

Shortly after the first Pentecost the apostles went out to preach about Jesus. Peter and John approached the Temple adorned with gold and precious stones, and they saw a man unable to walk asking for money. Peter said, "We don't have money. We have no silver; we have no gold. But we will give you what we have." The beggar opened his eyes wide. Peter said, "In the name of Jesus, get up and walk." Peter grabbed the beggar by the right hand and pulled him up. The man's feet and ankles grew stronger. He realized he was cured. He jumped up. He shouted, "Praise God!" Then he went into the Temple with Peter and John, not just walking but leaping around. He attracted a crowd, who recognized him as the man who used to sit at the gate and beg. Now he was jumping around a porch called Solomon's Portico. As the crowd gathered closer, the man threw his arms around Peter and John and would not let go.

That is how Peter was standing when he delivered the speech we heard as today's first reading. The people there came to the Temple because they thought they were faithful. But Peter let them have it. He told them, "Your God had a servant named Jesus, but you handed him over to death when Pilate wanted to grant him life. You denied that he was the author of life and asked Pilate for a killer named Barabbas. You think you are faithful to God, but you blew it." This got their attention. They remembered that Jesus could make the lame walk, as these guys just did. If they made a mistake by putting Jesus to death, they didn't want to make another by ignoring these guys.

Peter went on. He said, "All is not lost for two reasons. First, you are stupid. You didn't know what you were doing. Second, God won in spite of your stupidity. Prophets announced centuries ago that the Messiah would suffer, die and rise again. And now by God it has happened." Peter gave this speech at a portico named for Solomon, the biblical figure most known for his wisdom. Peter had one more point. He said, "Repent and be converted that your sins may be wiped away." Peter asked God to forgive the ignorant, just as Jesus on the cross said, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

Ignorance has consequences. If you body pierce a minor without parental consent and tell the judge, "I didn't know it was a crime," it is still a crime. If you don't know Christ, you do not live with his guidance. God works miracles to get our attention. God sent Jesus to help us overcome our ignorance and find mercy for our sins.