

## ACTS#2 CHAPTER 3 REACHING FOR A HELPING HAND

Acts 3:1-26

Acts three opens on a typical day like today.  
 Peter and John were coming to pray.  
 They had to pass by the beggars beside the temple  
 People coming to church are more generous,  
 or hope their gift will atone for some sin and appease God,

Begging beside a church still must work today.  
 When we were in Minneapolis for a wedding  
 when we came to the church there were  
 Two beggars standing on the sidewalk by the intersection  
 With a sign” Out of Work—need food”  
 What I noticed is that one had a big collie dog with him.  
 I wonder which was out of work  
 And which one needed food.  
 Then I noticed he had a new 20 lb bag of dog food beside his backpack.

The beggar in Jerusalem was a sight for sore eyes.  
 He had been paralyzed from birth.  
 He had to be carried every day and every place.  
 He probably also had the paralyses of self pity.  
 Like the classic poem  
 I gave a little tea party this afternoon, at 3.  
 "Twas very small, 3 guests in all - I, myself, and me.  
 Myself ate all the sandwiches while I drank all the tea.  
 "Twas also I who ate the pie and passed the cake to me.

Today if you and I saw this paralytic for the first time,  
 We might wonder if stem cell research could help him?  
 Reactivate legs that have been listless.  
 Connect a spine that has been severed?  
 There is a great debate over where the stem cells should come from.  
 The problem with our thinking about stem cells solutions,  
 And the beggar thinking about silver and gold solutions.  
 leave the help to a physical or worldly solution,  
 And not a spiritual one.  
 Both solutions can leave us spiritually paralyzed.

Today lesson is to encourage us  
 when we are in dire straights,  
 When life is tough  
 When suffering is piled upon suffering.  
**First lesson: God is in charge.**  
 He has a plan,  
 He is not surprised or caught off guard by our meltdown.  
 God is not sitting up in heaven wringing his hands about how this will all turn out.  
 He is altogether good and trustworthy.  
 Orchestrating all the random circumstances of our life.

## **2. Second Lesson: With God we will get through our trials.**

Even though we have to go through them and  
 There are no shortcuts.  
 We won't know how things will turn out.  
 Or how much time it will take,  
 That future belongs to the realm of God.  
 But you will get through this.

Acts Chapter 3 affirms and teaches that

### **I. GOOD THINGS HAPPEN IN AND AROUND THE CHURCH.**

Peter and John were best of friends  
 They spent time together.,  
 Went fishing together,  
 You can make good friends fishing together  
 If you don't out-fish the one who owns the boat.

They experienced holy week together.  
 Prepared the last Passover for Jesus.  
 Ran to the tomb together,  
 Now they were filled with the Holy Spirit  
 And working faithfully together to build the church Ps. 133  
 Peter and John were not competing for greatness, instead,  
 They came to the temple to pray.

### **One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. Acts 3:1**

The church was transitioning from Jews being the chosen ones,  
 To the Gentiles being included in the Body of believers.  
 It would take years before this inclusion was accepted by the Jews

### **Now a man crippled 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. Acts 3:2**

There were probably 1000 of beggars jockeying for position,  
 Problem was, who should you help?  
 If you helped one you might be trampled by the rest.

When our Israeli tour bus stopped at a Bedouin village outside of Jerusalem.  
 The children came running.  
 Some of the well meaning women on the bus, wanted to give the children  
 Some money. Once they started, they were swarmed.  
 Some of us men had to rescue one of the ladies  
 Who was literally being pulled down by the young boys  
 Hanging on to her purse.

This beggar today was an old first century Senior citizen.  
 He was 40 years old. Acts 4:22  
 Born a paraplegic

We don't know what attracted Peter to this beggar,  
 Peter didn't know the man,  
 There was no small talk,

Hi Joe how you doing today?

**3When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Acts 3:3**

Peter stopped and looked at the man.

**4Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Acts 3:4a**

This must have been startling.

Most people try to avoid eye contact with those less fortunate.

**Then Peter said, "Look at us!" Acts 3:4b**

But the word "look" here means intently, or with fixed attention.

Second lesson is :

## **II. EXPECTATION CAN HINDER GOD'S MIRACLE**

This look was also startling for the beggar,

He had his expectation of what happens every day.

He was here to beg and

Didn't want to get tied down with some religious talk

By Peter and John and then miss others going by

Who might give him more money.

You can't target a thousand a day "chit chatting" with a visitor.

But this beggar not only looked at him but held his gaze and

**So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Acts 3:5**

But Peter held out his empty hands and made a non-cash offer.

**6Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. Acts 3:6**

The unnamed man must have been disappointed

that he wasn't going to get money,

and then flabbergasted by the proposed miracle.

Good grief, he wants me to walk. Doesn't he know its been 40 years?

How many times has we been guilty of thinking this.

That if only that person who is sick or afflicted would make a little more effort.

PETER SAID:

**In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Acts 3:6**

Before he had a chance to protest,

Or turn to the next passerby,

Peter As a Jew, touched this unclean crippled man and

**7Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. Acts 3:7**

Stood up.

After forty years of paralysis and he was ,

eye to eye with another man for the first time.

On Feet that never felt full body weight before.

Ankles that never balanced a body before

All with a helping hand from Peter,

The man took his first steps.

Then he ran, jumped and shouted praises to God.

All the while Peter and John were remembering Jesus words:

**And these signs will accompany those who believe; In my name they ...will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well. Mark 16:17-18**

**Third lesson:**

## **III. GOD DESERVES THE PRAISE.**

**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**

I don't know about you, but it took me over a year to learn to walk.

It took my grandson almost two years.

But this man had not walked for 40 years, and

In a moment was now jumping, and dancing and walking.

There wasn't a person in that crowd that didn't doubt that a miracle occurred.

**When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10they recognized 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. Acts 3:9-10**

Friends I don't know what keeping you down,

Or holding you back,

But I do know when you take hold of the hand of God

A miracle happens.

Something changes in your life.

That old beggar held on to Peter and John,

Like a cockabur to a Springer spaniel.

The fourth lesson is

#### **IV. HOLD ON TO YOUR SPIRITUAL ANCHOR**

When you have found a mentor, or a good spiritual partner,

Hold on.

The Term Held on to: is used to describe how a policeman,

Holds on to an arrested person.

They go through a lot of training on how to hold on.

Because there is nothing more slippery, than a drunk trying to get away from you.

**While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. Acts 3:11**

Who is it in your life that you look up to,

Who has helped you, encouraged you.

Hold on to them.

Don't let them slip from your life.

We all need that helping hand that spiritual mentor, teachers friends..

They are so few and far between these days.

Well the people saw the man holding on to Peter and John,

They came to find out who they were.

**When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? Acts 3:12**

Peter was not surprised that they wondered at this miracle

But Peter was surprised that they wondered if they were the

Authors of this healing.

The Jews should have known better.

They were sufficiently acquainted with miracles to interpret them,

and to know they didn't come from men,

but from God.

**Peter felt a sermon coming on.**

**13The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.**

Peter reminds them that even the Roman Governor Pilate  
Declared Jesus innocent.  
Saw that he was more than just a man,  
But he didn't hold on to him.  
HE let him go.  
His life would have changed for the better and not the worse.  
Peter demands repentance.  
And then remembering his own denial of Jesus  
Cuts them some slack.

**Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. Acts 3:17  
Then Peter throws out the lifeline.  
Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, Acts 3:19a**

Peter was asking them to accept their guilt.  
But more than that,  
To change their ways  
Change their mind and behavior  
To see Jesus differently  
Not as someone to be hated and crucified,  
But as someone to be loved and honored.

**IF they do a time of refreshing will come to all.**

**that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. Acts 3:19b-20**

Aren't we tired of our sins,  
Let us surrender them, repent and  
Find a new heart,  
And a new spirit of refreshment.

**God only sends those away empty who are full of themselves.**

Jesus came to raise the dead.  
The only qualification for the gift of the Gospel is to be dead.  
We don't have to be smart.  
We don't have to be good.  
We don't have to be wise.  
We don't have to be wonderful.  
We don't have to be anything...  
We just have to be dead.

**When we reach out and take his hand,  
And hold on to the bread of life.  
That which is dead will come to life.**