

Tusculum Hills Baptist Church
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WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE HEALING OF THE LAME BEGGAR

Acts 3

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There are three points to my message today:

- Believers should be agents of healing.
- Believers should expect God to move.
- Believers should speak wisely.

INTRODUCTION: This is a good year to look at the book of Acts again, to have a refresher on what the first church was like. The book of Acts is exciting; it reads like a novel. If you ever have difficulty understanding the Bible, I challenge you to sit down one day and just read Acts. You'll be amazed about the early church coming together and all the stories that come out of that.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:1-5

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.

EXPLANATION: This was just an ordinary day with people going to pray. Three in the afternoon was a common time for prayer. It was the time of the daily sacrifice.

There was a historian in this day named Josephus, and we gain some knowledge about what the culture was like from his writings. He tells us the gate called Beautiful excelled in workmanship. It was plated with more gold and silver than

other gates. It was also larger – 75 feet by 60 feet – and it was so heavy that it took twenty men to move it. It truly lived up to the name Beautiful.

So you see the irony of a lame beggar begging at the gate made of gold and silver.

BELIEVERS SHOULD BE AGENTS OF HEALING

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:6-10

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 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.

EXPLANATION: If Peter had just given the man money, it would have been just another day to the beggar, and he would have been right back at the gate the next morning. But he gave the beggar something much more important. Complete healing. Peter touched the man, but it was the power of Jesus that healed him -- Jesus Christ of Nazareth -- the link between heaven and earth.

Walk in the original Greek means *be walking*. Not just walk, but make it happen. I couldn’t find evidence of this, but I wonder if this was the man’s first time inside the temple. He had been outside, and people passed him every day. They recognized him as the one who sat outside the gate, but did anyone ever take him inside the temple? I’m assuming not, which is a travesty.

Psalm 25 comes true – *then will the lame leap like a deer.*

APPLICATION: We should pray for physical healing. I have seen several people healed, I believe, because of prayer, God choosing to honor prayers for healing. There is another healing as well, more important in our day and time than physical healing. What we need today is spiritual healing. The lame beggar was stuck in a physical state but we know people who get stuck in an emotional quagmire. They need someone like Peter who will, through the power of Jesus, give them new life.

We need healing in our country. I believe with all the diverse opinions that we have here this morning, we would be 100% unified in that statement. People need someone to find them in their quagmire of depression, defeat, and misery and say, “I do not know or understand what is going on, but I do know there is a life to be lived.” We’ve had ten months of the most unusual time in my lifetime with the pandemic. And I can see how, especially if someone is alone, they can feel there is no hope. They need someone to say “walk again”. “Be walking.” “Renew your joy.” “Go on with life.”

ILLUSTRATION: Last night, I was chatting online with a friend from my Air Force days who is new to the ministry. He’s an older man, with a debilitating health problem and financial strain, so he’s not able to get the education he would like. But in his 100% disability, he is working hard to educate himself. He’s started an online ministry to pastor people who reach out to him. I told him as he grows his audience to just be consistent in his encouragement to others because that’s what we need today.

I know numerous people who struggle with the condition of our country. I have to remind myself that I am only a temporary citizen of the U.S. Far more important is the fact that I am a citizen of Heaven, I just haven’t gotten there yet. It is up to me to be an agent of healing among people who are part of this earthly citizenship.

In the New Year, let’s pledge to be an agent of healing in someone’s life.

BELIEVERS SHOULD EXPECT GOD TO MOVE

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:11-12

While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹² When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, 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?”

EXPLANATION: Peter makes sure people know it wasn’t his power or his godliness that made his miracle happen. They were in a temple where people prayed. I wonder if anyone had ever prayed for the healing of this man as they passed him to go pray.

APPLICATION: How about here? We've had people come forward at the end of the service who ask for prayers for healing. Did you believe or did you doubt? Do we believe that God can heal people? Yes, though he doesn't always heal the way we would like him to. But God can miraculously heal people like he healed the lame beggar all those years ago. I hope if someone comes here asking for prayers for healing, that everyone in this house of prayer will pray for healing.

ILLUSTRATION: A long time ago, I went on a mission trip to a small island in the Caribbean. It's very small, only 5 square miles, so they had to depend on everything being brought in from elsewhere. A church there had been destroyed by a hurricane. It was built out of lava rock, very pretty. But the pastor said he'd really like some tile for the floor. Being the dummy I am, I said without thinking it through, "I'll find you some tile."

I came back and in my mission report, I said if anyone knew anyone who wanted to give away a bunch of tile, to let me know. A few days later, a man came to my office and pulled out a business card. He hadn't been at the meeting, but he heard about it. Two months earlier, he had been on his delivery route, and during lunch, a guy walked up to him and asked if he was a Christian. He said he was, and the guy asked if he knew of any ministry or church or parsonage that needed floor tile. He told him no, but the guy said – "Well, you will," and gave him his card.

So now, two months later, this man is thrilled to hand me that card. I called the guy in Clarksville and said, "I hear you have some floor tile." He answered, "Yes." Just as boring as he could be. "And you want to give it to a church or ministry?" "Yes." I told him he wasn't going to believe what I had to say. But in actuality, when I told him the story, he asked me why I was so surprised.

And it kept going. My brother worked for a trucking company, and I asked them if they could take several tons of tile to a shipyard in Florida. "We deal in food." "I know, but can you do this?" "That's a tall request." A couple of weeks passed, and I called them back and they said they'd do it. They even went to Clarksville to pick the tile up. I never even saw it. Several tons of tile went to Florida in a truck with frozen chicken.

The tile was put on a ship, and a man called me to ask how much it would cost to ship it. I told him \$1200. "I'll write you a check for it and bring it by today." The

ship went through three hurricanes, but the tile made it to the island. They had a craftsman at the church who did a beautiful job laying it.

I think of the guy who had the tile. Why did he approach the other man? What made him do that? I don't know the human elements that made him connect. But I will never forget the man asking me, "Why are you surprised?"

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:13-16

The 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. ¹⁴ You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

EXPLANATION: Note where Peter says "you". He knew the audience. He lumps everyone together as the collective murderer of Jesus. Peter calls Jesus the "author of life" who has the power to heal. We see specific elements of this New Testament healing. It was instantaneous and complete. The healings occurred in response to a direct command in the name of Jesus. The healings were publicly acknowledged and undeniable.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:17-23

"Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. ¹⁸ But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. ²³ Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.'

EXPLANATION: In this passage, Peter tells the people that they acted in ignorance as they crucified Jesus. But he had a redemptive element in what he said. He also tells them they were a part of God's plan. He uses the healing of the lame beggar in such a way as to preach repentance. He saw the opportunity to catch them while they were wide awake and amazed at what they saw. When you see God move, I hope you'll take the opportunity to point it out. If people think you're crazy, that's fine. Join the rest of us.

Verses 22 and 23 about Moses are quotes from Deuteronomy 18, bringing out Peter's brilliance in catching the interest of the crowd that knew those scriptures and explaining that the person prophesied about was the one they had murdered.

Believers should be agents of healing. Believers should expect God to move.

BELIEVERS SHOULD SPEAK WISELY

Please, as a believer, don't speak in ignorance. Believers don't have an excuse to speak in ignorance when we have the book of wisdom. Peter spoke wisely and continued in verse 24.

SCRIPTURE: Acts 3:24-26

“Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. ²⁵ And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ ²⁶ When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

EXPLANATION: In verse 25, Peter quotes Genesis chapters 22 & 26. Peter used this occasion to speak wise words. He made every possible connection with this healing to tell the people that it was from the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob... from the God they worshipped, but through God's son Jesus, the one they didn't worship but should.

Peter uses great motivation for repentance. As one writer says: Peter tells them our slate has been wiped clean. Our parched lives are refreshed in the present by seasons of the Spirit's outpouring. Our future perfection is beyond imagination.

Peter was not one who spoke wisely in the past. He was the impulsive one. He had no filter. He got in trouble because of his big mouth. Now, we see him refined, eloquent, persuasive, wise. Thank the Lord that Jesus is in the forgiving business. Now, we see Peter as a mighty apostle.

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus did not give up on him? He stayed with Peter. He kept teaching him. And when Peter spoke unwise words, denying Jesus three times, the Lord gave him three chances when he said – "Do you love me?" "You know that I love you." "Feed my sheep." Three times asked. Three times answered. Three chances at repentance after his denials.

CONCLUSION: Just as Peter spoke wisely, believers should speak wisely. There are a lot of kooks out there who say crazy things in the name of Jesus. And there is a naïve population who believes it. When you speak for the Lord, use the words of the Lord. Speak wise words. And if you don't have something to say, don't make it up. Wait. When you have something wise and calm to say, say that.

Those are some reflections from Acts chapter 3 for the new year. Let's be agents of healing. Let's expect God to move. Let's use wise words.

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