

# Sermon Text For September 2, 2018

By Rev. Robert K. Bronkema

## *Isaiah 53:4-6, Acts 3:11-17*

“It’s not our fault”

We are in frontiers never crossed before in the Bronkema family. Kids are out of the house and the memories which we will create now are adult memories in relationship to our kids. The earliest memory I have of my children in a classroom is in Italy. Rachel wasn’t yet two years old, every day I led chapel in the orphanage where Stacy and I were working. After chapel I was talking with some of the administrators in the auditorium and Rachel had gone off to the kindergarten class because everyone knew her and she was comfortable in our school at the orphanage. As I was talking I heard Rachel crying and I knew it wasn’t that big of a deal, so I went down the hall into the kindergarten room and as I walked in every child began speaking and blaming a different kid for why Rachel was crying pointing their finger at someone else.

Kids are masters at placing the blame. It’s not just kids and we know that. From the very beginning in Scripture we have even godly people throwing the blame around. We start with Adam who blames both God and that woman for making him eat the apple. We have Aaron who blames both Moses and God for abandoning him with the people so that he just had to build that golden calf. Saul blames God for being too slow to give him guidance and so launches into an ill-advised battle which he loses. Judas blames Jesus on his betrayal because Jesus was really wasting money when he allowed that woman to break that expensive jar of perfume on his feet.

In all of these situations each person blames God, at least they go to the top, for whatever predicament they find themselves in, or for whatever mess they have created and realize they can’t get themselves out of it. We are really good at blaming our failures on others and not willing to take the responsibilities that we need to take. I have always said that the failure of one church in our world is the failure of all us. The tragedy that has taken place within the Roman Catholic Church is another example where sin is being laid at the feet of someone else and the blame and the steps needed to remedy the situation and to actually care for the victims has long since passed. Every time we say it is not our fault we are blaming someone else, in this case it is the victims that suffer the most.

Today, Peter in Acts addresses a large crowd and confronts them with their sin and demands that they react to their failure. We don't like that. But a sign of a mature Christian and a mature church is that when they are at fault they own up to it and take steps to take on the responsibility of their shortcomings. We also ought to be aware that we worship one who was completely innocent, as Isaiah tells us, and yet took the blame for all that we did which separates us from God.

### **READ SCRIPTURE**

Remember last week we sifted through what we feel like we want and what we really need? The man crippled from birth fundamentally needed Jesus Christ and when he took his first steps he found himself praising God for the first time in the temple.

Today we have the second part of that story. Everyone in the temple saw this man leaping around for joy and they ran together toward Peter and John because they were amazed. The healed man probably became aware of the commotion that he had created, look at vs. 11 and clung to Peter and John. I can see him hanging onto Peter's leg for dear life and Peter having to hobble around.

But with this crowd gathered wanting to know what happened Peter could not miss this opportunity. This should remind you of the day of Pentecost when the people gathered because they heard the loud rushing wind and Peter spoke again and 3,000 people were converted. Here, they are in the temple. Peter begins to talk. The first thing he says is: it is not our fault that this man is made well. We have no special powers, we are not exceptionally righteous or good. It is not our credit or our fault this miracle took place.

Usually we are quick to take credit when it is not ours to take and quick to lay blame when it is ours to take, but they do the opposite. You want to know how this man can now cling to my leg after he's been leaping around healed and given a new life? Let me tell you how. Peter then lays the blame or the credit for healing squarely on the shoulders of Jesus, and the unbelief and sin squarely on those listening.

The God that we worship and all of our ancestors worshipped, he is to take the credit. Because he sent his servant, notice Peter makes him a servant as lowly and unthreatening as possible. He reflects exactly what we read in Isaiah as it describes the Messiah who is to come and what he is going to look like.

You know, he sent what's his name, the one you handed over, rejected, beat, spat upon, the one Pilate said he saw no sin in this man and Pilate actually wanted to release

him, but nooooooo, you insisted that he be kept. You know who I'm talking about, the righteous one, the Holy one. The one you traded for a murderer, for an uncommon criminal who is locked up today because when he was out on parole killed someone else. You know the one I'm talking about, here how about the author of life? The one you killed but God raised up? Don't blame us, it isn't our fault, but just by the name, the very spoken name of Jesus, this man was healed. Don't stare at us, look at the one you destroyed.

There should be no question in anyone's mind that Peter is speaking, pointing his finger to those in the temple making them confront their sin so that they can finally say: it is my fault. God forgive me. Paul in Romans tells us that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We cannot be mature Christians without naming our specific, itemized sins and laying them before God to control and handle. Only then when we say yes, it is my fault, then we can enjoy and live in the freedom that God has laid out for us.

Peter says very clearly that when we were faced with God's Messiah, God's chosen son, humanity got together and did what it often does in the face of truth – we react in violence and crucifixion.

Listen to these words from Isaiah as we put the name Jesus in these verses. There are no more powerful verses in all of Scripture that convict us of our sin, that remind us that if it were not for our Savior, we would be dust and our hope would be completely lost. But vs.6 tells us that all hope is not lost, the last verse of Acts tells us that all hope is not lost. Jesus took upon his back all of our iniquity. That is the good news. Our sin is wiped clean and was carried to the cross by our Savior.

Our challenge today is to break this culture of avoiding the truth that we are sinful and that we need Jesus to carry our sin. If we had no sin, then we wouldn't need to worry about it. If we had no blame then we could live a carefree life. The parent who refuses to take responsibility for their child and solely relies upon medical diagnosis and medication says it's not my fault, I can't control him or her, so I'm not going to try, let the medication and the doctors do that. The spouse who feels ignored and affection is at the minimum does not blame himself or herself for the affair, because if the other one had been more open and loving then this wouldn't have happened. The student who struggles in school doesn't like their teacher or the principal, their failing grades aren't their fault, it's the school. The embezzler or the slacker at work doesn't feel like they get paid enough so this makes up for what they don't pay me. The pastor who doesn't visit as

often as he should says that they are working me to death anyway, it's not my fault, there are deacons anyway. We all have the ability to pass the blame for our responsibilities and yes, even our sins to others, and thereby avoiding any growth that we could have.

Do we have it in us to say it is our fault not only to those around us, but especially to God? The first step to any type of recovery is facing the issue, and admitting we have a problem. Brothers and sisters, we have a problem, it is called sin. Sin that manifests itself at home, at work, at school, in church, even in the quiet of our rooms. Today, Peter calls the crowd to recognize that they need the name of Jesus to be healed of their sin. It is the only name that can cleanse us of our sin and give us eternal life is Jesus. We are called to do the same.

This last verse gives us the eternal good news. When we stop relying upon our good name, then we are ready to be healed and made whole. I know that many of us today are living in denial of our sin. We have to believe that we are at fault before God can work in us.

As a church the same thing is true. We have to itemize our sins. When things happen in our community that should not happen, we are to blame as the church. Change in our individual lives take place in the church through Jesus Christ. But change in the community has to be spearheaded by the church. We may think that it is not our fault that refugees like Sydney from last week are no longer welcome in the United States, but it is. We may think that we have no role to play in the divisions that are present in our culture and our American society. But we do.

I am sure that those in the crowd who heard Peter, very few of them were actually present for the crucifixion of Jesus. But he felt comfortable enough to implicate all of them. It is all of our fault and a mature church takes the blame, the responsibility, and the joy of turning to the name of Jesus Christ for healing of individuals, churches and communities. Amen.