

Leaping and Praising God!

Introduction

We just finished Acts chapter 2. If you remember, in Acts 2, the day of Pentecost was a day like no other in the life of God's people. The Holy Spirit descended and the disciples began to speak in other languages. Their message was the mighty works of God through Jesus Christ. In answer to the questions and comments from the crowd, Peter preaches a sermon explaining what all this means. He calls them to repentance and 3000 souls are saved. The New Testament Church is born. Chapter 2 ends with "... the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved." (Acts 2:47b) The Church grew and spread as the Lord used the disciples and other faithful believers as they shared the Gospel of Christ.

Acts 3 is comprised of a miraculous event involving Peter, John and a lame man, Peter gives the explanation of that event, following the same pattern as we saw in chapter 2 and Pentecost - questions asked and answers given. The people who witnessed this event "were filled with wonder and amazement" (v. 10) The event is the lame man being healed in Jesus' name and the explanation is Peter's sermon preached in the temple beginning in verse 11. We will focus on the first half of chapter 3 this Sunday and the second half of chapter 3 next Lord's Day.

Key Truth: *It is Jesus Christ who gives people the faith required to believe in Him as the Messiah and by their belief in Him they receive God's gift of salvation.*

If you have been a Christian for a while, when you think back to those days when you were a brand new born again person; remember taking in all you could from God's Word and sermons and teachings trying to gain understanding what it truly meant to think and live as a Christian. I do not know about you, but I had preconceived ideas of what a Christian was. Some of those ideas proved to be true and other ideas and concepts were corrected over time. God often takes His children on paths they would have never dreamed of. For me, the Lord told me to give up my career and become a missionary and then a pastor; never in my wildest imagination would I have thought God could take a sinner like me, give me the faith I needed to turn my back on the world and change me and grow me so I could be used for His glory, serve His kingdom and His people.

Reading of God's Word

Now please stand and hear the Word of God read by Brother Dale, **3** ¹“Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’ ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, ‘I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!**’ ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and **leaping and praising God.** ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder

and amazement at what had happened to him.” This story is straight forward and yet, it has some basic lessons about life. We begin with the beggar or panhandlers and by extension from this passage our possible misplaced faith.

Misplaced Faith

Today’s passage is about a man who had grown accustomed to a certain way of life. From verses 1 to 3, which you just heard, we learn this man was lame from birth and forced to beg in order to survive. As we think about infants as they struggle to walk and as those first steps come, there is joy for the parents and grandparents seeing their children begin to walk, this man never did that. His parents had to do things for him because he had never learned to walk because his legs were deformed.

When he sees Peter and John that day, I am confident he thought he knew what would take place ... it was going to be a day like all the rest as far as he was concerned, his hope was in a few coins. He would be carried to the gate of the temple and as worshippers would come and go, he would ask them if they could spare a coin or two for a lame man. He had gotten good at asking or begging for money. It was all he had ever done it was all he would be able to do, it was his life day in and day out. He thought money was his greatest need in his life. He thought he would be on the ground, sitting on a mat for the rest of his life begging for money. He thought things would always be like they had always been. He never gave other things outside of survival much thought because sitting on that mat was all he had ever known.

Sometimes we make the mistake by thinking, *If I only had more money my life would be much better*. The truth is, money is not our greatest need, it was not the begger’s greatest need. Our greatest need is to have a vibrant relationship with

Jesus Christ. Today, our text introduces us to a man who thought what he needed most was for someone to give him money. What he received, namely, Jesus Christ and healing was far greater than anything he had ever received and when Christ came into his life, it was changed forever.

If you ever find yourself thinking, *If I only had more money, then I would be happier*. Use that thought to quickly remind yourself that there is something wrong with my thinking; correct yourself from *I do not need more money*, to thinking of your true need, I need more Jesus. I had advanced in my career and was making a lot of money. However, I was disappointed, money did not bring me peace and happiness and I thought is this all there is? Money did solve my problems.

These verses open with Peter and John going to the temple to pray. Even though Jesus had declared Himself to be the temple, the place where man can access God the Father. Even though Christ gives the gift of the Holy Spirit to dwell within a believer and the believer then becomes the temple of God, the disciples have not disengaged their practice of regular prayer at the temple. Why? Because community is important and seeking places to share the Gospel with the lost is important. Going to the temple was not a problem, as long as they understood it was a place, a building and God lived within them and they were His true temple. As they are going to the 3:00 pm prayer time held in the temple they are motioned over by a lame man. It is interesting that 3:00 pm or the ninth hour was the time for the sacrifices to be made. This was a perfect time to be in the temple reflecting upon the ultimate sacrifice; the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. This was the perfect time to go to the temple and pray and share the Gospel with those seeking God.

This man as he motioned Peter and John over began to ask them for something. This passage as we will see in a minute, indicates that this man was a

regular at the Gate called Beautiful. He had been there many times and for many years. He may have been there when Jesus walked by on one of the days He had been to the temple. He had probably seen the disciples before as they had regularly gone in and out of the temple to pray and share the Gospel. But this day would be different than all the rest.

This lame man had sat at the temple gates day in and day out for decades and all he expected of life were a few coins each day for food and family to carry him home. Not a lot of joy in that life; no meaningful work, no wife or children, it was a life of survival. Today was to be different, reading at verse 4, “[And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, ‘Look at us.’](#)”⁵ [And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.](#)” This day like all the past days, the lame man expects to receive a spare coin or two. He probably has his hand out in expectation, thinking Peter or John or both will drop in a coin out of pity for this man’s condition.

But Peter, does not drop a coin but says, ‘[Look at us.](#)’ Peter wants this man’s full attention, I can see in my mind’s eye, at this point the lame man sitting on his mat begins to look away, perhaps for others who might be more favorable to his pleas for money, than these two men who, it does not seem are going to give any money. Peter says, ‘[Look at us](#)’ demanding this man to give them his full attention in order to hear Peter clearly. We read the lame man fixed his attention on them but still expected to receive alms, which he did not get, but received something far better than coins.

Faith At Work

Now that Peter has the man’s attention he continues, “[I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,](#)

rise up and walk!” Understanding, the life style of the apostles living by the grace of the churches and believers who gave them a few coins, at times a place to sleep and food to eat, it is possible Peter and John possessed less money than the beggar. God’s work is not dependent on money instead it is dependent on faith. What God gives through His Son, Jesus Christ is worth far more than money and yet, it is free for everyone who has faith. This poor lame man thought all he needed to survive was gold or silver but Peter knows his true need, which Peter possessed, which was a relationship with God through Jesus! Peter says let me give you what I have, the knowledge of who Jesus is and what faith in Him brings. Peter is saying, I have faith that God is calling me to heal you and by you having faith in Jesus, you will be healed.

I want to be clear here it is not Peter or John who healed this man, they are servants of God and used by Him. It is Jesus from the throne room of heaven who prompts Peter to have faith to tell the man in the power of His name - be healed and Jesus gives the lame man the faith to receive the healing. With faith given and faith received, Jesus heals. It is Jesus who calls and it is Jesus who gives faith and the man receives. Initially, Luke does not reveal the behind-the-scenes details of this passage. But when Peter begins his sermon to explain what has taken place in verse 12, Peter declares, **“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?”** Peter is making clear that it was not he and John who healed this lame man. A few verses later, in verse 16, Peter explains who healed this man, it is faith in *Jesus’* **“name—by faith in *Jesus’* 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.”** Peter is saying, it is by faith in Jesus and it is Jesus who gives this faith that causes this man to believe resulting in his healing. As Paul

explained to the new church in Ephesus, ⁴“But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ **even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—** ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages *God* might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,** ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:4-10) The first thing Peter does is to make sure people understand faith is a gift of God, by His grace people are saved and it is God who prepares His children for good works to bring Him glory. It is not about Peter or John, they are but God’s servants, it is all about God, His power, His glory and the salvation He gives by His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Is it not a great act of grace for God to save us? How does God save us? He gives us the faith He requires for us to believe! Beloved, by ourselves we could not never produce the saving faith required for anything. So, God in His goodness gives us the gift of salvation which includes the gift of faith.

Faith’s Result

Reading at verse 7, “And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and **immediately** his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and **leaping and praising God.** ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to

him.” Here is a man who may have dreamed of walking someday, but was powerless to actually walk. He may have dreamed of walking or even running through fields, how disappointed he would have been when he woke and realized it was only a dream. God does not always respond with miraculous healings; God does what He does to bring Himself glory and to help in the process of giving faith to those He has chosen. So, God does something unexpected. God prompts Peter to step out in faith and He has already prepared this man to receive His faith and respond to Peter. Why? For His glory and to give all those in the temple a reason to listen to Peter about Jesus the long-awaited Messiah who has come.

There are similarities to this man’s response and those who responded to Jesus as He taught and did healings. Do you remember the way Jesus took Peter’s mother-in-law by her hand and helped her to her feet? Acts verse 7 is an echo of Mark chapter 1, ²⁹ “**Immediately Jesus left the synagogue and entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.** ³⁰ **Now Simon’s mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told him about her.** ³¹ **And Jesus came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them.**” (Mark 1:29-31) Also do not too quickly pass the word ‘immediately’. In both cases the healing was immediate giving support to it being an act of God’s grace. Going to Luke chapter 1, Zacharias had been unable to speak since the time of his service in the temple, now his son is born and there is a discussion as to what to name the child, ⁶³ “**And Zacharias asked for a writing tablet and wrote, ‘His name is John.’ And they all wondered.** ⁶⁴ **And immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, blessing God.** ⁶⁵ **And fear came on all their neighbors. And all these things were talked about through all the hill country of Judea,** ⁶⁶ **and all who heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, ‘What then will this child be?’ For the hand of the Lord was with him.**” (Luke 1:63-66) When God

is involved, He has the power to make things immediate, God spoke and the universe was put into place, now that was a ‘big bang’ and it was immediate! Jesus as God has the power of ‘immediate’, in Luke chapter 5 we read, ¹² “While Jesus was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, ‘Lord, **if you will**, you can make me clean.’ ¹³ And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘**I will; be clean.**’ And **immediately** the leprosy left him.” (Luke 5:12-13) A few verses later we again read the word ‘immediately’. Jesus told a man he was healed of his sin and the Scribes confront Jesus saying only God can forgive sins. In response Jesus “said to the man who was paralyzed—‘**I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.**’ ²⁵ And **immediately** he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, **glorifying God.**” (Luke 5:24-25) It is the exact same thing with the Apostles by the power given from God and in Jesus’ name they too have the power of immediate. By faith given and faith received, they carry out Jesus’ ministry of teaching and healing. Along the way God is working miracles to accompany their ministry so that the people will believe. When you were saved by God, your salvation was ‘immediate’ because it was done by the power of God not men and your salvation is a miracle of God – praise be to God!

This beggar was the one everyone saw over and over again out in front of the temple. This was the man people felt sorry for but rarely ever did anything to help. This was the man that when the worshippers saw him, crossed over on the other side of the temple entrance. This was the one who would at best received a coin or two but never anything more. This was the man who had been written off by society and no longer hoped of ever having a life any different than what he was currently living. This man was touched by God, given faith and healed too never

be the same again. Who in society have we written off? How does God want to use you and us as Canyon Bible for His glory and to show His grace to others?

The first thing the beggar does with his new legs is leap in the air praising God. Look in your Bible at verse 7, “**and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.** ⁸ **And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.**” Here is the right response; praising God. Let me ask, did not God healed you immediately of your sin problem when you came to Christ by the faith God gave you and is not the right response to live a life praising God! In verse 9 we read, “**And all the people saw him walking and praising God,** ¹⁰ **and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.**” They realized that when they came into the temple, they walked past this beggar and they recognized him as the man who always laid his hope in receiving a coin or two, but suddenly he is jumping, running, standing, leaping and giving God all the credit! Do you not know that those who knew you before you came to Christ saw you as somewhat broken and in need of something they could not give and knew you had sin in your life? Since coming to Christ, do people now see you as different and do you give all the credit to God?

Before we leave this passage in chapter 3, I want to address one more thing. I think there is more meaning here in this passage by Luke’s use of specific words, by the sheer concentration within this passage of a very rare Greek word and by the way Luke laid out this narrative.

Luke is recording a second event that proves the Last Days, the Church Age has begun. Again, just as Jesus performed miraculous healings that were called signs and wonders, so too, Jesus continues His ministry through the Apostles. By

the power of Christ, the Apostles demonstrate the impossible is possible. Peter is not some fake miracle worker seeking fame and money as the Bible warns about and as seen time and time again throughout history, including this very day. They performed a miracle of God through the power of the name of Jesus by faith. We are told in the next chapter when Peter and John are hauled before Sadducees that “the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.” (Acts 4:22) The miracle by the power of Jesus’ name is undisputable and the Sadducees have to let Peter and John go, they could not find anything to charge them with. When there is a miraculous sign or wonder, one needs to ask themselves a couple of questions. What is its purpose? Who does it glorify? Let’s go back to our passage and look at the answers to these questions. As Luke tells us about the Peter’s response to the Sadducees in verse 9 where he uses a rare word and a word with specific meaning, the word is ‘*sozo*’ which literally means ‘saved’. Beginning in verse 8, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been **healed** (*sozo or saved*).” As Peter continues, we read in verses 10 to 12, “let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And **there is salvation in no one else**, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be **saved** (*sozo*).” (Acts 4:8-12) When this man is healed, he becomes a picture of the future restoration of all things. He becomes an example of the first-fruit of all creation that will be restored when Jesus Christ no longer restores from heaven but returns and sets up the consummated Kingdom. By the faith given through Jesus this man, like all future believers is healed and saved ‘*sozo*’! This is what the prophet Isaiah spoke of a thousand years before Christ,

when Christ comes again, ⁵“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; ⁶ **then shall the lame man leap like a deer**, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.” (Isaiah 35:5-6) For those who believe in Christ as the children of God they will be saved and when Jesus returns for all nature they will be healed – ‘*sozo*’! As we have dug a little deeper into God’s Word found here in Acts chapter 3, we discover, when Luke reports that this lame man leaps, he is choosing his words very carefully to convey the fact that the Last Days have been ushered in and this man’s healing is a picture of the future healing and restoration of all things when Christ returns.

My beloved, the day is coming when all creation is restored to perfect health *sozo*, and that includes us with our glorified bodies. We are healed and saved; we are *sozo*. So, in the name of Jesus begin “**walking and leaping and praising God.**” I say with all we are, as God children, “Praise the Lord”! Can I have an Amen.