

# "Healing of a Lame Beggar"

## Acts 3:1-10

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### **Introduction:**

Probably most of us can remember several momentous events that changed our lives forever. Perhaps we remember the time when we met the love of our lives. Maybe we remember the birth of our children. Perhaps we remember getting our very first job and the feeling of accomplishment that came along with that experience. Perhaps we remember some kind of medical procedure that gave us a new lease on life. There are many events that may affect us in some very positive ways, and this morning I would like for us to consider one of these events that took place in the life of a man more than 40 years old who was healed in the book of **Acts, Chapter 3**. If you are using the pew Bibles, you may want to know that the passage is found on page 1703.

**Acts 3** has a rather interesting background. We remember that before Jesus ascended back into heaven, He told the apostles to stay in the city of Jerusalem until the coming of the Holy Spirit. They waited, and just a few days later they were gathered together in one place, and the Holy Spirit came down like a mighty, rushing wind. They began to speak in foreign languages, the apostle Peter then preached the first gospel sermon in **Acts 2**, and the Bible tells us that 3,000 people were baptized in response to that lesson. At the end of **Acts 2**, we find that the apostles were performing miracles and that the church was growing by leaps and bounds, that, ***"...the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."***

Sometimes we end there, but this morning I would like for us to continue by looking at what happens next, in **Acts 3**. **»PPT»** We will cover **Acts 3** in a series of three lessons, beginning this morning, and then picking up in two weeks, after our Vacation Bible School. And I would like to spend so much time in **Acts 3**, because the healing we are about to consider had some serious implications for the early church. Most importantly, it led to Peter's second sermon (where several thousand more people responded to the gospel).

This morning, then, I would like for us to look at **Acts 3** as we consider several basic principles that will help us reach out to the world around us today. As we study, I would like for us to ask ourselves the question: Why was the early church so effective at reaching out to people?

If you will, please look with me at **Acts 3:1-10**...

<sup>1</sup> Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. <sup>2</sup> And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. <sup>4</sup> But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup> And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!" <sup>7</sup> And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. <sup>8</sup> With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup> And all the people saw him walking and praising God; <sup>10</sup> and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

As we look back at these ten verses, again, we need to ask ourselves the question: What made the early church so good at reaching out to those who were lost?

**I. And one of the first things we notice is that PETER AND JOHN SAW A NEED. In other words, they were OPEN TO INTERRUPTIONS. »PPT»**

And again, this happens right after Acts 2, where the apostle Peter had just preached a sermon where 3,000 people had responded to the gospel. I think it might be safe to assume that the apostle Peter was almost a celebrity at this point. Both Peter and John would have been very well-known. Between the two of them, they were responsible for thousands coming to Christ. And yet we find in Acts 3 that their eyes were still open to the problems that individuals were having.

In verse 1, we find that Peter and John were going up to the temple at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at the time of prayer. There would have been thousands of people heading up to the temple. There would have been a sea of people. Peter and John were headed into the temple. They were on a mission. They had a purpose. But as they approach the temple, the Bible tells us that a certain man somehow catches their attention—not a rich young ruler who might be able to give a lot of money to the church, not a powerful rabbi who might be able to win a lot of his powerful friends, not the wealthy Pharisee who is dressed up in his colorful robes—but we find that Peter and John saw a need. They see a poor crippled man who is in the process of being carried to the temple gate for the purpose of begging.

The account is being written by Luke. We know from Colossians 4:14 that Luke is referred to by the apostle Paul as the "**beloved physician**." Luke, therefore is a

medical doctor, and we find in **verse 2**, that this beggar is a man, **"...who had been lame from his mother's womb."** In other words, this man had nothing to offer. He was insignificant in the eyes of the world. He was a nobody. He was unwanted. He was not cared for by society. He did not even have a disability check coming in once a month. He was worthless in the eyes of the world.

And yet we find here that this individual man was extremely important to Peter and John. Sometimes today it is easy to forget that we are responsible for reaching out to individuals. It is easy to overlook individual needs. Just a few moments ago, I shared some of the statistics from the website. And sure, it is amazing to think that there are thousands of people who are being reached with this particular ministry. It is easy to reach out to thousands, but let us never forget that within those thousands there are individuals who have very specific spiritual needs. Let us never get so excited about mass evangelism that we forget about the elderly widow who lives next door, or the little girl who lives across the street, or the Spanish-speaking family who lives down on the corner. Let us remember that we are surrounded by individuals who are desperate to hear the gospel message.

Here in **Acts 3**, we find that the man was begging. In **verse 3**, we see that he reached out to Peter and John. He began asking for alms. Probably all of us have had the experience of being harassed by someone asking for money on the street—maybe on State Street here in Madison, maybe in Chicago, or maybe in some other big city. I know that in Rome we saw a lot of people begging for money—especially around the Vatican—people who were disabled in different ways, people who were horribly disfigured, people who could do nothing but lay on the sidewalk—they were all right there begging for money. I am reminded of the salespeople at American TV over on the Beltline! They were swarming and begging for money. They were all fighting for attention.

But instead of turning away (as we might be tempted to do), we find that Peter and John saw a need—they were open to being interrupted in their daily routine. Couldn't we also say that the Lord's church should still be open to interruptions? As Christians who follow the example of Jesus, shouldn't we also be looking out for people with needs, for people with problems, for people who are hurting? As we have said before, the church can be compared to a hospital. The church is to be a refuge for people who struggle. The church is to be a place where we can come for help and encouragement. As God said in **Ezekiel 34:16**, **"I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment."** God's priority, therefore, is reaching out to those who are brokenhearted.

Peter and John, then, did not just hang out together discussing the Bible with the other apostles. They did not hide out somewhere, but they got out in the crowds. They got involved in the culture of Jerusalem. They met people with real needs. And what a great lesson for us to learn this morning!

Over this coming week, perhaps we can pay special attention to the individuals around us. Is there some way we that can influence them for good? Do we have any

friends or neighbors who may be interested in coming to the Vacation Bible School? Are there people we see every day who we can look at in light of the gospel? Do we see people around us who may look fine on the outside but who may be spiritually struggling on the inside—people who may be struggling financially, people who may have no idea how to deal with their children, people whose marriages are falling apart, people with no self-esteem, people whose job is hanging by a thread, people who are guilty and discouraged? Peter and John set an example of looking out for needs. First of all, therefore, they were open to being interrupted in their daily routine.

**II. As we look back at Acts 3, we also notice, secondly, that PETER AND JOHN PAID ATTENTION TO THIS MAN. In other words, not only were they open to being interrupted, but we also find that THEY TOOK THE TIME TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION HEAD ON. »PPT«**

In verse 4, the Bible says that, *"...Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, 'Look at us!'"*

And again, there were probably many beggars at the temple that afternoon, but Peter and John focused in on this one man and his particular concern. The English Standard Version says that Peter *"directed his gaze at him."* The New International Version says that Peter *"looked straight at him."* In other words, this one man had Peter and John's full attention. In fact, the Greek word that is used here is the basis for our English word "attention." This beggar had Peter and John's complete attention. They looked at him attentively. They noticed. They were perceptive. They paid attention.

And again, how different this is from the way that most of us deal with beggars! Usually we try to avoid eye-contact. Usually we look away. Usually we turn aside. But Peter and John paid attention. We remember the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. A man had been robbed and beaten and was lying by the side of the road. The priest and the Levite passed by on the other side, but the Good Samaritan, *"...who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you'"* (Luke 10:32-35). The Good Samaritan paid attention to the man, and Jesus said in Luke 10:37, *"Go and do the same."*

We also, then, are to pay attention to the pain and suffering that we see in the world around us! Too many times, though, people in the religious world around us today, are only out for people's money. Many will take advantage of those who are weak and those who are suffering, and they will use all kinds of gimmicks to separate those who are hurting from their money.

This past week, one of our members gave me a copy of something that he and his family recently received in the mail. It comes from St. Matthew's Church in Tulsa,

Oklahoma. And what I find interesting is that they have enclosed what they call a **"Holy Ghost Bible Prayer Rug,"** but they are very clear that this rug is to be returned to them within 24 hours. Of course, they encourage you to return a **"seed gift"** when you return the rug. But the instructions say that you are to either kneel on this rug or place this rug on your knees and then pray to God. And if you need, **"...more joy, peace, health, money, a new car, a new house, healing in family communication, or whatever..."**, then that is what this rug is for!

Absolutely ridiculous! Peter and John were not looking for this man's money. They did not give him a miracle prayer rug, expecting a donation in return, but they paid attention!

**III. As we look back at Acts 3, I would like for us to notice another key to their effectiveness at reaching out to the lost, and that is: PETER AND JOHN ACTED ON THEIR CONCERN. In other words, THEY GAVE THIS MAN WHAT HE REALLY NEEDED. »PPT»**

We are reminded here this morning that money does not solve all problems. Yes, I do have some problems that money would solve, but money does not solve everything! Too often, though, people think that giving money is the only way to help someone in need. Certainly this was the case here. In verse 3, we find that, **"...he began asking to receive alms."** This man was looking for cash. In verse 5, the Bible tells us that, **"he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them."** This man was looking for a handout. He was looking for money so that he could buy the next meal, so that he could pay his rent, so that he could pay people to carry him around...whatever. He was looking for money.

And yet again, money does not solve everything. Here in our own nation, it seems that the political campaigns have focused quite a bit on the economy. And so the thinking goes that if we can only get the economy up and running, if we can only get the price of gas down, if we can only get the stock market back up, if we can only control inflation, if we can only lower the price of groceries, if we can only strengthen the dollar in the world economy—then everything will be okay! But everything will not be okay! The main problem with our nation is not the economy! Our real need is the same as that of the beggar in Acts 3. What this nation needs more than anything is the saving gospel of Jesus Christ!

Like the lame man, people around us think that money fixes everything. But let us think about that for a little bit. Judas got money. In fact, Judas got 30 pieces of silver. But what did that do for Judas? We can think about Achan (from Joshua 7). Achan got money. But what did that do for Achan? He and his family were stoned to death for what he had done, for taking the valuables, the gold and silver, out of the rubble of the city of Jericho. We can think about Demas, a close associate of the apostle Paul. Demas apparently got money. But what did that do for Demas? Paul said (in 2 Timothy 4:10), **"For Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica."** Demas had money. We can think

about the church in Laodicea—they were a church with money. But Jesus said in **Revelation 3:17**, ***"You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."*** The church in Laodicea had money.

Even today, if a gambler has a debt of a million dollars, giving him a million dollars might solve his immediate problem, but it is only a matter of time until he gambles again and will create another million dollar debt. Money is not the answer.

Peter and John, therefore, did not have money, but they offered this poor beggar all that they had—they offered him healing in the name of Jesus Christ. In a similar way, we may not be very wealthy as a congregation, but the purpose of the church is not to accumulate wealth. The purpose of the church is to teach and preach the good news of Jesus Christ!

Can money save us? If we know anything about the Bible, the answer is, "No." Many years later, the apostle Peter would write something very interesting in **1 Peter 1:18-21**. He said, ***"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God."*** Peter very clearly said that we were not redeemed with ***"...perishable things such as silver and gold."*** In the same way, he was able to say to the beggar, ***"I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"***

We find that Peter acted in the name of Jesus Christ. Peter was working with the permission of Christ. He reached down, took this man by the hand, and raised him up. The Bible tells us that, ***"...immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God."*** We find that this man put the praise where it belonged. He did not praise Peter and John, but he was praising God. We cannot help but notice his excitement—walking and leaping, praising God! What a good reminder for all of us. Someone has said, "If one tenth of what we believe is true, we ought to be ten times as excited as we are." There is a lot of truth in that statement. As Christians, we have a lot to be happy about.

Today, we no longer have the gift of miraculous healing, but we do have the ability to bring Jesus to people. We still have what people really need. We may not be wealthy as a congregation, but we do have Jesus. People today do not really need a big fancy church building, but they need Jesus. And our mission as a congregation is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ to Madison and South-Central Wisconsin.

As one way of fulfilling our mission, I would like to remind all of us once again about next Saturday's Vacation Bible School. The teachers have been getting ready. Supplies have been collected. Invitations have been sent. Our goal next Saturday

morning is to teach Jesus to whoever is willing to listen. We will meet people all week long who think they need all kinds of things, but I hope that we will have the courage to direct them to Jesus.

### **Conclusion & Invitation:**

As we close, have we noticed the results of what happened here? Lord willing, I would like for us to come back to this in two weeks as we consider Peter's sermon on this occasion. But in the meantime, we find in **verses 9-10** that, ***"...all the people saw him walking and praising God; and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."*** This morning we started with the question: Why was the early church so effective at reaching out to people? I would suggest that they followed the example of Peter and John: 1.) They saw a need, 2.) They paid attention, and then 3.) They acted on what they believed by bringing people to Jesus.

Today, we are also bringing Jesus to the world around us. If you are visiting with us this morning, you need to know that Jesus died for our sins and He was raised up on the third day. In response to His sacrifice, we are to turn away from sin and allow ourselves to be buried in water for the forgiveness of our sins. If you have any questions, we would love to study the Scriptures with you. But if you are ready to obey the good news right now, you can let us know as we sing the next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: [church@fourlakescoc.org](mailto:church@fourlakescoc.org)