

Acts 3:17-26

“Do you listen to servants?”

“Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.”

²⁴ “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, “Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.” ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.””

When I was a teenager in Oregon, I never dreamed that I’d live the latter part of my life in farm country, preach mainly to farmers, and become a smidgen of a farmer myself.

Had I envisioned this, I wouldn’t have derisively referred to “hick farmers.”

Furthermore, had I known about today’s text, I’d have done many other things differently.



E.g. when certain people requested a favor, I might not have sarcastically asked, “Who do you think I am, your slave?”

Of the dozens of topics our text suggests, we’ll focus on three key words.

Peter mentioned the first when he reminded his Jerusalem audience that they executed an innocent person.

Those folks had longed to see God’s Messiah. God sent him, and they killed him.

“Fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.”

1. Consider the term *suffer*.

At about age 18, I heard about a new minister and educator, who had come to the Portland area.

In addition to preaching for a large church in the area, he was also, I think, the new vice president of a Christian school.

Many spoke highly of him and I was eager to meet him.

I drove to the school campus still under construction, but I saw only a guy in a field, who was driving a tractor plowing or disking.

From all appearances, to this 18-year-old, the tractor driver looked like a “hick farmer.”

You’ve heard enough of my first impressions.

At the time, I dated a girl named Norma Jean.

That “farmer” later counseled Norma Jean and me, conducted our wedding ceremony, and gave us sound advice for the survival of our marriage.

Claude told us we should move as far as possible from our families, which we did almost immediately.

Why do I relate these details?

Sometimes, our attitudes and viewpoints resemble baby diapers; they need changing.

For example, in Jesus’ day, most people in Israel thought that their lives could improve only with a change in government.

That attitude wasn’t confined to Israel.

You know about Pompeii, the city that lay buried for centuries after Mount Vesuvius erupted.

Pompeii excavations reveal records of conversations that you’d swear took place in Chicago, L.A., or Sioux City last night.

Some Pompeii folks weren’t satisfied with their government either.



Most Jewish people in Jesus’ time resented Roman control of Israel.

One of Jesus’ disciples, Simon, had belonged to a group known as Zealots.

According to the historian Josephus, the Zealot faction didn’t want to pay taxes to Rome because they considered Rome an ungodly government.

Jesus’ enemies, remember, tried to entrap him by asking, “**Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar?**”¹

Another group sided with the Roman authorities.

Most folks, though, looked for a bold leader, who’d lead Israel out of its bondage to Caesar.

That longing shaped their view of what and who the Messiah should be.

Many hoped Jesus would be that strong leader.

You recall the mockery at Jesus’ crucifixion:

“**If you are the Christ, come down from that cross.**”

Even some disciples viewed things in the light of greed and ambitions, not from the perspective of God’s will.

¹ Matthew 22:15-22

Recall this verbal swap between Peter and Jesus?

“From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘God forbid *it*, Lord! This shall never happen to You.’ But He turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests, but man’s.’”²

Numerous prophecies like Isaiah 52- 54 and Psalms 22 predicted the Messiahs’ suffering.

After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter realized that the Messiah had to suffer.

By reading and becoming acquainted with God’s Word, we avoid being misguided.

2. Our second word, *servant*, comes in verse 26 of our text: “When God raised up his *servant*, he sent him first to you . . .”

Remember how two disciple brothers wanted to sit on Jesus’ right and left in his kingdom.

They expected Jesus to roar into town in a Maserati and they somehow wanted to ride “shotgun” on either side.



² Matthew 16: 21-23 NASB

Jesus told them that the Father assigns positions in the kingdom.

Recall the ruckus the brothers incited?³

“²⁴ And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, ‘You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your *servant*, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your *slave*; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

In this account, two different terms come into play.

We achieve greatness by being a *servant*.

We receive “First in Class” by being a *slave*.

Too many folks forget what Jesus taught.

They scramble for prestige and titles.

You want greatness in God’s sight?

Become a servant for the Lord.

The term servant is deacon—a table waiter.

To be *first in class*, you become a *slave*.

The word slave didn’t carry all the racial connotations as now, but it included much of the same servitude.

³ Matthew 20:24-28 NASB. Romans 15:8 refers to Jesus as a deacon to Jews.

Paul often referred to himself as a bondservant (slave) of Jesus.

Prior to Covid19, many churches and Christian organizations advocated empowering certain groups they thought had not been treated properly.

Jesus taught us to love all people.

According to Revelation 7:9, the saved come from every tribe, language, people and nation.

No one is more important than any other.

The world will do what it wants.

Jesus' followers boldly serve and submit to him.

They're not cowardly, compliant, and sissified.

To "empower" is beyond any human paygrade.

God will empower folks by His wisdom.

In the meantime, His people gladly serve others.

In the phrase, "when God raised up his *servant*,"

The Greek word here *servant* might amaze you.

It's the term *paida* (παῖδα) child.

Pediatrician, a child doctor, derives from *paida*.



We could spend hours noting all its implications, but two illustrations should help.

After the incident in the Temple when Jesus was 12, the child Jesus obeyed (was subject to his parents) Joseph and Mary.

"He continued in *subjection* to them . . . ⁵² And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men," Luke 2:51, 52 NASB.

For clarity on this subject, read 1 Peter.

We please God and win folks' hearts by helping them see that God's people serve respectfully.

Through a Hollywood community project, we met a pleasant single mother with a son and daughter.

She and her children lived with her parents.

Her father didn't believe in God.

As her son matured, we studied with him and he wanted to give his life to Jesus, and be baptized, but the grandfather objected.

In similar circumstances, some become defiant.

After prayer and asking God's wisdom, we advised the young man, to go home and become the best son and grandson possible.

"Keep your room clean, make your bed, be an obedient son and grandson, and always be helpful."

Within weeks, the atheist grandfather said that he didn't know what was going on with the young man, but he was deeply impressed.

Not only did he give his permission; he wanted to witness his grandson's baptism into Christ.

God's people don't strive for power, privilege, and rights. **They serve.**

We've spoken of suffering and serving.

3. **Repent- Peter opened and closed his speech referring to repentance: v. 19** "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." **v. 26** "When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

Terrible, dismaying things occur around us.

We, too, keep wishing for strong leaders to remedy society's many ills.

News reports weren't good in Jesus' day, either.

Luke 13: 1-3 NIV "Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. Jesus answered, 'Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.'"

The issue isn't the state of the world.

Our relationship with God stands above all else.

The Apostle Paul said off his former life:

"We also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another," **Titus 3:3 NASB.**

Jesus' child-servant attitude gives up hate.

I once had a long phone conversation with a very troubled man in his fifties. He felt bitter toward certain family members. Depressed, his physical condition was deteriorating; he had nightmares, and was on drugs and alcohol. He went through drug and alcohol treatment many times.

"Do you think I should check myself into the VA hospital?"

After listening awhile, I said "I think 95% of your difficulty is your anger and hate."

He said, **"You're wrong Bob. It's not 95%. It's closer to 100%."**

Then I said, "It's not going to help you to go through a treatment program until you give up your hate. You need to ask God to forgive you and pray for God to bless the ones you hate."

"Bob, I can't do that!"

It amazes me how often I have heard this. Bitter people recognize it, but they refuse to give up hate.

They'd rather hate than enjoy life in Christ.

God blesses us when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior; testify to his resurrection, live by God's Word, serve others, and share his forgiving love.



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