

Sunday 17 July 2022 – Peter heals a lame beggar Acts 3:1-10

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer – at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, ‘Look at us!’ ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ Then Peter said, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’ ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognised him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

We’re continuing with Acts after a few weeks on the psalms of ascent.

This is quite a well known passage and is one example of the working of the Holy Spirit in the apostles in the same way He worked in Jesus. We’ll see more examples of what Holy Spirit can do in later chapters of Acts.

Some background: Peter was the disciple who denied Christ three times and was restored after the resurrection. John was the disciple Jesus loved. Both were fishermen, Simon Peter with his brother Andrew, and James with his brother John. Here we see Peter and John as the leaders of the church doing what we read about in the previous chapter: gathering in the Temple courts daily. Going at three in the afternoon seems an odd time for us, but the 9 to 5 economy didn’t exist in those days. There were a lot of people around at this time as well.

Like other beggars, he had someone to take him to his spot. It was a prime spot for this lame man with something wrong with his ankles and feet, who had never walked in his whole life. Jesus may well have passed him whenever he went to the Temple and did not heal him. Peter and John may also have passed him as the Gate Beautiful was one of the main gates to the Temple. By all accounts he was known to many as this time when the Pharisees saw he was healed, they didn’t question him like they did with the man who was born blind and had to wash at the pool of Siloam (John 9).

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Beggars seek the attention of passers-by: they expect something to be given to them. Rarely do we look straight at beggars unless we have something to offer them. Without eye contact, we can walk on by as if we didn’t hear the request for money. Once we have made eye contact, our minds have to make a decision: is this beggar deserving of our attention now we have not ignored him? Peter asked the man to look at both him and John, increasing the man’s expectations. Peter and John both were touched by the man’s predicament and prompted by the Holy Spirit gave the man something more precious than gold or silver. Healing comes from God, not us. Peter was giving Jesus the glory by saying “in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk”. There are few instances of Jesus of Nazareth being used as the name of the Messiah outside the Gospels. This is 60 or 70 days after the crucifixion so people would remember “Jesus of Nazareth” claiming to be the

Messiah. This healing is the first where the apostles use the name of Jesus to do something supernatural. There is also something a little different in the way the miracle happens.

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Peter takes the beggar by the right hand to help him up. The healing power of Jesus moved into the man, who could feel strength entering his ankles and feet. He jumped up and walked: someone who had probably never been able to walk without crutches. This healing was instant, like most of the healings of Jesus. Psalm 107:20 speaks of how God (Jesus, God and Holy Spirit are one) "sent forth his word and healed". Matthew 8 mentions the centurion who said the Jesus "*Just say the word and my servant will be healed*" (verse 8) and later in that chapter verses 16-17 ¹⁶ *When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. ¹⁷ This was to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: "He took up our infirmities and bore our diseases."* The Word of God is powerful and when Peter spoke the words of the Holy Spirit in him, the healing was instant. The man jumped up, not as someone gingerly trying to get up who knew his weakness, and was testing his strength, but someone who had no doubts about his new found strength. Peter held his right hand, the beggar jumped to his feet – both doing their part while Christ did everything to make it all happen. The beggar was overjoyed that he could walk and couldn't hold back his joy all the while praising God for his healing. Peter and John carried on walking into the Temple. The Holy Spirit had plans for them in the Temple to talk to the crowd that had gathered. That's for next week!

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This time the crowd in the Temple saw with their own eyes the lame beggar they had probably passed by earlier that day and indeed for many years earlier: no one could deny the reality of the healing and they were amazed. As the man was praising God, it would be natural to assume God had done the healing.

Going on to some points to take home with you which are: (1) **If this story happened today, what would it look like?** (2) **What is this story saying to us today?** (3) **Could the story make a difference to my life? If so, how?**

If this happened today, what would it look like?

We still have beggars and many with disabilities are outside larger churches, especially in Southern Europe. We still have a few meetings where someone with a healing ministry will be asking those in wheelchairs or on crutches to come forward. Occasionally these people are healed. Those present will have different reactions. Many of the Christians will praise God and have an expectation that He will do what His Word says: that is heal people. Some who don't believe will be more sceptical and seek to question if the person healed was really afflicted with what was healed. In any event this kind of miraculous healing is unlikely to hit the news outside Christian circles.

What is this story saying to us today?

This story tells us that the power of God which Jesus had when on earth, is available to those who are his disciples. Jesus said ¹² *Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have*

been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. (John 14:12-14). This is a bold statement many of us will skate over. But without boldness and knowledge that what we ask is the will of God, we will never know if what Jesus says is possible. None of us wants to look foolish when nothing happens when we ask Jesus to heal someone. How high are our expectations that God will do what He did when Peter said to the beggar, "in Jesus name, walk". Nothing is impossible with God. Jesus says elsewhere, and we've looked at this when we went through Marks' Gospel chapter 14 when Peter noted that the cursed fig tree had withered. ²² 'Have faith in God,' Jesus answered. ²³ 'Truly^[1] I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵ And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.'

The importance of that passage is that there are conditions: have faith, believe you have received what you asked for and forgive everyone so that you may be forgiven yourself.

Could the story make a difference to my life? If so, how?

Are you prepared before you ask God for something? Are you expectant that he will do what you ask? Are you willing to ask the seemingly impossible? We don't know if Peter and John had healed a lame man before. They just knew that the beggar's greatest need was to be able to walk, and they knew someone who could meet that need: the Lord Jesus.