

Giving What You Have

Acts 3

READ Acts 2:43-3:12

Context of this passage

Chapter 2— Pentecost

End of chapter 2—people were living in the power of the spirit
...that had become the norm

I think that sometimes we live life “normally” with an occasional exception

Life is “as is” and occasionally the Spirit intervenes

The transformation had been so powerful that they were “living there”

Story of “plane tickets and the whet stone in Hawaii...”

I felt so good about getting the tickets, I felt I could tackle anything

The truth of transformation is that God shifts our norm

Life in the spirit becomes our new norm

In this context, Luke shares with us a vignette illustrating the power of the spirit

Peter and John went to the temple to pray

There was a man there that was “crippled from birth”

and carried daily “to the temple gate called Beautiful” to beg for his living.

Since almsgiving was classed in Judaism as a meritorious act

he was placed at the gate

so those coming to the temple could gain merit by giving him a coin.

As Peter and John walked by, he asked them for money

Peter fixed his eyes on him and said, “*Look here or Look at us!*”

Thinking he had a benefactor, the beggar looked up expectantly.

To his astonishment he heard the words:

“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

In Semitic thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person;
it expresses the very nature of his being.

Therefore the power of the person is present
and available in the name of the person.

Peter does not just ask the risen Jesus to heal
but pronounces over the crippled beggar the name of Jesus,
thereby releasing the power of Jesus

And the power of the risen Jesus,
coupled with the man's response of faith
causes the healing.

The healing is instantaneous one,

accomplishing in a moment what God in his providence

through the normal healing processes usually takes months to do.

The effect on the man was traumatic

He was walking and jumping, and praising God

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The people were “filled with wonder and amazement.”

A crowd began to gather to see what was going on
Peter took this “teaching moment” to explain
He tells them it was Jesus that healed the man
The Jesus they had killed and who is now alive
Peter tells them to repent and turn to God

This story has much to say to us...

1. Live in the truth of the spirit...
the truth of the spirit is the norm
It's the new culture—the kingdom of God
Notice that Peter wasn't always successful at healing
“Before the Holy Spirit”—Mark 9—disciples couldn't heal a boy
“After the Holy Spirit”—Peter is living in the new fullness of the Spirit
2. Notice people—Peter noticed the beggar—*“looked him straight in the eye”*
Tell God you are willing to “see” the person God has for you to see
rather than turning your head as you walk by
We think we can't meet all the needs that are in front of us
No less today than in Peter's day
In fact there were likely more beggars then than now
Let God sort out who you are to “notice”
Means a willingness to be pulled to someone—to respond to the God tug
3. Our response comes out of us—out of our being, rather than an external gift
Sometimes it is easy to “simply give money” and walk away
“feel good about what I've done”
Other times we are called to give money
The gift rises out of our being—it is the gift God calls us to
Let our response come out of who we are
Who we are in Christ
Our unique personality and spiritual gifts
Our passions
4. Our response is not dependent upon our abilities, but on God
Peter and John had no inherent power to heal
While the response comes out of us—it isn't limited by who we are
God's power is infinite and sufficient
5. We have been given the authority to call upon the power of God
“In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”
“In the name of” = in the power of
John 14:12-14: *“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”*
The full power of God is present and we have access to that power

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Man was healed

I believe that God wants to do incredible miracles among us—including healing

6. God's response and power is sufficient for the situation

In this case it was healing

But it isn't always physical health that's healed

First century Palestine didn't separate physical from the spiritual
body from spirit

To be healed was true in all realms

Modern society separates the 2 but don't do that
because they aren't really separate

What God does is always what is truly needed

7. One more thing about this I want us to notice—When the man was healed—

everyone saw this man walking that they recognized as the beggar

They were astonished, scarcely believing what they were seeing

The word used means causing internal confusion or ecstasy
same word as in Acts 2

After the miracle is noticed—Peter preaches a sermon

Now here is the pattern I want you to notice.

Both times Peter's words did not convince the crowds. The wonders did.

In Acts 2 first came the wonder of the languages.

People were amazed and wondered.

Peter spoke.

3000 converted.

Then in Acts 3 the wonder of the lame man walking.

People were amazed and wondered. Peter spoke.

5000 converted.

The words followed the wonder.

The words explained the wonder and challenged the unbeliever.

It isn't words that create wonder.

It is out of wonder that people are looking for the words to explain it.

The greatest temptation for each of us and for the church

is to fill the world with words.

We think if we say it clearly enough and with enough passion,
people will believe it.

Words don't convince you!

You look for the walk behind the talk.

Why do we think it will convince others?

Words without wonder do not have the same power.

As a church we need to keep the wonder before the words.

The reason the early church grew so fast was not power of words

The wonder caught people's attention

But the real growth came through the community

Through their ministry of caring for each other

But that's another sermon...

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This was huge for me—I realized I had to give up words
I always thought I could explain it
More than once I thought the problem was I didn't say it right
If I just had more time, more words it would be right
Not true—the words aren't the answer
Rather the power in words is naming the wonder
What we do with God stories
Name the wonder God is doing among us
Also gift to others—name that God is doing the wonder
People unexperienced at God
often don't recognize when God is working
Gift to them to name it

Live in the norm and power of the spirit
Let it be natural and organic—part of you
Live in the power of wonder