

<sup>12</sup> So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: “Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. <sup>14</sup> But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, <sup>15</sup> and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. <sup>17</sup> Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. <sup>18</sup> But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before.

Text: Acts 3:12-20 A 4/8/18 1 John 5:1-6 John 20:19-31 Psalm 111 Responsive Psalm: 16  
Hymns: 733, 198, 728, 761

## **GREAT BLESSINGS FROM OUR LIVING SAVIOR**

Dear fellow believers in Christ, our living Savior,

It was only a few months earlier that Jesus died. His disciples had thought that their hopes about Him being the Messiah/Savior died with Him. But Jesus rose again and gave them renewed, certain hope. As we'll see from our text this morning, the living Savior gave them, and He gives us, many great blessings.

Peter and John had gone to the temple. There was a man there who had been unable to walk from birth. Every day his friends carried him to the temple to beg. Peter told him that although he didn't have any money to give him, he would give him what he did have. Peter told him, “*In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk,*” then Peter helped him up. “*So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them – walking and leaping and praising God.*” What an amazing blessing Jesus gave that man!

Everyone who saw the man crowded around him and Peter and John. Peter told them that he hadn't healed the man by his own power, but by the power of Jesus Christ. He then told them, “*The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified His Servant Jesus.*” With those words Peter let them know that the God in whom they and he and John believed had sent the Messiah, and that Jesus is the Messiah. Peter continued, “*But you denied the Holy One and Just, ... and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.*”

How Jesus had blessed Peter and John and the other disciples! Just after Jesus died they went into hiding. But now Jesus had given them the strength and joy to publicly bear witness to Him. They didn't hesitate to tell their fellow Jews what they needed to hear so they could be saved. Peter confronted them with the truth that they were among those responsible for the death of the Messiah. And he told them the wonderful news that Jesus was no longer dead because God had raised Him back to life!

We don't always speak up about Jesus and His Word when we could and should. More and more pressure is being put on us Christians to conform to the world's growing immorality, and we're tempted to 'hide our light under a basket' (Mt. 5:14-16). With the psalmist we pray, "*Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare Your praise*" (Ps. 51:15). The Lord blessed His disciples with stronger faith, and greater love for others. He blesses us in the same way. The Lord helps us to tell others what they need to hear about sin, and about salvation in Jesus, so they can be saved.

Peter told the people, "*Faith in [Jesus'] name has made this man strong.*" A few months earlier Peter had trusted too much in himself, and ended up denying Jesus. Now Peter placed his trust in Jesus to heal the lame man, and Jesus healed him. The 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of Hebrews tells us about many heroes of faith in the Bible, saying that "*from weakness [they] were made strong*" (v. 34). We are weak, but Jesus is strong. Don't trust in yourself, trust in Jesus. Scripture urges us, "*Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might*" (Eph. 6:10). Jesus gives us the strength we need each day to live for Him, to stand up to the devil and the world and our sinful flesh, and to bear witness to Him and His Word in our increasingly hostile world.

Referring to Jesus' crucifixion Peter told the people, "*I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers.*" On the cross Jesus prayed for all who wanted Him dead, "*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing*" (Lk. 23:34). They thought Jesus deserved to die for blasphemy for saying He is the Son of God, not realizing that Jesus truly is the Son of God. We know that the real reason Jesus died on the cross was for their sins, and our sins, and the sins of the whole world.

Peter said, "*Those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.*" The Jews thought that the Messiah would be a great earthly leader. Peter reminded them that the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah said He would suffer and die to save them and the world from our sins (Is. 53; etc.). As the promised Messiah, that's exactly what Jesus did.

Peter told the people, "*Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*" Just because they misunderstood Jesus it was no excuse for rejecting Him, refusing to believe in Him, and wanting Him dead. They needed to repent of their sins. "*Repent*" in the original text means "*change one's mind.*" They needed to understand that their unbelief and what they did to

Jesus were wrong, and tell God they were sorry for it. They needed to “*be converted,*” which in the original is “*be turned.*” God had to work repentance in their hearts, and God had to turn their hearts from unbelief to faith in Jesus.

Jesus died because His enemies hated Him and had Him killed. Jesus allowed Himself to be put to death because of our sins. “*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows*” (Is. 53:4). Jesus took the punishment for our sins in our place on the cross, so we won’t be punished in hell. Jesus worked repentance in our hearts and converted us, so we understand our sinfulness, are sorry for our sins, and trust in Him for our forgiveness and salvation. Jesus has blessed us with the gift of His life, and the faith to believe in Him and be saved.

Peter told the people, “*Repent ... and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*” “*Blotted out*” in the original means “*cancel debt,*” “*wipe out.*” On the cross Jesus paid the debt we owed because of our sins. For Jesus’ sake God has “ *canceled the debt*” of our sins, and “*wiped out*” our sins. God assures us in His Word, “*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins*” (Is. 43:25). Jesus blesses us with the complete, unconditional forgiveness of all of our sins.

Peter told the people that when we repent of our sins and receive God’s forgiveness “*times of refreshing ... come from the presence of the Lord.*” What a beautiful way of expressing what Jesus does for us! Our sins and guilt sometimes weigh heavily on us. When we come to Jesus in repentance He takes all of our sin and guilt away. Jesus gives us peace with God, and peace with ourselves. He invites us, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Mt. 11:28). Scripture says, “*Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new*” (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus blesses us with true, lasting peace, and a new life in Him.

Peter had assured the people that God would forgive them for what they did to Jesus and for all of their other sins as well. Now he assured them, “*[God will] send [you] Jesus.*” They would see Jesus again on Judgment Day. But they didn’t need to be afraid of Him. Jesus will come, not as their Judge to condemn them, but as their Savior to take them to heaven!

Jesus tells us that when the Judgment Day comes, “*Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near*” (Lk. 21:28). By faith in Jesus we don’t fear the Judgment Day, we look forward to it. We can’t wait for that day when “*[God will] send Jesus*” to take us to heaven. “*Let not your heart be troubled;*” our Savior assures us, “*you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also*” (Jn. 14:1-3). Jesus blesses us with our home in heaven.

If Jesus had not risen from the dead, we would be lost. But Jesus has risen! “For Your blessings of faith, love, forgiveness, strength, peace, new life, physical healing, eternal life in heaven, and so much more we thank You, Jesus, our living Savior!” Amen.