

1

FIRST PERSON NARRATIVE OF WITNESS NEAR THE BEAUTIFUL GATE – ACTS 3:1-11...”It was just another day, or at least that’s what I thought it was going to be. I was on my way to worship and prayer that morning, and just like all the days before, there was Ben, asking for money at the gate again. I had given him plenty of money before, and just didn’t feel like it this morning. So, I passed by, but as I took a couple more steps, I heard a statement from a man behind me that caused me to pause and turn...”

-- Now, of course, you all know that I, Patrick, didn’t really witness those things with my own eyes, but I wanted to share from the perspective of someone who might have been there when God, through Peter, healed a lame beggar, lame from birth...and ALL the people were amazed at this wondrous breakthrough of the Kingdom in their midst...

-- I imagine these people in Jerusalem, were still going through a rough time...even post-resurrection/Easter Sunday

- To many, this apparent false Messiah was recently crucified, and it’s not like everyone knew He was alive, because the rumor was going around that the body was stolen by the disciples, something that the chief priests paid the guards to spread the fake news around...

- Also, the curtain to the Holy of Holies was torn in two, where the presence of God was physically supposed to reside...and the presence of God wasn’t tangibly there...something must have felt wrong or empty in their religion...on top of all the many laws and rules the Pharisees and teachers of the Law continued to heap upon them...

- And what’s more, they were still under Roman oppression...things were no better than they were before...

-- But then all of a sudden, a Kingdom sign of Life breaks through, something REAL and Radical, and everyone is utterly amazed and in awe and wonder...and they want to know

more, see more... I mean, who wouldn't!?

1

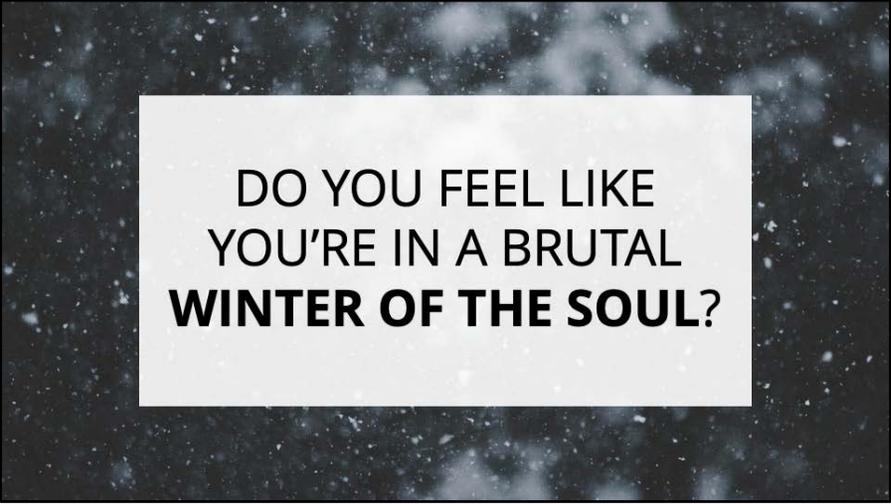
TR: You ALL know we came through a pretty brutal Winter here in Michigan...



2

- **Polar Vortex...sustained frigid windchills well below zero...even to a point where the governor declared a state of emergency...**
- **A Record 24 SNOW DAYS for Big Rapids area, even an entire SNOW WEEK...**
- **I'm sure all of you at some point or another, and especially for as long as winter seemed to hang on, you all longed for signs of Spring...even to just see the sun break through...**
- **Well, I imagine it might have been a bit like that...not actual snow fall, but a people who were trying to survive a Winter of the Soul, and then a Kingdom Sign of Spring breaks through, like flowers pushing through the snow, or the sun piercing through a blizzard, but 10x more amazing than that...**

TR: DO YOU EVER FEEL...



**DO YOU FEEL LIKE
YOU'RE IN A BRUTAL
WINTER OF THE SOUL?**

3

...LIKE YOU'RE IN A BRUTAL WINTER OF THE SOUL?

-- overwhelmed, discouraged, despairing, fearful, anxious, sad, frustrated, angry, etc

...any number of emotions...for any number of reasons...

TR: Don't you, likely like them back then, long for a season of Spring times of refreshing DEEP WITHIN...doesn't the world around us yearn for that too?



4

...to experience Times of Refreshing in the Lord?

-- But HOW? And WHEN?

TR: Well, this is where I want to pick it up in ACTS, Chapter 3, starting at verse 12...

Acts 3:12-15

And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus...”

ESV

5

READ SLIDE

TR: KEEP READING TO NEXT SLIDE...

Acts 3:12-15

“...whom **you delivered over** and **denied** in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But **you denied the Holy and Righteous One**, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and **you killed the Author of life...**”

ESV

6

READ SLIDE

TR: Now this is some HARD brutal Truth delivered by Peter to the people...



HARD TRUTH EXPOSED
~

7

As if they'd be like, "Wow, we just wanted to see more of this Spring signs of refreshing and power, and bam, we get knocked out with some Hard Truth..."

--But it wasn't anything new...it was already there, and Peter was simply exposing it...reminding them...

—the Holy and Righteous One, you rejected and asked for a murderer

— the Author of all Life, you killed.

—This Brutal Winter you continue to live in, you're actually the cause of it.

— Kind of like the Peace Initiative...seemed like an increase in conflict in our church family, but I believe it was rather just an uncovering...

-- God's Word tells us that we are ALL born into AND actively choose to

live in this Brutal Winter...

7

-- One that ultimately exists because of SIN, Sin by nature that we're born into, and Sin by choice that we decide to live in, and the conditions brought about by this can be brutal and cruel and cold...

TR: So the first thing we must do in seeking those times of refreshing, is to humble ourselves to allow the Holy Spirit to Expose the Hard Truth we need to see in our own lives, and...



HARD TRUTH EXPOSED

~

WE HAVE TO OWN IT

8

READ SLIDE...

—now, I'm not saying that everything you're experiencing in your brutal winter of the soul is a result of your sin

--it could be others' sins...could be an attack from Satan...could simply be that we're living in a fallen and broken world...but in all things, God is sovereign and uses all things in your life to teach you, test you, train you, make you more like His Son and draw you into deeper relationship with Himself

— But in regard to our passage of Scripture for today and what we must always look into and check on, is indeed our own selfish pride that, recognizing that we all are prone to live in the flesh, that in our own way put Christ on the cross, and we have to own that.

—since we're talking about Weather, it's kind of like Global Warming, which is very controversial politically, if it's even happening, what's causing it, what we do about it...but I'll tell you one thing, the Global Sin Effect is real, worldwide, and catastrophic...the cause of which is due in part to each of us to some degree...and we have to own it...the Hard Truth of wherever we have intentionally or unintentionally gone our own way and neglected Christ, or actively gone against Him...

— We own it, in part, by confessing to God, which is simply agreeing with God and acknowledging before Him what He already knows...

TR: Let's get back to the text now...

8

Acts 3:15-16

“... whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—**by faith in his name**—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the **faith that is through Jesus** has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.”

ESV

9

The author of life, whom you killed...READ SLIDE

He's not dead. He's alive. And it is through faith in his name, Jesus (which a name back then represented a person's authority, power, and character) so through Jesus' power and authority this man is now healed and so now you're seeing this kingdom breakthrough in the midst of the winter of your soul...

TR: But now as we read on, See if notice how Peter's tone seems to change toward the people...

Acts 3:17-19

“And now, **brothers**, I know that you **acted in ignorance**, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. **Repent therefore, and turn back...**”

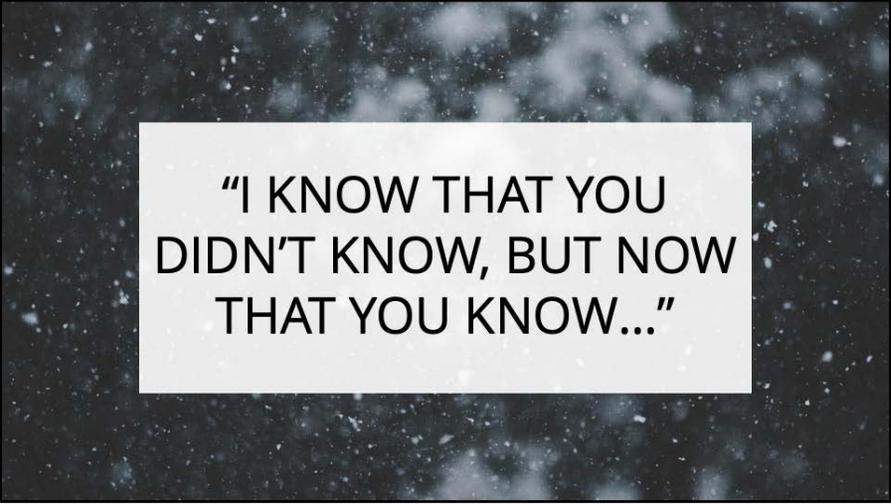
ESV

10

READ SLIDE

TR: What you did unintentionally against God, God was sovereign even over that...He was letting us know even long ago, through his prophet meteorologists of sorts, predicting with certainty that this brutal winter was going to get worse in certain ways before it was going to get better...

TR: Peter was basically saying...



"I KNOW THAT YOU
DIDN'T KNOW, BUT NOW
THAT YOU KNOW..."

11

READ SLIDE...



REPENT!

12

READ SLIDE...

TR: Turn From going your own way and turn back to God and His way...



JUDGMENT OF CHARITY
EXTENDED
~

It's really the Judgment of Charity extended with an open hand...

--Hard Truth on the Methods coupled with ridiculous grace on the motives...

--It's the Judgment of love that Christ first extended in his first words on the cross, "Father forgive them, for they know no what they do."

TR: Peter continues now to extend the Open Hand of the Now Resurrected Jesus toward the people...

JUDGMENT OF CHARITY
EXTENDED

~

RECEIVE IT AND
REPENT!

14

If they would only receive it and repent...

--It's the same for us today as well...If we each in turn would only receive and repent, wherever we need to in our lives...

TR: That Hard Truth that Peter went right after them with at the start...



IT'S REALLY
CARE-FRONTING

READ SLIDE...

--Care-fronting his brothers, giving an out to them from their Winter, extending hope to the hopeless, a strong resurrection hand up...if they'd only take it...

TR: So that they might enter into those times of refreshing...

Acts 3:20-21

“...that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.”

ESV

16

Peter says Repent and Turn Back...READ SLIDE...

--Amen, this is what we all long for, and do have already in part, in Christ NOW, Sins washed away and times of refreshing available to us in the Holy Spirit, the very presence of the Lord in us, and one day in its fullness when Christ returns and all things are restored, an ETERNAL Summer in the SON, so to speak...

TR: I think of it a lot like what my brother, Chris, says to me when he comes back to MI to visit...



He's been out taking classes and working at Pepperdine University for several years now, which is located right in beautiful Malibu, southern California, right on the coast.

-- And according to one online article I read, California, at least Southern Cal, is the #2 best State in the US for experiencing Winter...

TR: And so my brother makes the trip, pretty much every year around Christmas to come see the family...



...in, according to that same article, the #2 Worst State in the US for experiencing Winter...

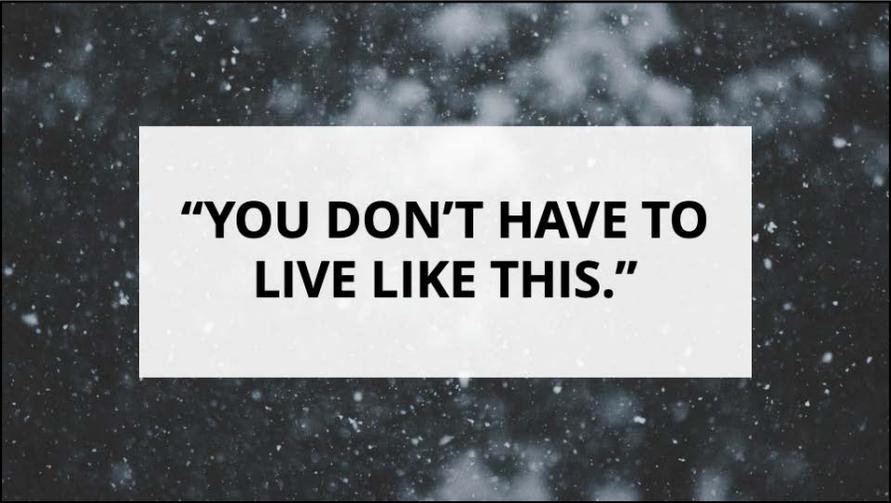
-- And so we have a coat waiting for him, and he's all bundled up and needing about a day usually simply to adjust to the time change and the temperature change and the overall environment change...you know, he's not married yet, no kids, so it's also our 5 kids getting all over him, and earlier in the morning than he's used to...

-- And I don't know if it's every year, but I distinctly remember talking with him one time, and he looks at me after looking out at all the cold snowy kind of nasty weather, and he says, "You know, Pat, you don't have to live like this."

TR: And you know what, that's exactly what I think Peter was

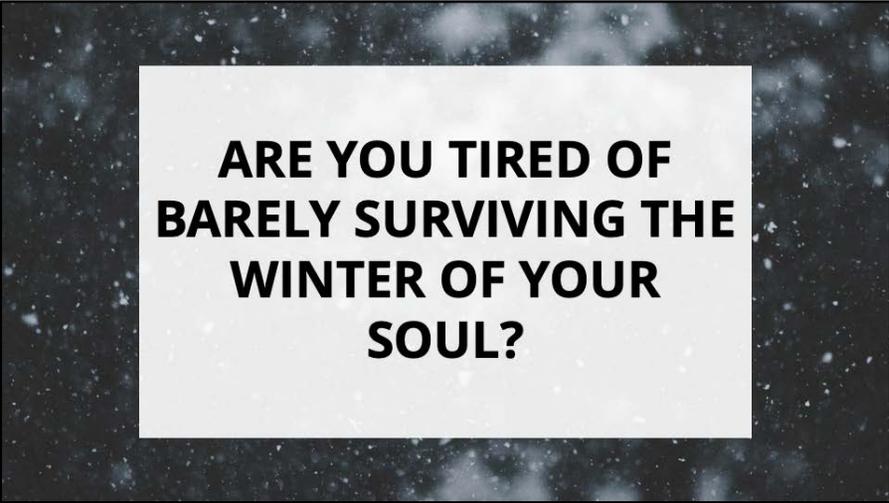
**saying to the Jewish people back then, and I believe it's
exactly what God is saying through His Word and By His Spirit
today...**

18



**"YOU DON'T HAVE TO
LIVE LIKE THIS."**

READ SLIDE...



**ARE YOU TIRED OF
BARELY SURVIVING THE
WINTER OF YOUR
SOUL?**

20

READ SLIDE...

-- It's kind of like what Dave Ramsey is always saying to people who know what they need to do, but lack the motivation, the courage, the hope to take the steps they need to take to get out of debt and stay out of debt...

--He's always saying, "Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired?" Essentially, are you desperate enough? Then here is the extended hand and the tools you need to get out...

TR: ARE YOU Ready...



**ARE YOU READY FOR A
NEW SEASON?**

...For a new season?

--As much as I imagine all of you by now, even those of you who love Winter, you all got be ready for Spring by now...for Summer...

-- Well, as much as you are ready for that now, there ought to be a 10x, 100x, 1,000x greater, deeper yearning, at the core of who you are, for a New Season of the Soul, a NEW KINGDOM Season in this World...

TR: And it all starts with Simple, yet Significant steps of Surrender to our Lord Jesus who lived the perfect life we could not, who died the atoning death we deserved, and rose again triumphant,

ushering in a New Kingdom season...

21



**TURN (Repent) AND
TRUST (Faith)**

It's TURNING and TRUSTING...

--That turning away from going your own way and turning toward Him and His way, and taking that extended Hand of Grace in Faith, and Trusting Him with your life, SAVIOR AND LORD...

-- Janet's testimony...

--Maybe some of you have been doing the church thing for a while now, but you haven't come to that point like, Janet, of Jesus being savior AND LORD...or some of you don't come from a church background and you're newer to church, and God, and the Bible, and you need this NEW Season for the first time...or maybe you're like me, and I already surrendered my life to the Lord, and the Lord birthed in me a NEW creation and a NEW season of the Soul, but just like the Snow that's accumulating once again, Winter always tries to creep back, and fight back...it's my flesh...

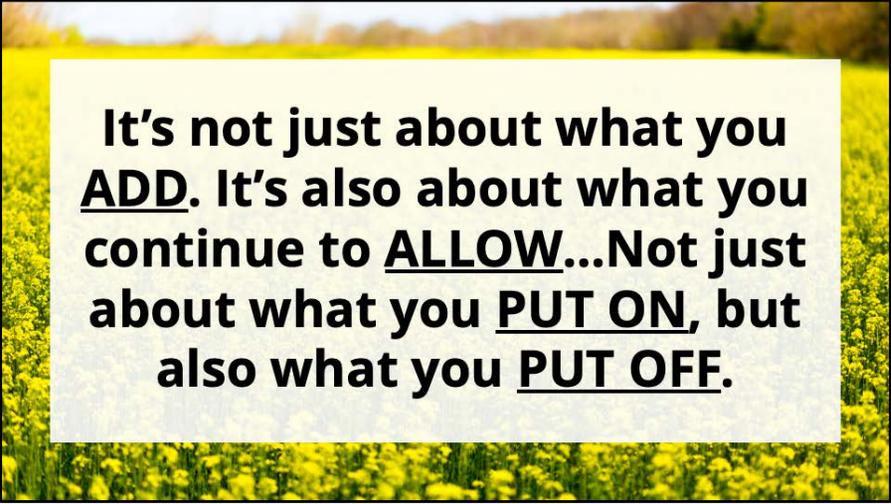
AND I SIMPLY NEED TO REPENT AFRESH...Repent of neglecting time with the Lord, repent of busying my life with more things to do, repent of trying to justify and defend myself, of going through the motions at times in my walk with the Lord, for proclaiming the goodness of God in Christ but then longing for something else more worldly, for taking my eyes off Jesus and fearing the storms around me and becoming anxious, for trying to look better than what I am, for not doing the next right thing that I know I ought to do, for essentially wanting my way again and not

His...

22

IT ALL ONLY welcomes the Winter back in my life and hinders the Holy Spirit and the Spring times of refreshing He wants to bring...

TR: You see...



It's not just about what you ADD. It's also about what you continue to ALLOW...Not just about what you PUT ON, but also what you PUT OFF.

READ SLIDE...

-- You see, the temptation is to just ADD Jesus to your life in some way, usually as fire-insurance so you don't have to worry about Hell, but then continue to ALLOW all the other things you like and want...

--But what Jesus told us, what God tells us, what Paul said to the believers in Ephesus...You have to Put Off to Put On...You can't have everything...Right? You have to let go off what you're grasping on to, in order to open up your hand and embrace fully all that God has for you...

--To Put Off Blaming others in a conflict, be renewed in the spirit of your minds to recognize and confess the hard truth of your fault in it all, and Put On Humility entrusting ultimate Judgment to God and lowering your defenses and extending the open hand in apology and forgiveness...

--To Put Off blaming God for terrible things that have shaken you to the Core (Accidents and Cancer and Calamity), to Put Off Fear of those things, and to Put On Trust, Thanksgiving, The Promises from God which are yours in Christ Jesus...

--To Put On Christ and Abide in Him more and more...to draw closer to the Son in Spirit and in Truth and experience the Winter of your Soul melt in the light of His glory and grace...

TR: So, once again, for those of you experiencing a Winter of the Soul...



BECAUSE HE LIVES...YOU DON'T HAVE TO LIVE LIKE THIS...

That no matter what you're facing, you can experience times of refreshing in the presence of the Lord right now in Christ, first in your soul, your heart, your mind, perhaps in even your physical strength in your lifetime, but all as a Spring time foretaste of THAT DAY when Winter will be no more, and it will be an eternal Summer with the SON, Jesus...

**Until that day, let us continually Repent, Turn, Trust, and Draw Near to Him...and as you do, I believe just as you physically travel South where the Sun is closer, more direct, the Winters still come, but they're less harsh...It's the heart of that beautiful song "It is Well with my Soul"...
"Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come, Let this blest assurance control, That Christ has regarded my helpless estate, And hath shed His own blood for my soul."**

We're about to sing a song, called Simplicity. May the words that we

sing be your prayer and your response to the Lord today.⁴
Let's Pray, "I come in simplicity. Longing for purity. To worship
You. In spirit and truth. Only You. Lord strip it all away. 'Til
only You remain. I'm coming back. To my first love. Only You."

**AMEN...LET US SING TOGETHER NOW, AND CONTINUE TO
PRAY...**