

In God's Timing

Acts 3:1-11

I think if we were honest with each other, there are times or at least have been times in our lives where we **wonder if God is really listening**, or wonder **whether or not God would answer OUR prayer...** after all He knows us better than we even know ourselves... **why should He answer.** Today we're going to look at a miracle that took 40 years in the making.

As we continue on in the book of Acts, we see that Luke writes for us an account of the ongoing and growing influence of the Gospel and the Church through a multiple of incidents, conversations, signs and miracles, positive responses of people to the Gospel message and the negative actions of the ruling class of the Jews, as well as the Roman authorities.

Through all of this, Luke is trying to share with his friend or acquaintance *Theophilus* about how the power and Spirit of God moved among the Disciples and the followers of Jesus, as the Church was being established – first of all in Jerusalem, then Judea and on to the uttermost parts of the then known world.

As we continue on into this historical letter, we'll find pretty quickly how some of the incidents are powerful and positive, while others are sad and troubling, yet in and through all these events, the power of God through the Holy Spirit moved to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ known to the world.

This past Wednesday evening Susan Staples (our missionary serving in Thailand) shared with us how God is working in the lives of those in Thailand, **but through a very long process**; beginning with them simply coming to understand that there is only one God, and He is the One who created all things. Their absolute ignorance of the Word of God and the general non-availability of the message of the Gospel causes Evangelism to be a slow process in those types of cultures.

But here in the opening chapters of the book of Acts, the message of the Gospel is being heard by men who are very familiar with the Old Testament prophecies and promises; they knew about covenantal relationships and the use of sacrifices. And a

vast majority of the common people actually had a love for God and a desire to be found obedient to His Word. So, when the Gospel was laid out for them, quiet often there was a powerful, and positive response. But with that positive response of the common man, came a very negative response of those religious leaders who loved their places of authority and power more than they loved God. They understood that the Gospel message and the messengers of the Gospel were a threat to them, as they feared losing those cherished positions.

As we finished up chapter 2 last week, everything seemed positive... everything seemed to be working out in a good way. Look with me at the closing words of chapter 2 –

⁴⁶ So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

“Bam! End of story! Everything’s wonderful Theophilus. Have your people call my people, let’s do lunch next time you’re in town.”

But, that **wasn’t the end** of the story and Luke wanted to make certain that Theophilus didn’t have a wrong understanding, both of the power and **also the struggles** of the Church and her messengers.

Back up in verse 43 Luke had simply stated –

*⁴³ Then fear came upon every soul, **and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.***

***Many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.
Many wonders and signs.***

What an exciting time that had to be. All the things that had been going on in those first few days and weeks, Luke didn’t write it all down. There’s no possible way for us to know ALL THAT WENT ON. We just don’t know.

But, now as Luke continues the story here in chapter 3, he mentions **one of these events... one of the miracles...**

A very powerful and a very public miracle...

The telling of this particular miracle and the resulting attack from the religious rulers is described for us in all of chapter 3, plus all the way through chapter 4 until verse 31.

It is the event of a crippled man, lame from birth being healed through the actions of Peter and John; the opportunity for further evangelism to take place; the Sadducees coming upon them, (*being greatly disturbed*) arresting them, holding them overnight, setting up a Temple Courtroom scene when **one of the best questions these religious rulers could have ever asked is asked of Peter:**

Acts 4

⁷ *And when they had set them in the midst, they asked, "By what power or by what name have you done this?"* ⁸ *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...*

Peter is given this **grand opportunity** and proceeds to preach Jesus Christ, crucified, and risen from the dead right in front of all these religious rulers. And he ends up with those **powerful words** (beginning in verse 10) – Peter tells this congregation of Jewish “*rulers, elders, and scribes,* ⁶ *as well as Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, (as well as) many as were of the family of the high priest...*” **He tells them without hesitation...**

¹⁰ *"...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole.* ¹¹ *This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.'* ¹² *Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

Wow!

The boldness... the audacity... the courage... These guys were the very ones who had ordered and brought about the crucifixion of Jesus. And here Peter is telling them straight out...

*"You're the ones who rejected Him and crucified Him.
And yet, unless you cry out to Him, you'll never see heaven!"*

But, we're getting way ahead of the story here. We need to go back to the beginning of chapter 3, with Peter and John *simply headed to the Temple to pray*. Turn back to the left a page or so and let's look at Acts 3, beginning in verse 3 –

¹ Now Peter and John went up together to the Temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. ² And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the Temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the Temple; ³ who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

Okay, there are so many amazing things happening right here in these three verses. I don't know when we will get to chapter 4, but at least you now know the end of things... well, maybe not the end of things, because we didn't get that far into chapter 4, but you do know the primary direction things are going to go. So, let's look here in the first three verses.

Peter and John went up together to the Temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

The hour of prayer was actually "*one of the hours of prayer*". The Jewish day was divided into 12 hours, beginning at 6:00AM, therefore noon would have been the "*sixth hour*" and 3:00PM would have been "*the ninth hour*". There in the Temple, there was designated multiple times of prayer – certainly 9:00AM, noon, and 3:00PM. The 3:00PM prayer time coincided with the *Evening Sacrifice*. This was the time when Peter and John came to the Temple to pray.

The very fact that Peter and John continued to go to the Temple for the times of prayer demonstrates that at the beginning, the Church seemed to be a **subset of Judaism**. But, that didn't last long due to the growing persecution and the fact that many Gentiles began to come into the Church.

The Temple compound was divided up into three primary areas, moving from the outside to the center: the Court of the Gentiles, then up the steps and into more of the Temple "*proper*" you would come to the Court of the Women, and then finally at the

highest level was the Court of Israel (or the Court of the Men), where the Holy of Holies was also located.

To give you an idea of the size of the whole thing, scholars believe you could actually place more than a dozen full size football fields inside the Temple compound.

As Peter and John approached the gate leading into the main Temple area, they started to pass by a lame beggar laying at what Luke calls the Beautiful Gate. Scholars don't really agree on this, but some have said that what Luke called the "gate of the Temple called Beautiful" could have been more of a description than an actual name, since no Jewish writings that we know of have ever referred to a gate with the **name Beautiful**. Many believe it was the main gate leading into the Court of the Women, facing east, on the way to the Court of Israel. This gate was actually called the Eastern Gate. It was covered with brightly polished Corinthian bronze with almost the look of shimmering gold. Because it was so popular, the lame man would have had a lot of opportunities to receive alms from both the women and the men who passed through the gate.¹

Luke very clearly tells us the man was – *lame from his mother's womb*, and he *was carried*, and *laid daily at the gate of the Temple, to ask alms from those who entered the Temple*. Later, in chapter 4:22 Luke informs us that the man was more than forty years old!

Now here is where I want you to do a little bit of speculation.

Have you ever wondered **how many times since the Disciples** had been in Jerusalem and gone to the Temple to pray; how many times they passed this same guy?

Now, take it a little deeper. During the times of His visits to Jerusalem, how often had **Jesus, Himself passed this same man** who obviously needed healing and didn't heal him?

Now I can just imagine Jesus walking by the man and smiling with a warm smile and a heart of deep care for the man and thinking, "*Not today my friend, but your healing is coming. Be patient and wait for God's timing.*"

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [The Bible Exposition Commentary](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 412.

I think I can safely say that each one of us have probably prayed prayers to the Lord: seeking His healing or His deliverance; perhaps His intercession in certain areas and situations in our lives.

Personally, I wonder how many times the Lord looks at us with a heart of care and simply says,

“Not today My son... be patient, My daughter...”

Or

*“Don’t worry my child. I’m going to answer you,
but not in the same way that you are thinking or praying.*

But you still need to trust Me fully.”

How long had it been since the Day of Pentecost? How often had Peter and John walked by that very man, **but today...**, **TODAY**, the Holy Spirit prompted them to stop and get involved with this man’s earthly condition and eternal future. There were no doubt **scores of lame, blind, and the chronically sick and diseased** seeking for a few alms, **but TODAY God was going to visit this man.**

Why does God bring healing on some and not on others? All I can say is that ***all things work together for His glory and for the furtherance of His Kingdom’s purposes.***

And, we still must trust Him:

- ***Even when the healing doesn’t come.***
- ***Even when the deliverance doesn’t appear.***
- ***Even when it seems that “for the moment” the enemy is having his way.***

As you are going through those times, waiting on the Lord, listen to the words of the Lord –

Isaiah 43

¹ “...Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. ² When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you.”

Jeremiah 17

⁷ *"Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD.*

⁸ *For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear **when heat comes**; But its leaf will be green, and will not be anxious **in the year of drought**, nor will cease from yielding fruit."*

And we can't forget –

Isaiah 40

³¹ *"But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."*

Folks, stop and think for a moment: how long had this man waited for God's answer in his life?

All of his life! 40 plus years of waiting!

But TODAY everything was going to change.

But, we also need to see very clearly: **he wasn't expecting a miracle**. He was simply hoping to get enough today to make it through the day...

But TODAY everything was going to change.

Luke tells us the Lame Man saw *Peter and John about to go into the Temple, (and he) asked for alms*. At that moment in time, that was the total of his expectation. He **hoped** he would get some sort of financial assistance.

But God... God had something so much greater in store for him...

Acts 3

⁴ *And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us."* ⁵ *So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.* ⁶ *Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."*

Oh yes, he **was** *expecting to receive something from them*. After all why would they have taken the time to stop... to call out to the man... to tell him to look at them... After all, he had been a beggar for some time. In his shame and discouragement his head was probably looking down so as not to embarrass the people who **walked by and gave nothing**.

But now these men had actually **recognized his very existence**. They called out to him, "*Look at us.*" Peter knew that there was nothing **he** had in the flesh that would have done this man any good. But, I believe the Holy Spirit inspired and directed Peter to offer this man the **one** thing that would change his life forever –

*⁶ "...Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of **Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.**" ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God.*

It wasn't the power of Peter, it was the power of Christ and Peter was enabled to minister to that lame man, as the very representative of Christ.

And let's not take this too lightly, **this was a bold step of faith by Peter: "rise up and walk."** ⁷ *And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up...*

Could you imagine if the guy took his hand and simply fell back down in a heap?
Sorry, but that's where my brain goes at times.

But, ***I really don't think that thought ever entered into Peter's mind***. I think that he had experienced such power in his own life and had seen the Lord work so many miracles that he was absolutely confident that the Lord would cause this man to be healed and to walk again!

So, Peter spoke and acted ***in absolute faith***. Not a blind faith:

- But a faith based on the Word of God...
- But a faith based on what he knew to be true...
- A faith based upon the experiences he had been through himself... (he had walked on water, he had seen his mother-in-law healed, he had already seen the

lame walk, the blind see and the lepers cleansed... even the dead raised back to life)

- It was a faith based upon what he had seen in the lives of others...
- And it was a faith based on the reality of the resurrected Lord.

And immediately (this lame man's) feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸ So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them--walking, leaping, and praising God.

And immediately...

Do you see what's happening here?

This guy didn't get up like some of us do on a cold morning, barely moving and sounding like a breakfast cereal, "**Snap! Crackle! Pop!**"

Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength and he began *walking, leaping, and praising God* as he *entered the temple with them*. Can you imagine the mind of all the others who saw him and knew him? Well, Luke tells us –

Acts 3

⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹ Now as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed.

Beloved, when God moves in a life, people get excited – some in a positive way and some in a negative way. We'll save the negative responses for next week. But for now, we see this multitude of people responding in a **very positive way**, as they see the change in this man's life. *And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

You might be here this morning and you've been waiting for God to move in your life. Maybe you've been waiting a long time... It seems to you that **the answers aren't**

coming and you wonder if God has forgotten or even the possibility that He really isn't concerned with your situation.

But, let me bring you back to the words of Jesus to His Disciples:

Luke 12

²² Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. ²³ Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. ²⁴ Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

²⁵ And which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? ²⁶ If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest? ²⁷ Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ²⁸ If then God so clothes the grass, which today is in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will He clothe you, O you of little faith?

*²⁹ And do not seek what you should eat or what you should drink, **nor have an anxious mind.** ³⁰ For all these things the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knows that you need these things.*

³¹ But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you.

Guys, on the authority of God's Word, I can assure you God does care about you and the situation you are dealing with.

So, the real question today is...

What is it you're truly seeking in your life?

A temporary fix or comfort, or are you desiring all that the Lord has for you?