

More - Acts 3:1-10

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Temple Gorgeous!*

1. Do you have a favorite place; somewhere special you love to go & hang out?
2. Mine's *Israel*. Love walking through the ruins of ancient cities.
 - a. Sitting in a restored Roman theater or an ancient church.
 - b. Walking through the olive groves on the Mt. of Olives.
 - c. Standing on the Southern Steps of the temple mount, in the very place where Jesus & the Apostles walked.
3. As you stand there looking up at the weather worn walls you can see the outline of 2 massive doorways that once led people into the Outer court of the Temple.
4. Those doors are now sealed by massive stone blocks.
5. As I stand there, a mental image from 2000 years ago layers over it; Herod's Temple as the Apostles would have seen it here in Acts 3.
6. It was one of the greatest buildings of antiquity – a Wonder of the ancient world.
 - a. The fame of Herod's Temple had spread throughout the Roman Empire.
 - b. People from all over made trips to Jerusalem just to see it.
 - c. The Jewish sages said until you saw the temple in the morning sun, you didn't know what beauty was.
7. It was Herod the Great's *master work*.
 - a. Herod's building projects are *still* some of the most notable features in Israel.
 - b. But the temple was the greatest of them all.
 - c. It took decades to finish. It wasn't done in the days of Jesus.
 - d. It was completed just a few years before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.
 - e. It was made of white marble – massive blocks cut by the most skilled masons.
 - f. And it was decorated with tons of pure gold, worked into intricate shapes.
 - g. Sitting atop the temple mount it dominated the skyline over Jerusalem.
8. So today, when you feel the intense emotion that makes your knees weak as you stand in the *ruins* of the Southern steps there on the temple mount, you catch *just a inkling* of what Peter & John must have felt as they went to the temple that day to pray.
 - a. For not only was the temple beautiful beyond words,
 - b. It was the place where of old God had made His glory known.
 - c. The cloud of His presence had been there!

II.TEXT

A. V. 1

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

1. How much time has passed since the end of ch. 2 & the Day of Pentecost we

looked at last time we don't know. It might have been a few days, or a few weeks.

2. The new church was growing & lives were being changed.
3. Peter has emerged as the leader of the disciples.
4. He & John made their way to the temple at 3 PM; the time for afternoon prayers.

B. Vs. 2-3

²And 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; ³who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

1. There were 9 gates leading through the wall separating the outer Court of the Gentiles from the inner Court of Women surrounding the main temple.
2. The actual name of this gate was the *Nicanor Gate*.
3. It was made of the finest Corinthian *bronze*.
 - a. It was so ornately decorated its value *exceeded* that of the gates covered with silver & gold.
 - b. Because of its *elegance*, it was known as "The Beautiful."
4. Not a bad place to beg, if begging is what you do.
5. We never learn this lame man's name; only that he'd been born lame.
6. And every day his family or friends would carry him to the temple so he could beg while they went off to whatever their business was.
7. If he was like most of the beggars of Jerusalem, he'd developed a slick little system.
8. Think about it:
 - a. Every day he gets to spend hours in a place most Jews *dream* of visiting.
 - 1) When they do get to visit Jerusalem, they only get to spend a few days.
 - 2) And when they get to the temple, they can only spend a few hours there.
 - b. The Nicanor Gate was a must-see.
 - c. This guy gets to sit there *all day, every day*.
 - d. While no one envied him his lameness, *thousands* envied the privilege of being where he was.
 - e. And there were probably some who's hunger for God was so strong, they'd have gladly taken his lameness if it meant they could also have his seat.
9. If who have to beg, there was no better place to do it.
 - a. Most came to the temple to *worship*. Honoring God was foremost on their mind.
 - b. Giving to the poor was not only a part of the Law of Moses,
 - c. It was seen as something specially dear to God since He called Himself the Defender of the poor.
 - h. What better way to secure God's favor than give a beggar a few coins?
 - i. We saw this in Russia. The poor & destitute hang out at the gate of Orthodox churches hoping for a handout from worshipers who want to rid their conscience of guilt & think a few rubles in a beggar's hand will do it.
 - j. This lame man's condition looked all the more desperate from the

contrast with the Beauty of the gate he sat by.

- k. So he probably made a nice living from begging.
 - l. The proof is seen in that they'd been bringing him to this spot *for a long time*.
10. But on *this* day, as Peter & John passed by, he looked at them as he had countless others, & once more spoke the words he'd said countless times . . .

C. Vs. 4-5

⁴And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." ⁵So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

1. Ever given cash to someone standing outside the donut shop or mini-mart?
2. If you have, you know how the thing goes down:
 - a. The beggar shuffles over apologetically & holds out their hand.
 - b. The giver quickly makes the pass, then goes on their way.
 - c. He/she rarely stops to engage the beggar in conversation. The charity is *quickly* concluded.
3. It was no different in the temple; *most* coins dropped into outstretched hands without a word exchanged.
4. *Except* when the rich came.
 - a. They *announced* their intent to make a special offering to the temple by having trumpeters go before them.
 - b. They'd parade up to the temple with great fanfare & flourish, announcing the amount of their gift.
 - c. To make themselves look *especially* generous they'd stop at one of the beggars, & make a big show of laying a gift on them.
5. When Peter stopped & looked intently at this lame man, then stepped near & called to him, no doubt this guy thought he was in for a special gift.
6. Maybe Peter was one of Galilee's fat-cat businessmen come to worship & now he'd get a huge offering.

D. Vs. 6-8

⁶Then 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."

⁷And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. ⁸So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them; walking, leaping, and praising God.

1. You know what this is? This is nothing but a disciple who's doing what he'd seen his rabbi do because his rabbi had told him to do it!
2. Peter saw a man in need & reached out in faith to help him.
3. The lame man expected coins but Peter had something better to give - *Healing!*
4. As Peter lifted him to his feet, the joints & ligaments were restored.
 - a. The atrophied muscles grew strong.
 - b. The withered bones straightened.
5. He stood on his own 2 feet for the first time *in his life* & found he couldn't

- keep his feet from dancing.
6. He followed Peter & John into the temple, trying out his new legs—running & leaping the whole way.
 7. Not a very dignified way to act in the solemn precincts of the temple.
 8. But who could blame him? Think of his joy! He's never walked before!
 - a. When he was a boy, he had to sit on the sidelines while the other kids ran & played.
 - b. When they went off to school, he stayed home, confined to his pallet.
 - c. When they got older & walked with their brides under the wedding canopy, he'd watched from afar.
 - d. The life that was *normal* to everyone else, was an *impossible dream* to him.
 9. But now, in spite of what he'd ever even *allowed himself* to long for: He's standing tall!
 10. Who could blame him for running in church? Who could fault him for leaping & jumping
 11. He has years of running & jumping to make up for!
 12. *Let* him run, *let* him jump, *let* him praise the God Who's given him a new start in a new life!

E. Vs. 9-10

⁹And all the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰Then 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.

1. Word spread quickly, this was the same guy they'd seen begging for years. He was a fixture of the temple mount, a part of the Beautiful Gate.
2. Soon they were all abuzz with the news of his healing.

F. What Happened

1. There are several great lessons to be drawn from these verses, but what I want to focus on is this . . .
 2. Having resigned himself to his disability, the lame man tried to make do the best he could.
 - a. He set up shop in the temple, begging alms from those who passed by.
 - b. Some days were better than others.
 - c. There were good times with friends & family.
 - d. Having been *born* with a disability he knew nothing else.
 3. The highest his hopes ran, the farthest he let his expectations reach, were for some rich person to lay a big gift on him one day. Maybe then he wouldn't have to depend on friends to carry him to the temple; he could *hire* someone to do it.
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4. But one day, Peter & John walked by.
 5. At first he thought they might be the answer to his dream.
 6. How tragic it would have been if Peter & John had walked over & *fulfilled his dream*.
 7. *Worse*—how sad if they'd only dropped a couple pennies in his cup.

8. Worst *of all*, if they'd just passed by altogether.
9. All these are *tragic* because they possessed *more*, something better than indifference, or pennies, or even a fortune in gold.
 - a. Because of Jesus, they not only had hope, *they had hope to give*.
 - b. Because of Jesus they possessed the *power to heal*.

G. *More*

1. This story is a window for you & I to see beyond this world into the heart of God.
2. The lame man represents the lost; Peter & John, believers.
3. They were on their way to worship God & passed by a man in need.
4. While the *best* he could expect was more of what he already knew, they offered *more*, a whole new way of living; a new *identity*.
5. Before a person comes to Christ they're like that lame man, *spiritually crippled*.
 - a. So they pursue the best the *world* has to offer -
 - 1) "If only someone would give me a bronze coin."
 - 2) Then, once they have the bronze, "If only I could get a silver drachma."
 - 3) And once they have silver, "Once I get a gold talent – oh, then I'll be set."
 - b. Pennies can buy fresh *straw* for the bed.
 - 1) Bronze means trading up a *foam mattress*.
 - 2) Silver means a Sealy Posturepedic with a brass bedframe.
 - 3) Gold buys a Sleep Number mattress, dual air-chambers, w/memory foam pillow top, black satin sheets & a down comforter.
 - c. If my dreams comes true & a rich man gifts me, I'll get a motorized wheelchair & a specially equipped van so I can get around on my own.
6. The problem is—*they're still lame*.
7. All the money & the stuff has merely allowed them to *adapt to their limitation*.
8. There are millions of people who are *spiritually lame* because they're *lost*!
9. Rather than seeking *healing*, they've *adjusted* to their spiritual disability.
 - a. They think *more money & better stuff* is the answer to the aching emptiness within.
 - b. They think toys & distractions are the best they can do.
 - c. If they're sensitive enough they realize the problem is an *empty soul*, they may take up a *cause*, thinking *that* will give them *significance*.
 - 1) They "*get religion*" & go on a *spiritual retreat* to learn how to meditate.
 - 2) They get involved in *politics*.
 - 3) They join the *environmental movement* or become an *advocate for the poor*.
10. Like a Band-Aid, all these do is *hide the problem* for a time.
 - a. Eventually all the old heartaches & loneliness returns.
 - b. And like the lame man, they'll once again find themselves holding out an empty hand looking for someone to come along to give them what they

really need.

11. Then along come Peter & John; *people* who understand there's *more* to life than *coins & causes*.
12. They fix their attention on the spiritually lame, seeing their *real* need –
 - a. A new identity – one bestowed by the grace & power of God.
 - b. They're not interested in making the earthly path of the lost to an eternal hell *comfortable*.
 - c. They know Jesus came for LIFE – to set men & women *free* from sin & its crippling of the soul.
13. Here in Acts 3, the lame man needed to know Jesus was not just one more name in a long list of would-be Messiahs who'd made great promises but failed to deliver.
 - a. He wasn't just *another coin-giver*.
 - b. Nor one more quack dispensing a snake-oil remedy or therapist with a new treatment.
 - c. The only way to *prove* Jesus' power to save was to show it.
 - d. So Peter took him by the hand & LIFTED HIM UP!

III. CONCLUSION

A. *You & I*

1. We live in a world *filled* with the spiritually lame.
 2. Their lives are spent with hands out, hoping for the coin of satisfaction.
 3. The greatest they can hope for is something to ease the pain of their crippled existence.
 4. And here we are, growing in our relationship with God, becoming what He created us to be.
 - a. *We* were once lame, hands out, grasping for coins that never satisfied.
 - b. Till someone came, took the time to stop & see our need, then dared to take us by the hand & invite us *out* of our spiritual lameness.
 5. Now that we *walk by faith*, shall we go quietly, *sneaking past* the lame, afraid to dirty our hands?
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B. *Oxygen*

1. As I was thinking about this, I had a vision of rows & rows of hundreds of people sitting side by side in chairs, their feet chained to shackles attached to the floor.
2. The upper floor of the building they were in was on fire & smoke had begun to come in their floor.
3. A handful of rescue workers with full fire protection suits were walking around handing out oxygen bottles, showing the people in the chairs how to use them.
4. Around the neck of each rescue worker was a lanyard with a huge key on it that fit the shackles.
5. Once everyone had an oxygen bottle all but one rescue worker ran out, just as the flames broke through.
6. The one who stayed was using her key, *opening* as many shackles as she could, urging those freed to run for their lives.

7. Religion, philosophy, therapy, wealth, possessions, romance, medication –
 - a. They're all oxygen bottles handed to people locked inside a burning building.
 - b. What good is it to be saved from the smoke if the fire's going to get you?
8. Jesus is the Key that sets people free. He's the Only One who can rescue us from the flames.