ignorance. And so there's something there. And truly, in the Old Testament, there is a distinction between sins done in ignorance and sins done presumptuously. In other words, knowing something is sinful and in a hard-hearted and high-handed manner doing it anyway, assuming that God will be gracious because that's what God does. Catherine the Great famously said one day, I shall be an autocrat. That's my business and the good Lord will forgive me because that's his business. It's a very presumptuous attitude. I can live the way I want to. There's no need for contrition. There's no need for repentance. There's no need for me to feel bad about my sins because God will forgive me. God is gracious and that's what he'll do. That is presumptuous sin and that is even worse than sinning in ignorance. Now both are bad. And both ignorant sins and presumptuous sins are both bad enough to send us to hell if we don't repent from them. But presumptuous sins are worse than sinning in ignorance. And so Peter is making a point here when he says that these sins were done in

ignorance. Now he's saying, now that you know who Jesus is, I'm telling you the truth about him. If you continue in your sins, then you're compounding your guilt to your own destruction. So he goes on to preach to them about who Christ is. So they're ignorant, but they have no excuse for their ignorance. I was once pulled over by a lady police officer around Waycross, Georgia. I think the year was about 1993. And it was my first time being pulled over on this country road. And she, I remember very distinctly, was a no-nonsense kind of police officer. And I rolled down the window of my Oldsmobile, and she said, son, do you know what the speed limit is on this road? And I said, no ma'am, I don't. And she said, it's 65, do you know how fast you were going? I said, probably a lot faster than that, right? And she said, yeah, 73. And I said, I'm sorry, I really did not know 65 was the speed limit. And she looked at me and kind of gave me a half smile as if to say, I understand what you're saying. I even sympathize a bit, but not knowing the speed limit is not an excuse because it's clearly posted about two miles in the rear view mirror. I understood, and she wrote me a ticket, and I learned a very painful lesson that day. And Peter is giving the same lesson to this crowd. You are ignorant. of what the Bible teaches, the Old Testament teaches about Christ. But you have no excuse for that ignorance, because it is clear in the Old Testament who Jesus is. After the resurrection, Jesus preaches on the Emmaus Road to those travelers, doesn't he? How does he do that? Well, he goes through the Old Testament, through the law and the prophets, and he preaches from the law and prophets all those passages that speak about himself. And so the Old Testament is clear in its portrait of Jesus. And Peter spends some time relieving them of their ignorance and telling them from the Old Testament who this savior is whom they have rejected. And so he says in verse 19, turn back so that your sins might be blotted out so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord. What a beautiful and complete salvation the Lord Jesus gives us. There's both a negative component to this and a positive component. First of all, the negative component, he says, repent so that your sins may be blotted out. When I was a child, I'm telling my age a little bit here, but in schools, in classrooms, normally there was a chalkboard, a green chalkboard, rather than a dry erase board. And at the end of the day, the teacher would often ask one of the students to come up and take a wet sponge and go across the dry, dusty chalkboard and erase all the chalk marks as well as the dust and to clean that chalkboard off. There's something very satisfying to me about doing that, taking that wet sponge and making that chalkboard clear so that it would almost gleam that green, clean color. Well, that's the idea of blotting out. Our sins, though they are scarlet in the Lord's sight, can be washed as white as snow by the blood of the Lamb of God, whose blood washes those sins away, blots those sins out, so that when God sees us, God the Father sees us, he does not see us guilty, stained with sin, he sees us pristine and white with the righteousness of Christ, having all our sins blotted out and wiped away, washed away by the blood of the Lamb. So there's that negative component of having our sins done away with, washed away, cleansed, gone. But then there's this positive idea of us receiving refreshing from the Lord, being given a new life, being given regeneration, being given new hearts, being restored, being refreshed. And so both of these things come from the Lord of glory. And they both hinge, you'll see, on this responsibility these people have to repent. Repent so that your sins will be washed away, so that you will receive refreshing from the Lord. And you might say, I can't repent. I don't have it in me to decisively and completely and consistently turn away from my besetting sins and turn to Christ and

follow him. I've tried again and again and again. I just can't find it within myself. And I'm almost despairing of myself and my ability to repent of my sins. What do I do? Well again, God is so gracious to us that God not only requires repentance from us, but he also provides what he requires. In the words of Saint Augustine, he provides the wherewithal, the ability to repent. The Westminster standards call it the grace of repentance. As if to remind us that repentance is not something that we conjure up and generate out of our own strong willpower. It is something that we go to Christ for and something he does within us. And we're told this in verse 26 of this passage in a beautiful way. In verse 26, Peter reminds these people that God not only requires it, he provides it. And there he says, God sent his servant to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. See who does the turning there? It is not the person, it is God who does the turning in the person. He turns us from our wickedness. So only God can change your heart. If you're struggling with repentance in a certain area, and you're falling on your face again and again and again, and you're despairing of yourself, it's actually a good place to be, because out of that self-despair, you can turn in desperation to the Lord and say, Lord, do in me what I cannot do in myself, and he promises to do it. And Peter knows about this, doesn't he? If anyone knows about the depth of falling away from Christ and the joy of being restored to Christ, it is Peter, isn't it? Peter knows. He himself denied the holy and righteous one, the Lord of glory. That night, Satan wanted to sift him as wheat, and wanted to sift all the apostles as wheat. But what kept Peter from plummeting over the edge? Jesus says, I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail. And when you have turned back, when you have repented, then strengthen your brothers. That is exactly what Peter is doing here. Why did Judas go on and plummet into the abyss of perdition and suffer in hell while Peter was restored and used so mightily? Well, very simply, because Jesus turned Peter from his wickedness back to himself. He can do that for the crowds who were gathered here. And He can do it for me, and He can do it for you. He has done it for me. And that is the source of our turning away from wickedness. We go to Him. We don't just simply try harder to do better. We go to Christ, and He does in us what we can't do for ourselves. So Peter goes on to preach about this wonderful savior from the pages of the Old Testament. Tells us that he's a prophet like Moses who doesn't just deliver his people from physical slavery in Egypt to a physical Egyptian master by the blood of the Passover lamb. He also frees his people from spiritual slavery to the prince of darkness by the blood of the Passover lamb who is Jesus. He goes on to tell us that Jesus is the suffering servant that we hear about in Isaiah, who was bruised for your iniquities, who was chastised for your transgressions, who heals you with his stripes. He goes on to tell us that he is the seed of Abraham, through whom not only Israel, but the whole world is blessed. He's the one who saves your soul now, but will also one day restore your soul with your body in the new heavens and the new earth and give you something that is only hinted at in this passage. Notice that he says that when this man was healed outside the temple, he was given perfect health. Well, one day that man died and his soul went to heaven, but his body went to the grave. But one day, when the Lord comes back in glory, which this passage talks about, he will reunite our souls who've gone to be with him with our bodies in a beautiful way, and we will live with him in the new heavens and the new earth with resurrected bodies, and we will enjoy that perfect health that this passage only hints at. So those who listen to this Jesus and every word that comes from his mouth, Peter says, are forgiven. Their sins are blotted out and they are refreshed.

But those who don't, he says, are destroyed. Everything, eternity for every soul that's ever lived hinges on what we do with Christ and his words. Eternity is at stake. So in our ministries, in our lives, in our discipleship, whether it's seniors' ministries or pastoral care or whether it's missions' ministries or whatever it is, The thing that we can do in our ministries that matters more than anything else is to consistently point away from ourselves as if we ourselves could do anything worthwhile or eternally significant and point to Christ. who is the source of every blessing for the believer, both here and in the life to come. So may we do what Peter exhorts us to do here, and what he sets the example for, pointing away from himself, don't look at me as if I have the answers, or I have the power, I have the ability. Look at Jesus, my Savior, who has made all the difference. So with that in mind, let's go to the Lord through the mediating power of the Lord Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit, and let's spend some time praying to this great God who has saved us in a marvelous way. Why don't we begin tonight praying for the Lexington Church plant and Pastor Jeff Tell and his wife, Aubrey, and his children. and their core group that has been meeting together to pray. Let's pray that many folks will be attracted to the ministry of this church and that the Lord will add his rich blessing to it and that it will prosper and that many souls will be saved and disciplined in the days to come. So let's spend a few moments praying for the Lexington Church Plant and Pastor Jeff Tell.