

Show and Tell – Acts 3:1-26

Welcome. After being away most of last month, I can't tell you how good it is to be back.

When my Dad died, we yearned to be with you.

And I want to thank you for your love, and prayers, and many expressions of sympathy. You've been so very kind. We were overwhelmed.

I love my Dad. Not only for his influence in my life, but his testimony for Christ. Seen most in his faithful work of ministry and dedication to the church.

It's blessed assurance that he's with the Lord.

I also want to thank you for praying for my brother Rick and my Mom.

Rick has recovered from his concussion, and with the exception of a divot in the back of his head, he seems to be okay.

And much to our relief, Mom went willingly to a new assisted living cottage for memory care, and is doing great.

So once again, thank you for your kindness and concern. God's grace has been so precious and so sufficient, and you're a big part of it.

➤ I'm also thankful for those who preached in my absence, but I'm eager to get back to it. Having preached at 2 other churches last month, there's no place like home.

So let's turn in our Bibles to Acts 3 (Intro).

Acts, if you remember, is about the start and spread of the early church under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

An influence that compelled *them* to live and speak for Jesus, and compels us as well. Hence our theme.

And having already seen the ascension of Jesus, the advent of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the response of the crowd, you'd think things would slow down a bit. They don't.

In fact, what we find here in chapter 3 is an apostolic version of *Show and Tell*. Know what I'm talking about? Do they still do that?

Peter and John, two of the 12 apostles, encounter a crippled beggar, do a miracle, and then talk about it. Just like I used to do in kindergarten.

Like the time I jumped over a snake just outside the door of our house on the way to school, and then stood in front of the class . . .

To show them how *big* it was and tell them how *brave* I was.

Which was a lie, my bravery, but made for a *great Show and Tell*.

So let's work our way through Peter's, and see what God has for us.

➤ [1] Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 3 o'clock. One of the set times of prayer each day for the Jews.

Only the disciples would have been praying in Jesus' name. Just like he taught them.

[2] And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they [most likely family or friends] laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms [handouts] of those entering the temple. (**Temple Complex**)

Just to give you a mental picture of the scene, the Beautiful Gate was the entrance separating the Court of Women from the Court of Gentiles.

The Court of Gentiles being the outermost area where *anyone* could roam, and the Court of Women being the first of two inner areas where only Jews could go.

And the gate was most likely *named* such, for two reasons:

1. It was the entrance to the place and presence of God. Beautiful for *spiritual* reasons.
2. It was 75 feet high, 60 feet wide, and most likely covered in shiny Corinthian bronze. This *ceiling* is about 30 feet high. It was huge. And beautiful. So beautiful, that Josephus, an historian at the time, said that it "far exceeded in value those gates that were plated with silver and set in gold."

So here was the lame beggar, strategically placed in the arch of opulence, asking for scraps. A contrast no doubt intended to place the ultimate guilt trip on those passing by.

➤ [3] Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms.*****

[4] And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." [5] And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

[6] But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" [7] And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. [8] And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

Which I can't read without breaking into a children's song that we taught our girls. (Sing – Peter and John Went To Pray)
Now you won't read it without thinking of that song.

➤ But the point is not a memorable children's song.

The point is that Peter did a miracle *in the name of Jesus*. (6)

As in, by his power, under his authority, and according to his leading.

That's what it means to *pray* in the name of Jesus, that's what it means *live* in the name of Jesus, and that's what it means to do a *miracle* in the name of Jesus.

By his power, under his authority, and according to his leading.

Don't let "in Jesus' name" become an empty expression of your prayers.

And don't miss the fact that this kind of miracle is *exactly* what God-fearing Jews were looking for. The prophet Isaiah said (**Is 35:5-6**) that when God comes to save . . .

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; [6] then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy.

Not only had Jesus *himself* done those things, *inaugurating* the Messianic age, but here his disciples were doing the same. Confirming it.

So no matter how you look at it, from the phrase "in Jesus' name" to the Messianic prophecy of *healing* being fulfilled, **the miracle was meant to . . .**

1. Exalt Jesus (v6-8) – Do _____?

To lift *him* up in our minds. To elevate *him* in our heart and soul. To praise *him* with our life. Not Peter as the Catholic Church went on to do, but Jesus.

That's why Peter was so explicit about it. *In the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk.* It was meant to exalt Jesus. Magnify Jesus. Glorify Jesus.

How about you? (**Do you?**) When you do something in Jesus' name – like help someone, or give to something, or pray for somebody – do you name the name, or keep it quiet? When something miraculous happens to you, or providential, are you explicit and *open* about giving credit where credit's *due*, or vague and veiled? Are you bold like the healed beggar, overflowing with praise, or bashful and ashamed like most?

➤ One of our elder's daughters, Kayla Reilly, was in a 4-wheeler accident in Colorado a few weeks ago, and was thrown headlong over a nearly vertical precipice. And for most of the fall she was completely airborne, except when she glanced off the rock and gravel 2 or 3 times, before landing on large, jagged rocks *150 feet* below. Her dad saw it all, and thought sure that was it. But when he got down there, she was alive.

And after being plucked off the mountain by a helicopter, she was taken directly to a hospital in Denver.

Where they ran a full battery of tests, and discovered that other than a mild concussion, she had no internal injuries, no broken bones (**Photo**) . . .

And didn't even need stitches for her cuts and bruises.

That's a miracle. And cause for praise in and of itself.

But so is her dad's response. When I spoke to him on the phone, he was quick to give God the credit. Naming Jesus explicitly. And exalting him. Repeatedly.

➤ How about you? When you encounter something miraculous or providential, do you name the name? Do you exalt Jesus? Giving credit where credit's due?****
Or keep it under wraps? Explain it away?

2nd, the miracle was meant to . . .

2. Get their attention (v9-10) – Does God have _____?

[9] *And all the people saw him walking and praising God, [10] and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

God got their attention. They couldn't *help* but see what had happened. The guy was right in front of them.

And they *paid* attention. God *got* their attention, and they *gave* their attention.

➤ The question is – **Does God have yours?**

Does he? Are you dialed in to what he's doing in your life?

Have you ever thought that the things that happen to you might be for the sole purpose of getting your attention?

The sole purpose of turning your eyes upon Jesus and never taking them off?

The sole purpose of keeping you from sin or getting you out of it?

The sole purpose of spurring you on or changing your direction?

I'm not saying we need to "read the spiritual tea leaves." Or infer something that's not there. I'm saying we need to wake up to the *obvious*. Clue in to reality. Pay attention. To both the hardships *and* the blessings in our lives.

And stop passing them off as random events due to a naturalistic, anti-supernatural worldview.

➤ When Becky and I travelled to Missouri last month for my Dad's memorial service, we stayed at a place called *Heartland Community*. It's a *ministry* for people who are down and out. Sometimes by their *own* doing, and other times by someone or something else.

And when I say ministry, I mean a **small town**. Literally. Built in the middle of cornfields. Complete with a church, school, college, store, gas station, restaurant, farm, hotel, and houses. Dozens of them.

All founded and constructed by a man named Charles Sharpe.

Who was cruising through his middle-age life living for himself, and lost everything.

And with his full attention, the Lord impressed on him to not only start *living* right, but to use his money for *kingdom* purposes.

So as his business and income recovered, at the age of 69, when most people are sipping tea and eating bonbons, he started a church and established a ministry.****

Don't wait for God to bring you to the end of yourself to get your attention.

Wake up. Look around, at both the hardships *and* the blessings. And get going. (**Summ**) Whether that means tithing, serving, worshipping, going, or abiding. Waste no time.

➤ [11] *While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.*

Solomon's Portico is a series of columns forming a *walkway* on the outer edge of the temple complex. It was basically a meeting and gathering place.

[12] *And when Peter saw it [the people running toward him] he addressed the people: "Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? [13] The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus [empowered him to do it], whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. [14] But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, [15] and you killed the Author of life [there he goes again, saying it like it is, just like in chapter 2], whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. [16] And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.*

The miracle was meant to exalt Jesus, get their attention, and . . .

3. Encourage faith in Jesus (v16) – Who or what do you _____?

Faith. As in, belief and trust. In the Son of God.

Which rules *out* the *nebulous* kind of faith you hear about these days. Faith that has no object and is meaningless.

Or *misguided* faith. Faith with an object *other* than Jesus. They're ruled out.

The *miracle* in Jesus' name was meant to encourage *faith* in Jesus' name. Faith in who he is and what he can do. V16.

His name—by faith in his name [as in belief and trust in his power, authority, and leading]—has made this man strong whom you see and know.

And then Peter reiterates it. *The faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health.*

Peter and John had faith in *speaking* Jesus' name, believing God would heal; and the beggar had faith in *hearing* his name, believing God would heal.

➤ All for the purpose of encouraging us to do the same. To believe and trust that God can and will act on *our* behalf.

That he can and will save *us*. And keep *us*. Provide for us. Protect us. Bless us. Heal us.

Maybe not in *our* way and time. But certainly his.

All through faith. Belief and trust in Jesus Christ our Lord.

How about it? **Who or what do you trust?**

Is it Jesus? Is it *God's* way according to the *Bible*? Or *your* way according to the world?

I hope it's the former. I hope it's Jesus. Because he makes all the difference.

All the difference in what we experience, and all the difference in the world.

Put your faith in *him*. More and more. (**Summary**)

➤ Which brings us to the last point, starting in v17.

[17] *"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers [when they rejected Jesus and killed him]. [18] But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled.*

In other words, what you did, was God's ordained plan, to pay for it. To pay for what you did. That's what Peter's saying.

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! (Rom 11:33)

[19] *Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, [20] that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, [21] whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago.*

And then Peter cites some of those prophets.

[22] *Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers [referring to Jesus]. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. [23] And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' [24] And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.*

He's trying to convince them that Jesus was the very one the *prophets* spoke of.

And thereby remove some of their barriers to belief.

[25] *You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.'* [26] *God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.*"

In other words, "You're in a privileged position. Not only is Jesus the *blessing* promised through Abraham, but you have the opportunity to receive him *first*."

It's a massive effort to . . .

4. Lead them to **repentance** (v19-21) – Are you _____?

That's the 4th purpose of this miracle. It wasn't meant to be a viral video and get a thousand likes, but to change their heart.

To lead them and urge them to repent. Like he says in v19 – *Repent therefore, and turn back.* As in, have a change of *heart* about what you did . . .

Ask God to *forgive* what you did, and *turn* from what you did. That's *repentance*. A change of heart, a plea for *forgiveness*, and a commitment to *turn*.

And look at the benefits. The *reasons* he gives for *repentance*.

1. *That your sins may be blotted out*, v19 – totally forgiven and erased.
2. *That times of refreshing may come*, v20 – due to the very presence of Jesus *within* us.
3. *That he may send . . . Jesus*. Who waits in heaven until God's appointed *day of return*, not wanting *any* to perish.

Repent to be *forgiven* Peter says, repent to be *refreshed*, and repent to be *rescued*.

Are you **there**?

Do you *see* your need? That *you're* the crippled beggar in your sin, and desperately need a Savior? Desperately need to change your heart, ask *forgiveness*, and commit your life?

Are you *there*? Because that's where Jesus is found. That's where refreshment is.

That's where mourning turns to joy and pride turns to praise.

That's where feet of clay give way to walking and leaping.

That's where a life of *getting* gives way to *serving*. And *begging* gives way to *giving*. Repentance.

Exalt Jesus. Pay attention. Only trust him. And repent.

Prayer – If I've been speaking to you, if God has your attention and you trust Jesus to save you and keep you, now is the time to *repent*. If you want to be *forgiven* and *refreshed*, now is the time to *repent*. If you need to return to the Lord, you need to bend the knee and *surrender* anew, now is the time to . . .

Express your change of heart, ask God to forgive you, and commit all over again. You take a moment.

Lord, thank you for your patience and mercy, your grace and blessing. We exalt you. And pray these things *in the name of Jesus*.