**April 18, 2021 Acts 3:12-19**

***Turn Around***

**Scripture:** Acts 3:12-19 NRSV (12)

*… Peter addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? (13)The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. (14)But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, (15)and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. (16)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 Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. (17)"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. (18)In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. (19)Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out…*

**Notes:**

1. Peter questions their ***thoughts***.
   1. They have the same power of the ***Holy*** ***Spirit***.
   2. This man received his legs by ***believing*** in the name of Jesus.
   3. That is what ***faith*** in Jesus can do.
   4. Peter knows the people and religious leaders acted out of ***ignorance*** of who Jesus is.
   5. For people to receive the same blessing, mercy, and grace, they must ***repent***.
2. What is ***repentance***?
   1. Turn around one’s life to go in the ***right*** direction.
   2. Repentance is “turning to ***God***.”
3. Repentance is Turning from the ***Past***.
   1. Repentance begins by ***recognizing*** life is moving in the wrong direction.
   2. To repent means we ***step*** ***back*** and ***take*** ***stock***.
4. Repentance is a Turning Toward the ***Future***.
   1. Many people ***never*** get around to repenting.
   2. Many realize they are headed in the wrong direction, but decide to ***continue*** on the wrong road.
   3. “Repent, because God is about to do something ***wonderful***!”
   4. Turning in a new direction gives us a ***hope***.
5. Repentance is a Turning around in the ***Present***.
6. ***Why*** should we repent?
   1. When we are busy traveling down the wrong road in life we ***break*** the heart of God.
   2. We must ***love*** God so much that that we would do everything in our power to keep from ***breaking*** His heart.
7. Our ***Father*** in heaven sees what we are doing.
   1. Are you traveling down the wrong road, ***turn*** ***around***.
   2. ***Turn*** ***away*** from the wrong direction and turn back to the Lord.

**Script:**

An elderly man is driving down the interstate and receives a call from his wife. “Honey are you ok?” she asks, to which he replied, “Yes, why?” “I saw a news report that somebody is driving down the interstate in the wrong direction.” He responded, “One? I believe there are hundreds driving in the wrong direction.” That is something I never experienced, traveling the wrong direction on the interstate. But I have made plenty of wrong turns in my travels and my life. Times when I traveled in the wrong direction for a long time only to realize it after seeing a road sign.

We all make wrong turns from time to time, but knowing there is no shame in turning around is the key to getting back on the right track and to the desired destination in an adequate amount of time. Many times, though, we refuse to make the necessary changes and travel out of our way.

The answer to this dilemma is simple, to turn around. In our passage we get instruction, regarding how to live the life that God wants and how we can stay on the right track. And it begins by turning around Stand with me and join me in your Bible to our Sermon Passage in Acts 3:12-19 .

(12)… Peter addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? (13)The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. (14)But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, (15)and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. (16)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 Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you. (17)"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. (18)In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. (19)Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out… Acts 3:12-19 NRSV

Let’s review the first part of this chapter before moving to our text today, so we can better understand what Peter is talking about. You see Peter and John are going to the Temple one afternoon, when a crippled man, a man lame from birth, saw Peter and John and asked them for “alms”, he needed a few coins to help him financially. Peter and John look at him intently for a few seconds, and then Peter says, “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.” They reach out their hands and help him to his feet, and with that he was healed and began to jump and shout and praise the Lord above for being healed. No doubt this was a great day for this man who was crippled since birth.

That brings us to our passage today. Those who read this passage according to the citation miss so much, and perhaps draw incorrect conclusions. They may think the main thought seems to be Peter blaming the Jews for what happened to Jesus, but many skip over the first line where Peter questions their thoughts emphatically, “…why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?” Peter is saying there are those in the crowd thinking that these men have the same power as Jesus. Others may be thinking that this is some sort of deception, or perhaps believe witchcraft is involved. Maybe they are confused about who these men may be; the truth is, they do have the same power as Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit of God.

Peter goes on to explain his criticism of the Jews. He tells them that God had brought Jesus, his glorified servant into the world, and God’s chosen people refused to believe in him, refused to listen to him. They rejected him and had him put death by Pilate at the insistence of the Jewish religious leaders. It was them who killed the author of life, yet God raised him from the dead and Peter, John, and others were there to testify to this fact. This man received his legs back by believing in the name of Jesus, and only in the name of Jesus. Many who saw Jesus in person, many who heard him teach, many who saw him healing the sick and lame still did not believe in who Jesus is. But this man who may never have met Jesus, may never even heard his name, upon hearing this command in the name of Jesus, believes and is healed. That is what faith in Jesus can do.

After criticizing the Jews, Peter offers them the same gift as the crippled man; a blessing from God, God’s undeniable mercy, and His undeserved grace. Peter explains that he knows that the people acted out of ignorance, they didn’t understand who Jesus was and why he had come. that the religious leaders also acted out of ignorance of who Jesus was. Without their acts of ignorance God’s plan would not have come to fruition as it did, prophecy would not have been fulfilled. What the religious leaders did was not because they were Jewish, but rather because of their humanness and inherent sin. So, for them to receive the same blessing, the same mercy, and the same grace they must repent.

First, what is repentance? Here is an example. On our way home from Sheldon’s the other week I was driving in the lead and Jan was following in her car. Before we went a few miles I made a wrong turn. But my GPS said that if I followed its direction, I would still get to my destination. The further I drove the more lost I felt. Jan following behind me knew I was lost and so rather than follow me she followed her GPS which took her a different direction. What I should have done rather than staying on the wrong road I should have turn around and go back to the right way. This is a perfect picture of what repentance means: turning around our life from going in the wrong direction to going in the right direction. The word repentance as used in scripture means basically a “turning to God.”

Repentance is Turning from the Past. In my story, we were on perfectly good road. It may not have been the best but it did eventually get me to my destination a little later than I expected. It could have been considered the right road, but it wasn’t the best road. We were obeying the traffic laws. The cars were functioning properly. But by continuing in the direction, I was going; we would not reach our destination. Everything seemed fine, but unless there was a fundamental change of direction, we will utterly fail in our plans. My GPS had to make all of these adjustments and I was lost. Had I turned around right away, I could have saved time. The spiritual parallel is just as intense. In setting the course of life, most choose a well-traveled road with many advantages. Our intentions are good. We are not bothering anybody else. Then we discover that life isn’t turning out the way we expected. We see signs along the way that suggest we are on the wrong path and unless we change courses, we will not get where we want to go. It is not a matter of doing what we are doing better. It is not a matter of a little fix-up. We must turn completely around. We have to turn from the past and turn to God.

Repentance begins with the recognition that life is moving in the wrong direction no matter how long we have been doing it, no matter how many others may be doing the same thing, no matter how contented we are with our situation. Repentance involves the willingness to analyze where life is really heading, and speak to the need we have to reorient life so that it will be centered around the right goals, centered around God. To repent does not mean we must admit we have done something worse than anybody else; it means to step back and take stock; evaluate the present direction of life, and then to decide if we are headed in the right direction.

Repentance as a Turning Toward the Future. After making the wrong turn, I saw an opportunity to turn around and get back on the right track. However, my pride and ego would not allow me. I blamed the highway department for not having better road signs; I blamed the vehicles at the intersection for blocking my view; and I even said it was an honest mistake. But the truth is, I was on the wrong road and I did not do what I should have to get on the right road. In the same way, many people never get around to repenting because they are looking for somebody to blame for their situation. The blame game doesn’t get us headed in the right direction.

Many realize they are headed in the wrong direction, but decide to continue on this road, to see if they get there anyway. Some are so set in their ways that they are willing to settle for second best. Some people keep expecting new results from the same old behaviors. People need the assurance that a finer destination awaits in the future, if only we will abandon the way that we have been going in the past. Notice the last part of our key verse, Acts 3:19, “Repent therefore, and turn again, *that your sins may be blotted out, so that there may come times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord…”*

Jesus presents a different future in Mark 1:15, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” Jesus did not say, “Repent because of your past.” Instead, he said, “Repent, because God is about to do something wonderful!” In repentance, we have a desire for something better in life. We want a future that is better than our past, and the possibility of heaven, of entering the kingdom of God this gives us reason to turn from the past and change the direction our lives; we have fresh commitments, a better option that awaits us if we turn to God. Focusing on our mistakes drag us down with guilt. But turning in a new direction gives us a hope compelling enough to call us away from our mistaken path.

Repentance is a Turning around in the Present. Once we see repentance as good news rather, then we are able to accept the option of turning around. But this change is never easy. In fact, it can be very frightening. It is giving up what we have; which is safe, secure and certain for what we don’t have; which is unsafe, insecure and uncertain. But taking such risks is at the heart of real repentance.

There is one last thing I want to address. Why should we repent? I have tried to present a logical need for repentance. We can never get to our eternal goals if we continue doing the same wrong things over and over again. If we keep going down that road in wrong direction, we will never get to our desired destination. But we should also consider God and his feelings. When we are busy traveling down the wrong road in life we break the heart of God. And considering all that he has done for us, we should be eager to express our love for him in every way we can. We must love God so much that that we would do everything in our power to keep from breaking His heart.

I heard a story of a man who whose 7year-old son stole some comic books from a library. When the father discovered this, he confronted him, corrected him, disciplined him, and took him back to the library to return the books. The boy received a stern lecture from the librarian and also from his dad. A year later it happened again. The boy stole some comic books from a resort gift shop. Again, the father corrected him, told him how wrong it was to steal and made him return the magazines. Another year passed, and the boy, now nine years old stole some comic books again. The father decided he had to do something to get his son’s attention and to emphasize how serious stealing is. He took the boy into a private room and said, “Son, I have never spanked you before, and I don’t want to now, but somehow I’ve got to get through to you and help you see how wrong it is to steal.” He then bent the boy over his knee and spanked him five times with his bare hand. The boy’s eyes were reddened from holding back tears. The father sensing his son did not want to cry in front of him decided to leave the room and let the boy there to consider the punishment. As he stepped out of the room, he was overcome at the thought of what he had just done. He, broke down and cried with great sobs. When he had regained his composure, he went into the bathroom, washed his face, and then went back in to talk to his son.

He never stole again. Years later, as the boy and his mother were discussing childhood memories, they remembered the incident with the comic books. The son, now a man said, “Mom, after that, I never stole anything again from anybody, and I never will.” His mother asked, “Was it because your dad spanked you that day?” “Oh no,” he explained, “It was because I heard my father crying!”

I wonder how many times we have done things that would make our Father cry? Each time We travel down the wrong road, we take the wrong turn, we make a mistake; Our Father in heaven sees what we are doing And because he gave us free will, he allows us to go in the wrong direction And this breaks His heart.

Where do you stand today? Are you traveling down the wrong road, perhaps you have been traveling that road for quite some time? Maybe you feel that you are so far gone that there is no way to make it back. Turn Around, repent, ask forgiveness, do your best to move in the right direction. Perhaps you have just made a wrong turn. Nip it in the bud, turn around and get back on the right track, the sooner the better. Are their relationships in your life that you have walked away from? Turn around, and do what you can to salvage the relationship that is broken. Ask forgiveness, if you may have done something that was the cause. Offer forgiveness if you were wronged by the other person. Life is too short here on this planet to live with regrets and broken relationships. I invite you to repent; to turn away from the wrong direction you may be traveling and turn back to the Lord.

There is a misconception that we who live this Christian life do not need to repent. No matter how many years you have served the Lord, when you make a wrong turn and travel down the wrong road, you need to turn around and head in the right direction. As you look back at your life, can you see places where you were going in the wrong direction? Turn around. As we live this life there will be times when we discover that there is a better way, in those instances, we must turn to Him who makes all things right, turn to Jesus. There is no easy way or a better time to turn, than to do it right now. The longer we travel the wrong road the longer it takes for us to get back on the right one. If you need to turn from the past of sin in your life; if you desire to turn to the Lord; do it today, do it now; repent because God loves you and if you love Him you don’t want to break His heart.