

God Sent His Servant to Bless You

by John Piper

God is on his way to bless you with the blessing of his truthfulness, guidance by the prophet like Moses, and overcoming sin in your life.

Duration: 25:47

Scripture: Acts 3:22, Acts 3:24-26

Topics: "Book Of Acts"

Description

In this video, Pastor John Piper delivers a sermon on the book of Acts, specifically focusing on Peter's message to the crowd after performing a notable miracle. Peter emphasizes three key points about the blessing that the Lord brings to us through Jesus. Firstly, Jesus came to prove that God is truthful and can be trusted. Secondly, Jesus is the mediator between God and us, showing us the true way of God in a world that has gone astray. Lastly, Peter addresses a troubling question about whether everyone will be turned from their wickedness, highlighting the importance of listening to the prophet that God has raised up. The sermon encourages viewers to make God their treasure and find satisfaction in Him.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God is available at www.DesiringGod.org. I invite you to take your Bibles and turn to the third chapter of the book of Acts. The text this morning begins at verse 22, which is the end of Peter's message, occasioned by a notable miracle that he and John had accomplished for a lame man.

And as a crowd gathered in the temple, Peter began to speak to them about how this fulfilled promises from of old. And so we come to the end of Peter's message this morning at verse 22 of Acts 3. Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you.

And it shall be that every soul that 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 afterward also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness. Amen. Oh, that God would give me the enablement to persuade you this morning that he is

on his way to you laden with blessings today.

And that if you would turn to him and draw near to him in faith, you would receive blessing beyond anything you have had or enjoyed before. This text is about blessing. Did you hear it in verses 25 and 26? Let me read those again.

And you look for that word. You are the sons of the prophets, speaking to Israel now, and of the covenant which God made to your fathers, saying to Abraham, And in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed. Note the word, blessed.

God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness. So twice now in those two verses, this rich word, blessed. And blessing is given.

And when it says in verse 26 that he's coming to Israel first to bless them, that's rich with hope for us non-Israelites. Because that means we're second. I would be real happy to be second in line for God's blessing.

Real happy. And I hope you are this morning very happy to be second in line for God's blessing this morning. Because you are in verse 25, are you not? Are you not one of the families of the earth? In your posterity, all the families of the earth will be blessed with this blessing that I'm first giving to Israel.

You will be blessed. That's you this morning. And so I just want so bad for God to enable me to persuade you that he's on his way to you this morning with blessings in his hand.

And I'm also aware that that word blessing is a pretty corny word for a lot of people. Because it's been thrown away in so many prayers so often when we can't think of anything else to say, we can say bless them. But it's a rich word.

It's a glorious biblical word. It's a word of promise. A word of covenant.

Gary Smalley, I think, has written a book called The Blessing because of how rich this word is from generation to generation. And I hope I can fill it up this morning at least with three specifics from this text. That's what I want to do.

You're in it. God is on his way to you. He is laden with covenant blessings.

If you will draw near to him in faith as I'm preaching or at the end of this service in prayer, I do believe he has an appointed blessing for you today. I don't know what it is in your case. But it's something special that he has.

Now let me try to show you from the text the kinds of things it might be. There are three examples that I see of blessings in this text that come when Jesus comes to bless the people. And that's what verse 26 says.

He's coming to bless. He came to bless. Now here's the number one way that he came to bless.

Namely, Jesus coming is a blessing because it proves the truthfulness of God. The truthfulness of God. Now I'll show you where I get that.

When you read from verses 22 to 26 and you listen to Peter's sermon, you get the impression he is trying to pile up spokesmen from of old who said things were going to happen that are now happening. For example, verse 22, Moses said one would come like him. Verse 24, all the prophets from Samuel on said these days were coming.

Verse 25, the covenant made with Abraham is now coming to fulfillment. So there you have Moses, all the prophets in Samuel plus Abraham mentioned as those who foresaw predicted by God's inspiration what's now happening in the coming of Jesus. Now isn't the point then that one thing Jesus brought was the vindication of God's promises.

One thing Jesus did in his coming to bless us was to make plain and prove to us that God keeps his word. God does not lie. God can be trusted.

That's the fundamental meaning of the Incarnation. Now if you want to hear that stated as a kind of theological, crisp, clear doctrine, let me read a sentence from the Apostle Paul, from Romans 15.8. He says, Christ became a servant to the Jews to show God's truthfulness and to confirm the promises given to the fathers. Now that's plain.

That's really plain. Jesus came down, took the form of a servant, died among Israel his people for this fundamental reason, to say to the whole world, God keeps his word. There is a God in heaven who never lies.

There is a God reigning over all the world who can be counted on. He's trustworthy. And I just want to commend to you this morning, that is a blessing for us.

And the reason that's a blessing is because where a society forsakes that truth, the foundations of moral life collapse. God's truthfulness is the foundation of all goodness and truth and beauty in the world. And where we forsake it, political life, educational life, economic life, family life, deteriorate.

Because we have no way to get our bearings. The anchor is up, the rudder is broken, the keel is off, and the boat is just floating all over the ocean of the world with nothing but the winds of men's wishes to guide it from one generation to the next. If there is no God who tells the truth, we have no standards.

I can knock you in the nose anytime I want, because you can't tell me what I can do. There is no foundation for law, no foundation for education, no foundation for family life, no foundation for religion if there is no God who tells the truth. And it's a blessing to this church and to all Christians and to America today that people will stand up and say, God is true.

Now we can't enact this. We can't legislate this conviction. But oh, we can say it still in America.

We can read all kinds of editorials to the contrary in the Tribune concerning this new solstice celebration and the new pagans that are on the horizon and all the relativistic people around us who say nobody's God is better than anybody else's. If Jesus makes you happy, that's fine. I'll do my thing, you do your thing.

That is not the God of the Bible. That is not a blessing. It's a curse upon this land.

It's destroying everything from schools and families and business and politics. The only thing that will provide a keel, a rudder, a wheel, an anchor is this glorious blessing that Jesus came to give, namely, God

is true. God speaks truth.

God is firm. God's an anchor. God is not fickle.

God does not flop around. God is there, unchanging in His glory and His truthfulness. Say it, brothers and sisters, to each other often and above all, say it to the next generation.

Say, Carsten, God is true. Benjamin, God never tells a lie. Abraham, you can always count on God.

He's a rock. Barnabas, God can be trusted. That's the legacy I want to leave to my boys.

There's a God in heaven and He is one truth. Orient your life on Him no matter what anybody else says or does in our crazy culture. That's blessing number one.

I offer it to you to enjoy, to live by, to share. Number two, the coming of Jesus is a blessing because He comes as a prophet like Moses. Verse 22, Moses said, The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as He raised me up.

Literally, it's like me. You shall listen to Him in whatever He tells you. Now this is a blessing, I say.

Now I know that there is a theology that hearing me count this a blessing would say, Are you sure that's a blessing? I don't want another Moses. I don't like Moses. Moses is a law giver.

I want Jesus. I don't want Moses. I want grace, not law.

I want somebody that cancels Moses out. There's a theology that thinks that way about the Old Testament law. I don't think that way.

I don't think the New Testament thinks that way. But there is a theology that thinks that way. There's something wrong with it.

Because when you read this, you can't help but get the impression Peter's excited about this second Moses. Peter thinks this is good news. Peter's preaching and says, Hey, it's about to be fulfilled.

Moses promised that one would be raised up like him, a new prophet like Moses. We're supposed to get excited about that. Not we're supposed to say, Ooh, wow, I don't want that.

Keep Moses. We don't want another Moses around. That's not the way to respond.

You know why it's a blessing to have another Moses on the scene? Because we need another Moses today. We need a prophet to guide us. We really need help in order to get through life.

This is not ungracious of God to bring another prophet on the scene. If there is truth in God, we need a prophet to communicate that truth. We need a mediator.

We need a channel that can get the truth from God's absoluteness into our lives. And Jesus comes on the scene not only as a priest to atone for sin, but as a prophet now. The new Moses to guide us through the wilderness to the promised land.

And if we don't have a guide, we won't get there. We won't get to the promised land without Moses. Verse 23 says, And it shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the

people.

If all lifestyles led to paradise, we wouldn't need a prophet. Let me say that again. If all lifestyles led to paradise, we would not need a prophet.

If you do anything you want, you get there. All lifestyles do not lead to paradise. There is a lifestyle that leads to destruction.

There is a narrow way that leads to life, Jesus says, and there is a broad way that leads to destruction. Many there be that go on it. We need a prophet to point to the narrow way and guide us through it.

And is that ungracious? Is that ungracious that God would send us a prophet to guide us through the wilderness to the promised land and keep us from going the other direction into Algeria, die in the Sahara Desert? Picture Saudi Arabia with a big land strip dotted just beneath the sand with landmines and there is one soldier who knows how to get across this strip of land without detonating any of these landmines. And he says to you, he turns and he says to you, now I want you to get across safely. And I know how to get across safely.

So follow me. Because if you turn aside from following me, you are going to get blown to pieces. Now is that an unloving thing for him to say? Is that ungracious for Jesus to talk like that? That's what verse 23 says.

It shall be that every soul that does not listen to that prophet shall be blown to pieces. There are so many people who think that's not gracious when Jesus talks like that. That threats and warnings are not grace.

You never can process that if you believe in sin and destruction. If there are mines in the world, if there is a minefield of sin out there that can destroy your life, if there is a broad way that leads to destruction, my goodness, I need a prophet. I need a way shower.

I am the way, the truth, and the life. Nobody makes it to the Father but by me. I need a new Moses today.

And you do too. And it's a blessing that he came as a second Moses to show us the way. He didn't leave us in the dark concerning the way that leads to life.

And now thirdly, Jesus coming is a blessing because he turns us from our wickedness. Verse 26, God having raised up his servants sent him to you first to bless you. Here the blessing is very explicitly defined.

He sent him to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness. I love this blessing because you see, there's something else I need besides a prophet to show me the way. It would not be enough if he were to say there is the path.

I've shown it to you. I've told you all the clues. Watch for the signs.

And then he just kind of waits, watches me nervously crossing this minefield of sin on the way to the promised land. That's not the way he is. This verse says that he turns you from those mines.

He turns you. He's involved with you. He is not only a prophet that says there is the way.

Go ahead, I'll watch. He walks along and when he sees you he turns you. This is the new covenant.

He will cause you to walk in his statutes. Jeremiah said and Ezekiel said. And he turns you.

He guides you. Now he suffers you at times to stray off but never over a lethal land mine if you are one of his children. He'll bring you back onto that path and he'll get you there.

But now there is a troubling thing. Troubled me because I wasn't sure what to do with it but I'll make an effort to handle it. Namely, at the end of verse 26 it says that he's doing this.

He's turning every one of you from your wickedness. Hmm. Hmm.

Every one? What does that mean? Because he's preaching to a crowd of Jews here 2,000 of which are going to get converted in chapter 4 verse 4. But a lot of whom will throw them in jail. Peter. They don't get converted.

They don't get turned from their wickedness. God doesn't turn everybody from wickedness. Well then what does this mean? When it says he's turning blessing you and turning every one of you from your wickedness.

Now to answer that I looked around in the book of Acts to see other places where this work of God in the heart to protect from wickedness and to cleanse and to guide is mentioned and let me read two verses and see if you hear the same clue I heard. For example, in Acts 15.9 it says God cleansed their hearts by faith. And then in Acts 26.18 Jesus says to Paul those who are sanctified that's just a big fancy word by kept back from evil and guided in righteousness those who are sanctified by faith in me.

So my suggestion for understanding the everyone in verse 26 is that it is a potential everyone who will accept this. Who will believe that Jesus is moving to you today with the blessing, this blessing in verse 26 in his hand to guide and turn your life but you can reject it. Or by faith you can say I need that kind of help.

You are the way shower and you are the one who will pull me back again and again. I open my life to you and afresh today as a believer for a long time perhaps I ask you take me over in a new way get me right on the narrow way through this minefield of sin don't even let me go over a little teeny mine that might blow off a foot. I want to be right on the way.

And so I think it really is to all of us this morning that he speaks this and it becomes effective through faith. Now let me try to sum up what we've seen about the blessing that the Lord is bringing to us. Three kinds of Christmas presents here from the Lord Jesus.

Number one, Jesus came to prove that God is truthful. He keeps his word. He does not lie.

He can be trusted. Second, that truth needs to come from God to us so that we see the true way of God in a world that's gone haywire. And that mediator is the new Moses.

The way shower through the wilderness of life Jesus Christ. He's not only the priest who atones. He is the prophet who guides through the wilderness leading to paradise and the promised land.

And then third, he not only points the way. He's really like Moses. Moses didn't say, you guys go through that water.

I'm not walking through that water. Or you guys head south to Sinai. I'm not going that way.

There's a shorter way to Canaan than that out of the way way. Moses and Jesus went with the people. Moses suffered with the people.

He was willing to die for the people. He said, blot me out in the book of life if I don't go with this people up to Canaan. And Jesus is the new Moses who never leaves us or forsakes us in the minefield of sin.

And therefore, we not only have the comfort that he has shown us the way in this book and by the Holy Spirit, but he has also promised to be right there, hand on our shoulder. And if we start to veer off, bring us back into the narrow way. God is on the way to you with blessings.

The blessing of God's truthfulness, the blessing of guidance by the prophet like Moses, the blessing of overcoming sin in your life and being delivered from the bondage of wickedness. And I believe the Lord is on his way to bless you with other ways that I haven't mentioned. So let me just suggest that perhaps some of you, if God has spoken to you in any of these areas and you want to be prayed with, you want somebody to help bear your burden or ask the Lord with you and join the two or three voices, that you find our teams.

They'll be at the front here. We're just praying together up in the room and it's so good to pray with the prayer teams now before the services and just get them ready and tell them what I'm going to say. But they'll be here.

Terry and John volunteered this week. They said, well, maybe somebody would just like some seclusion back like in David's office. And so they're back there after this service in David's office which is right through that door to the left.

If you wanted to go and let a couple of guys pray about something with you in David's office, they'd be happy to pray as long as you wanted. I'd like us to close with the third verse of joy to the world. It's full of blessing.

It's full of hope. You'll see the connection with the message as we sing it. It's number 171, verse number 3. Let's stand as we sing.

We bless you Father that your blessings are flowing this morning. That they are flowing our way as far as the curse is found. The curse of sickness and the curse of loneliness and the curse of frustration and the curse of sin and every kind of curse conceived of.

Your blessings are flowing up to and against and over those curses. And I just pray that you would open hearts and grant faith and enable people to receive the powerful blessings of which we've spoken and far more. And all the people said, Amen.

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