

Better Than Silver or Gold

Acts 3

DT- Be refreshed so that you can enjoy the restored.

As we move into Acts 3 Luke records a miracle performed by Peter. Acts 2:43 tells us that the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. Was this the first miracle? It could have been but probably not. Why did Luke choose this miracle? We don't know for sure, but we do know that his miracle was performed in the name of Jesus and that phrase is something we will see over and over again for the next 3 chapters. Let's get into the text and see how this miracle stirred things up. Let's pray.

PRAY

The ending of Acts 2 says that "Each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." Acts 3 describes one of those days. Some days a multitude would give their lives to Christ and some days a crippled beggar would be the only one changed by God. Either way the Spirit was moving in some amazing ways. Peter and John are headed to the temple for the afternoon prayer. Peter and John as best we can tell have been friends a long time. We find them together often. They were partners in a fishing business before they meet Jesus. They were the ones who prepared the last Passover for Jesus in the upper room when Jesus instituted communion. They were the 2 disciples running towards the tomb on that first Easter morning.

There was a time when Peter and John argued over who would be the greatest in the kingdom, but now they realize that title belongs to Jesus and to him only. Instead of arguing with one another, Peter and John are working faithfully together to build the church. They did that in various ways, one method was to visit the temple and place themselves at an intersection where they knew people would be. Acts 3:2-4 says, "As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!"

Anyone with a physical impairment could not go into the temple. Instead, the crippled were placed at the gates of the temple so they could beg for money. Did this crippled man know Peter and John? There's a good chance he did. This was probably not their first trip to the temple, in fact this could be weeks after Pentecost. If they had been going to the temple often, which I'm sure they did, then chances are this crippled man knew who Peter and John were, the leaders of this new group who believe Jesus rose from the dead.

We find out later in Acts 4 that this crippled man was over 40, which means he probably overheard the teachings of Jesus when he was there. Perhaps his familiarity with Peter and John is why he asked for money. The text says Peter and John looked at this crippled man intently. We've all probably experienced someone homeless coming up to our vehicle begging for money, or at least holding up a sign and begging. If you don't intend to give that person any money what's the one thing you don't do? Make eye contact.

How many of you go into Sam's and avoid eye contact with the people from AT&T trying to sign you up or sell you an upgrade? How many of you know what I'm talking about? We have AT&T everything, so I go ahead and make eye contact and tell them all our devices and internet is with them and we are very happy with our service, good luck, and have a good day. I even gave a fist bump one time to the guy standing there after saying that.

It's kind of sad to watch other people walk by them and avoid eye contact; and even when the AT&T people say something to them, they just ignore them as if they don't exist and keep on walking. When I see that it reminds me of this story. Most people ignored the crippled folks sitting by the gate, and they would just keep walking into the temple.

Peter and John didn't do that. The normal Greek word for look means to glance. That's not the Greek word that Luke uses here, which is why the NLT says that they looked intently. The Greek word here means to stare someone down. A penetrating kind of stare. Apparently Peter and John's stare is so penetrating that the beggar felt kind of awkward and must have looked away because Peter says, "Hey, look at us."

Peter's being rather bold here but what he says next is beyond bold, and moves towards the miraculous. Peter says in Acts 3:6-11, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them. All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded! They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John."

The miracle draws a crowd.

1. The miracle draws a crowd.

You can understand why that would be the case. First the man is doing things you're not suppose to do in the temple. Everybody knows you're not suppose to run in church. The actions of running around the temple is one thing, but then people start to notice who this guy is. I mean he's been crippled since birth. He's been begging at the temple for decades. People know who he is.

In Joplin when I was attending Ozark there was a homeless lady that everybody knew as the cart lady. She pushed around a Walmart cart full of stuff. She was more mentally handicapped than physically handicapped, but everyone knew her and the community would often take care of her in whatever way she would allow them to. They knew this guy and seeing him walk, run, and jump around got their attention.

Peter heals this man using the phrase "In the name of Jesus" get up and walk. In these next few chapters, you will see healings in the name of Jesus. Courage in the name of Jesus. Suffering in the name of Jesus, and salvation in the name of Jesus. A person's name in the ancient world is what opened doors for them. The family name had power. We still have some of that today.

We often end our prayers by saying "In the name of Jesus." There's no magical formula to ending a prayer. Saying "In the name of Jesus" is a convenient way of letting people know the prayer has ended, but hopefully the reason we say that is to remind ourselves and everyone around that we are praying by his authority, his power, his kingship. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus intercedes for us when we pray; that verse says, "Therefore he is able, once and forever, to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf."

Peter isn't ending a prayer, but through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus he tells this man to rise up and walk. There's a story told in F.F. Bruce's commentary on Acts about a time when the famous early church theologian Thomas Aquinas was visiting with Pope Innocent II. Apparently in the process of their visit the Pope showed Thomas the vast treasure houses of the Catholic Church. This was the time when indulgences were being sold and St. Peter's was being built. The Pope was trying to impress Thomas with the wealth of the Catholic Church and he said, "You see Thomas, the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Thomas agreed and said, "True, holy father. Neither can she now say, 'Rise and walk.'"

Thomas wasn't pointing that out to be harsh or anti-Catholic. He was pointing out that sometimes the accumulation of wealth can rob us of the power of God. Peter has said in the name of Jesus get up and walk. The crippled man is now walking, leaping, and praising God. The crowd is drawn to this commotion underneath a large covered porch known as Solomon's Colonnade. Almost immediately we see Peter turning the attention towards God. The credit goes to God.

2. The credit goes to God.

This was not about Peter and John's godliness. When amazing godly things happen in your life either to you or through you it is God who deserves the praise, glory, honor, and credit. Peter sees yet another chance, with the crowd gathered round, to proclaim the good news about Jesus and give him the credit for this miracle. Peter says this in Acts 3:12-16, "People of Israel," he said, "what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness? For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate's decision to release him. You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact! "Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus' name has healed him before your very eyes."

Peter gives God all the credit for the miracle and specifically points them towards Jesus. he was healed through faith in the name of Jesus. How do you have faith in a name? It goes back to what I said earlier. Your name in the ancient world gave you certain privileges. Your name commanded or demanded respect. We see this today in all sorts of ways. If the father or mother builds a well-known reputation, people expect their children, who bare that same name, to carry on that legacy, to be at least as dignified, to be the same kind of hard worker, or have the same kind of spiritual depth.

It goes both ways though. Children of parents who do not have a good reputation can find it hard to break away from that view of them and their family. To put your faith in a name is to trust that this person will be what their name and family represents. They will carry on the legacy of their name and in no way tarnish that legacy. Peter not only wants this crowd to put their faith in the name of Jesus but also in the person of Jesus as well. Peter continues with his sermon and the call to repent and turn to God is given again.

3. The call to repent and turn to God is given again.

Peter says in Acts 3:17-21, "Friends, I realize that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was done in ignorance. But God was fulfilling what all the prophets had foretold about the Messiah—that he must suffer these things. Now repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away. Then times of refreshment will come from the presence of the Lord, and he will again send you Jesus, your appointed Messiah. For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets."

This sermon is essentially a repeat of what he said on Pentecost with a few differences. Repent is still plural. It's still all y'all need to repent. Instead of mentioning baptism he says turn to God. On one occasion Peter says repent and be baptized, here on another occasion in chapter 3 he says repent and turn to God. If you repent and turn to God 3 things will happen. First, your sins will be wiped away.

- Your sins will be wiped away.

Instead of saying your sins are forgiven he says your sins will be wiped away. That term wipe away or wipe out was an accounting term. They would sometimes put wax on wood and make markings in the wax to keep a record. When that record needed to be removed they could take another piece of wood and wipe away the wax. When we repent and turn to God our sins are wiped away. Peter also says that times of refreshing will come.

- Times of refreshing will come.

What does times of refreshing mean? That's another way to talk about the Holy Spirit. In chapter 2 after repentance, baptism, and the forgiveness of sin comes the gift of the Holy Spirit. Here in chapter 3, it's the same thing just described in a different way. Ephesians 4:23 says, "Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes."

Renewal and refreshment are what the Spirit can bring. God talks about this often in scripture, and especially through the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 55:1-2 God says through Isaiah, "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare."

God is trying to tell us that no matter where you find yourself he will at some point bring times of refreshing. Our struggle is that we sometimes labor over things that will not satisfy us. God is calling us, just like Peter was calling this crowd to turn to God and receive the refreshment you so desperately need. He will give you what your soul delights in, but you have to turn towards him.

There's another text in Isaiah that speaks to this time of refreshing. Isaiah 44:1-5 says this, "But now listen, O Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, O Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants. They will spring up like grass in a meadow, like poplar trees by flowing streams. One will say, 'I belong to the Lord'; another will call himself by the name of Jacob; still another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's', and will take the name Israel."

Another will write on his hand "The Lord's". Ephesians 1 tells us that the Holy Spirit is our seal, our mark on the hand, so to speak, that we belong to God. Jesus has a mark on him. A mark on his hands made by us. Every time he sees that mark he is reminded of his love for you. He is reminded of what he did to bring times of refreshing upon you. When he looks at his hand he is reminded of the gift of the Holy Spirit that he gave to you.

Isaiah gives us the image of putting his mark on our hand to remind us who we belong to. I'm going to ask you to do something that your mother always told you not to do. There are pens in the pocket of the chair in front of you. Take that pen and write on your hand, "The Lord's".

Doing this will hopefully remind you today, that you belong to the Lord. I know that some of you here today are going through a tough season of life. I wish that wasn't the case for you. I wish your life was free from pain and sorrow. But perhaps this exercise, this mark on your hand, that in some way matches the mark on his hand, will remind you that a time of refreshing will come. You belong to him, and God takes care of what belongs to him.

There is a final refreshing that will happen someday. And that's the last thing Peter says will happen when you turn to God. God will send Jesus again to restore everything.

- God will send Jesus again to restore everything.

Peter says in Acts 3:21, "For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through his holy prophets."

A time of full restoration and refreshing will come for those who bear the mark of the Spirit. John writes in Revelation 21:1-4, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

The word for new in verse 1 actually means renewed. God will renew, restore this earth and we will dwell with God himself. When we repent and turn to God he wipes away the sin, gives us the Spirit to refresh us, and promises to send Jesus again to restore all things. When that restoration happens, for those who are the Lord's; he will not only wipe away sin, but he will wipe away every tear, and the time of refreshing will be indescribable and unending.

No more death, no more mourning, no more crying or pain. Total and complete refreshing for those who are the Lord's. Be refreshed so that you can enjoy the restored. Be refreshed now by the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, by turning towards God, so that he can put his mark on you, a seal to prove that you belong to him, that you are the Lord's. Then one day all of us with that seal will be able to enter into the final restoration of all things. That is the promise God has made to us. Be refreshed so that you can enjoy the restored.