

**Sermon Notes of
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on December 13, 2020:**

**"Transformation of the Early Church Series on
The Book of Acts – The Radical Advance of a Radical Gospel [Part 1]
(Acts 9:32 – 11:18) (Part 10)"**

Third Sunday of Advent – Joy

[In today's sermon, Pastor Craig Kuhlman on Zoom shows us from the writing of Luke about the amazing account of the radical advancement of Jesus into people's lives through dramatic healings including one from the dead.]

Introduction:

- First we'll talk about Joy being the theme for the third Advent Sunday.
- Are joy and happiness one in the same?
- Since we know that they are not the same, what is the primary distinction between the two?
 - Happiness is completely external, dependent about our immediate circumstances.
 - Joy is constant and internal and lasts no matter what is going on around us.
 - Joy comes from heaven – it's the fruit of the Spirit.
 - We can have spiritual joy without happiness.

- Now, in today's message, we're going to see a couple of miraculous healings.
- We're going to see an emphasis on prayer and generosity.
- And we'll also see a radical transformation in the mind and heart of the apostle Peter.
- And we'll also see how the gospel expanded and brought the Gentiles into the nation of God.

- And we'll also see how Luke is proceeding through a transition from Jewish life into a Gentile life.
- And Luke also shows how Peter is still struggling with some long held life time Jewish practices and experiences, but responds well to his new calling.
- We're also going to focus on the generosity of Tabitha.

- Not only is there an emphasis on prayer and generosity but also on yielding and being obedient to what the Holy Spirit is showing us.
- We'll also see that Scripture is not the only way God speaks to us but also through the Holy Spirit, which didn't end in the book of Acts.
- It's the Holy Spirit who continues to speak to us today in shaping and molding and transforming our understanding of Scripture in our present moments.

Overview of today's message:

1. Peter's ministry is authenticated (Acts 9:32-43)
 - a. Both miracles followed the example of Jesus
 - b. Both miracles were performed by the power of Jesus

- c. Both miracles were signs of the salvation of Jesus
- d. Both miracles rebounded to the glory of Jesus
- 2. Cornelius sends for Peter (Acts 10:1-8)
- 3. Peter receives a vision (verses 9-23)
- 4. Peter preaches to Cornelius' household (verses 23-48)
- 5. Peter defends his actions (Acts 11:1-18)

Poetic Preview of today's message – Pastor Craig's rhyming verses:

*The gospel advances in a radical Way,
According to plan we might Say.
Through miracles of healing good news was Spread,
As two arise, one from a mat, and one who was Dead.*

*Now Peter begins to Understand,
God doesn't show favoritism, no respecter of Man.
As Peter prayed at noon and became hungry to Eat,
He was given a vision of unclean Meat.*

*But Peter resisted at the thought of Unclean,
Not knowing it was Gentiles that God did Mean.
Then Peter was told they were down at the Gate,
Three men from Cornelius did Await.*

*Cornelius had gathered his relatives and Friends,
To hear the gospel from Peter, and the one God Sends.
Peter explained through the law Gentiles were Forbidden,
But now he sees Grace and acceptance has Overridden.*

*So as Peter preached to this household of All,
Upon each one, the Holy Spirit did Fall.
Peter called for their baptism in Jesus as a sign of Grace,
Seeing that the Spirit was provided to the entire Race.*

*Now back in Jerusalem the Apostles had Heard,
How the Gentiles had received and accepted the Word.
At first criticized for breaking the Law,
Peter explained how the Spirit had brought him to Awe.*

*At this they rested and their objections now Cease.
Seeing how God changed Peter and brought about Peace.
At this they all gave God their Praise,
And dismissed the questions Peter's actions did Raise.*

Acts 9:32 (NIV), As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the Lord's people who lived in Lydda. 33) There he found a man named Aeneas, who was paralyzed and had been bedridden for eight years.

- To be paralyzed for 8 years a long time to suffer this hardship.
- It's importance to notice the response to this healing by Peter.

34) “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ heals you. Get up and roll up your mat.” Immediately Aeneas got up. 35) All those who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord.

- These verses remind us that we’ve been praying for a lot of our brothers and sisters to be healed.
- It can be difficult for us when someone close to us needs to be healed and hasn’t been.
- So, was Aeneas’ healing the object of what God was accomplishing?
- Or, was God doing something else through healing?

- Aeneas was obviously very appreciative of being healed but also what happened was that his healing, after 8 long years of being bedridden, dramatically spread the Gospel to the entire city.
- Aeneas’ physical healing opened up the minds and hearts of spiritual healing and belief for others.

- Now, our human natural desire is for us to be healed by God.
- There is nothing wrong to pray for the healing of others.
- But’ it’s good to pray with expectancy but not always with expectations of immediate healing.

- What the New Testament people went through primarily was the understanding of the truth of their being, but they hadn’t been experiencing what we’ve been experiencing, which is the transformation of the way of our being.
- Today, we are experiencing the truth of our being matching the way of our being.
- We need to understand that we have been the object of Jesus’ healing, which is spiritual healing.
- Now Jesus also offered physical healing, but as we’ve read so far in the book of Acts, the emphasis is on spiritual healing into eternal life.

- We need to realize that this physical life is a drop in the bucket to what we will ultimately live out.
- We need to understand that when we’re physically healed, we’re only healed for a short time, because we all ultimately die.
- Now, we can have joy apart from happiness even if we’re sick or have loved ones that are sick, because joy is a gift of the Spirit.

36) In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor. 37) About that time she became sick and died, and her body was washed and placed in an upstairs room. 38) Lydda was near Joppa; so when the disciples heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him and urged him, “Please come at once!”

- Tabitha, a female, was also noted as a disciple of Jesus, which is important to understand.
- Discipleship was not designated just to males.
- When Luke used the phrase “doing good and helping the poor”, he was indicating that the person is a member of the household of God – a believer and follower of Jesus.

- Generosity and prayer says something extremely meaningful to us today as disciples of Jesus.

39) Peter went with them, and when he arrived he was taken upstairs to the room. All the widows stood around him, crying and showing him the robes and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was still with them. 40) Peter sent them all out of the room;

- Now, didn't Jesus do the same thing in the gospel of Luke, asking others to leave Him alone before He raised a lady, named Talitha, from the dead?
- Peter was following Jesus' example.

40) Peter sent them all out of the room; then he got down on his knees and prayed. Turning toward the dead woman, he said, "Tabitha, get up." She opened her eyes, and seeing Peter she sat up. 41) He took her by the hand and helped her to her feet. Then he called for the believers, especially the widows, and presented her to them alive. 42) This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord. 43) Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

- Yes, Tabitha was raised from the dead, but she is no longer alive – she ultimately died like we all do.
- Jesus is the only example of someone raised from the dead that still has life.
- Once again, here we see, in the early church, that a resurrection from the dead became a means for proclaiming the gospel where "many people believed in the Lord."
- Now, we don't see this type of action today, because we are living in a different time period.
- Now, today, it easy for us to question God if He doesn't heal us.
- We just don't see a lot of miraculous examples of healings as we do in the book of Acts.
- Today, a lot of God's healing takes place in the hospitals, as God intervenes there.
- So, it's nonsense to say that "God didn't heal me, because I didn't have enough faith."
- It isn't about our faith, there are other issues involved.

43) Peter stayed in Joppa for some time with a tanner named Simon.

- A tanner was a person who dealt with dead animals, who then was unclean, in the Jewish tradition.
- And no respectable Jew got near an unclean person, let alone spending time with him.
- Yet, we see Peter staying with him, which means that Peter's ideology is being transformed into a new way of thinking.
- We'll go into this more deeply in next week's message.

Communion (Ron Morgan):

- The candle for the third week of Advent represents joy – it's often called the Shepherds' Candle.
- Now, Biblical joy is choosing to respond to external circumstances with inner contentment and satisfaction because we know that God will use our experiences to accomplish His work in and through our lives.

James 1:2, Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds.

- James is telling his readers that they can choose to respond with joy even in times of trials and suffering.
- Joy is a choice, but it does come from the Lord and the Lord, alone, is the originator of true joy.
- Here's an example – to use a feature on your phone is a choice, but the choice comes from Apple or Samsung, because they are the originators of the features.
- However, the choice to use the feature is yours.
- Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that joy is a fruit of the Spirit, which is a gift from God.

Philippians 4:4-7, Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5) Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6) Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7) And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

- Now, the Christmas season has the reputation of being the most joyous time of the year.
- Experiencing the joy at the birth of Christ is easily understood and for the most part gladly celebrated.
- But Jesus tells us to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
- Today, we have the opportunity to celebrate the gift of joy from the Holy spirit and to commemorate the Lord's death that gives us the gift of life.
- So, now we will participate in the traditional communion.

1 Corinthians 11:23, For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24) and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

- So, let's take the bread together. (Prayer)

1 Corinthians 11:25, In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26) For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- So, let's take the cup and proclaim the Lord's death.

In conclusion (quote from an Advent Devotional Guide by Christine Anderson):

Our hope is sure. We have peace with God. And the Messiah is coming to set everything right in our sin-drenched world. Every tear will be dried, every hurting heart mended, every broken body healed, every torn relationship restored.

We are treasured sons and daughters of the most high God. The only reasonable response to God's lavish love and goodness is joy, pure joy.