

Healing A Man Who Cannot Walk

Lesson for May 14, 2023

Unit III: The Birth of the Church

Scriptural Background: Acts 3

Printed Text: Acts 3:1-11

Key verse: *“He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”* (Acts 3:8, NIV)

What is it to serve God and to do His will? Nothing else than to show mercy to our neighbor. For it is our neighbor who needs our service; God in heaven needs it not.

Martin Luther

This is the service shown by Peter and John in this week’s lesson -m showing mercy to a neighbor in need.

Key Terms

1. **Alms** (verse 2) – Mercy; pity; charity “to beg from” (NIV).
2. **Lame** (verse 2) – Halt; maimed; deprived of a foot; limping; crippled.
3. **Look** (verse 4) – See; perceive; discern.
4. **Prayer** (verse 1) – A solemn request for help or expression of thanks addressed to God or an object of worship.
5. **Raise up** (verse 22 – Background scripture) – To waken, arouse, cause to rise; to arouse from the sleep of death.
6. **Receive** (verse 5) – To take, lay hold of; accept; “get”.

Lesson Background

The events recorded in Acts 1–2 begin to show how the resurrected Jesus Christ led the Church through the ministration of the Holy Ghost.

In the first chapter, Jesus Christ ministered to His Apostles for 40 days following His Resurrection. The Apostles witnessed Him ascend into heaven. The Apostles and others united in prayer and supplication. After seeking the Lord’s direction, Peter presided over the selection of a new Apostle - Matthias.

In Chapter 2, The Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. The Apostles were filled with the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost and experienced the gift of tongues as they preached the gospel. Peter proclaimed that Jesus is both Lord and Christ and invited people to repent, be baptized, and receive the Holy Ghost. On that day about three thousand souls “were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37) by the Holy Ghost and, as instructed by Peter, repented and were baptized. The young Church was flourishing.

Lesson In Depth

I. A Gate Called Beautiful (Acts 3:1-5)

Now Peter and John went up together: Peter and John were both commissioned by Jesus and recognized by the early Christians as *apostles* – special ambassadors of Jesus. Acts 2:43 told us, *many signs and wonders were done through the apostles*. Acts 3 tells us of a specific example, one of the *many*.

At the hour of prayer: Apparently Peter and John saw no problem in continuing their Jewish custom of prayer at certain hours of the day. Peter and John were *not* going to the temple at the hour of *sacrifice*, but **at the hour of prayer** that followed the afternoon sacrifice. They realized that the sacrificial system was fulfilled in the perfect sacrifice Jesus offered on the cross.

The ninth hour: “Perhaps this time of day, even then, held special significance for them because it was the hour when Jesus cried from the cross, ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30).” (Hughes)

The gate of the temple which is called Beautiful: The Jewish historian Josephus described this gate on the temple mount; made of fine Corinthian brass, seventy-five feet high with huge double doors, so beautiful that it “greatly excelled those that were only covered over with silver and gold.” (Cited in Stott)

A certain man lame from his mother’s womb was carried... asked for alms: The lame man simply wanted to be *supported* in the condition that he was in. God had something better in mind; Jesus wanted to completely change his condition. Of course, the lame man felt he had no other option than to be supported in his condition; and it was certainly better for him to be supported than to starve to death.

In addition, the man had good reason to believe that begging at the **Beautiful** gate could support him. There was (and is) a strong tradition of alms-giving (giving to the poor, especially beggars) in Judaism, and doing it as an act of righteousness.

This man had been lame from his mother’s womb. He is a sad picture of the human race, maimed by the fall. This was not a day when there were concrete wheelchair ramps for those who were crippled. In fact, there were no wheelchairs or handicapped parking places! If this man left his house, it was only because more than one friend came over, put him on a stretcher, and carried him. They often took him to the gate at the temple called Beautiful, where worshipers would take pity on him and toss him a few coins so that he could survive. While the temple gate was beautiful, this man with his useless legs was anything but beautiful. He is a sad picture of how sin cripples humanity.

Fixing his eyes on him: The man must have been happy and encouraged when Peter and John looked at him intently. Most people who want to ignore beggars are careful not to make eye contact with them. When they looked at the lame man so intently, he probably thought he had a big gift coming.

He gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them: The lame man returned the eye contact with Peter and John; perhaps he stretched out his hand or a cup to receive their generosity. The lame man was correct in **expecting to receive something from them**, but he received much more than the monetary donation he would have been satisfied with! Many have yet to come to the place where they really expect something from God. This is *faith*, plain and simple – even if the man expected less than Jesus wanted to give. Better yet, we should expect the right things from God. We are often much too ready to settle for much less than God wants to give to us, and our low expectations often rob us.

II. No Silver and Gold (Acts 3:6-8)

Silver and gold I do not have: Peter didn't have any money, but he did have authority from Jesus to heal the sick (**what I do have I give to you**). Peter knew what it was like to have God use him to heal others, because Jesus had trained him in this (Luke 9:1-6).

For some people, to say “**silver and gold I do not have**” is about the worst thing that can be said. They feel the church is in ruins if it must say “**silver and gold I do not have.**” But it is much worse if the church never has the spiritual power to say, “**In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk**”.

There is a story – perhaps true – about a humble monk walking with a Roman Catholic cardinal at a time in the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic church was at its zenith of power, prestige, and wealth. The cardinal pointed to the opulent surroundings and said to the monk, “We no longer have to say, **silver and gold I do not have.**” The monk replied, “But neither can you say, **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.**”

When Peter and John gave him no money, we might have heard the lame man complain: “You don't care about me. You won't support me. Look at the mess I'm in.” But Peter and John wanted something greater than supporting the man in his condition. They wanted to transform his life by the power of the risen Jesus Christ.

What I do have I give you: He gave the lame man power in the name of Jesus, but he could not give it unless *he had it in his own life*. Many people want to be able to say, “**rise up and walk**” without having received the power of Jesus to transform their own life.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth: “Jesus was from Nazareth – he was a Nazarene, and this had been used to insult Christ during his life on earth. But now Peter waved it like a banner.” (Hughes)

Immediately his feet and bones received strength: Strength did not come to the lame man until Peter said “**rise up and walk,**” and not until Peter **took him by the right hand and lifted him up.**

Entered the temple... walking, leaping, and praising God: As soon as he was healed, the formerly lame man did three good things. First, he attached himself to the apostles (**entered the temple with them**). Secondly, he immediately started to use what God had given him (**walking, leaping**). Finally, he began to praise and worship God (**praising God**).

The power for healing this man came from “the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” (3:6). Peter attaches the despised name, “Nazarene,” both to show that God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise (1 Corinthians 1:27), and to emphasize that it was the man Jesus from this village of Nazareth who is still living, who imparted from heaven the power to heal this cripple.

Sometimes in the Gospels and in Acts, a person was healed because he had the faith to be healed. But in many instances, the person was healed as an act of sovereign grace, without any indication of faith on his part. Here, there is no indication that the man had faith in Jesus to be healed. In 3:16, Peter explains to the crowd that it was on the basis of faith in the name of Jesus that this man was healed, but Peter seems to be referring to his own faith, not to the man’s faith. The man was not expecting a healing; he was only expecting a handout (3:5). Peter also makes it clear that the faith that he exercised “comes through [Jesus].” In other words, Jesus gave Peter the faith to believe that He would heal this lame man. Peter simply responded to the prompting of the Lord. The healed man knew where his healing had come from. He didn’t shout praises to Peter and John. He didn’t praise his own mental attitude, saying, “I knew that if I kept a positive mental attitude, someday I’d be healed!” He didn’t boast in his great faith as the cause of his healing. No, he simply praised God. God and God alone, by His great mercy, was the cause of his cure.

III. A Healing Witnessed (Acts 3:9-11)

And all the people saw him walking and praising God: Think of all the friends and family who would be overjoyed with him at his miracle. This should stir up their faith in God, as well. He has been made new in the name of Jesus Christ.

Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms: This man was more than 40 years old (Acts 4:22) and had been crippled since birth. He was a familiar sight at this temple gate (Acts 3:10). Therefore, Jesus must have passed him by many times without healing him.

While the man held on to Peter and John: Since he could walk, it wasn’t for support. Perhaps he held on to them out of gratitude, perhaps out of a combined sense of fear and surprise – since a crowd quickly gathered as **the people ran together to them... greatly amazed**.

... all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon’s, greatly amazed: Porch that is called Solomon’s is a portico surrounding the temple’s Court of the Gentiles. This was also where Jesus had taught about the Good Shepherd (John 10:23). This great number of people ran to marvel at these men. They may have been confusing this power as if it was in Peter and John, not through the power in the name of Jesus Christ.

This is even a thing to consider today. We must not be too overwhelmed by miracles. We must look beyond the miracle to Jesus.

Lesson Summary

This week's lesson records the first miracle in Acts that God enabled the apostles to perform after the Day of Pentecost. Peter and John, going up to the temple for the 3 p.m. prayer service, encountered a man in his forties (Acts 4:22) who had been crippled from birth. He asked for a handout, but Peter spoke a word of healing to him in Jesus' name, reached out his hand and pulled him to his feet. Instantly, God's miraculous power strengthened the man's feet and ankles, so that he could walk. He followed Peter and John into the temple, but by now he wasn't just walking, he was jumping for joy! It may well be that some stern religious leader told him to calm down: "Don't you know that you're in God's holy temple?" But the man would have replied, "I'm so happy that I could jump and dance all night!"

Perhaps the man was not only healed physically, but he also was healed spiritually, because he was now praising God. If he was not yet clear on the gospel, I'm sure that he responded to Peter's sermon that followed. The man's joy is a fulfillment of what Jesus the Messiah would do. Isaiah 35:5-6 says, "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy." These words were fulfilled in Jesus' ministry (Matthew 11:5).

This story in Acts attests to the divine Messiahship of Jesus. It shows that Jesus was continuing to work through His apostles and that His name was still powerful to perform the same gracious miracles of healing that took place when He was on this earth. Luke shares it as a specific example of what he reported in 2:43, that many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. He picked this miracle because it led to Peter's second sermon (3:12-26) and to the first persecution against the early church (4:1-22). But it was not just a miracle of physical healing; it is also a picture of the spiritual healing that God brings to a spiritually lame world. It teaches us that God's miraculous gift of salvation should cause us to praise Him with exuberant joy so that others will marvel at His mighty power.