

The Lame Man

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[0 : 00] Sorry, I'm normally doing this from the other side of the mic stand. So now I know what it feels like, Andrew.

Good morning, everyone. I'm sure several of you are wondering why you've got an American voice on St. Patrick's Day. I'm kind of wondering the same thing myself, but you can blame Rob for that one.

We're going to be looking today, we're going to be continuing our series in Acts, looking in Acts chapter 3 and starting in verse 1. And in the Church Bibles, I will tell you very quickly where it is. So if you guys want to turn in the Church Bibles to Acts chapter 3, that is on page 1094.

1094 if you're in the Church Bibles. Acts chapter 3. So one day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer, at three in the afternoon.

[1 : 16] 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. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, Look at us. So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

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. Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful.

They were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. This is one of those passages that is about subverting expectations.

[2 : 35] And it's also about how what we need is often quite different than what we think we need.

We start this story with a lame man, a guy who hadn't been able to walk from the day he was born. I want you to picture this. This guy has never walked a step in his life.

He's never been able to take a single step in his life. Lame from the day he was born. And we know, I mean, even in modern Ireland, that it is not always comfortable walking around.

Sorry, it's not always comfortable getting around if you can't walk. It's, in modern society, it can be quite difficult. But in Jerusalem in the first century A.D., it would have been much, much harder.

The first problem that this guy would have had is that his professional options would have been limited. I'm one of those geeks who spends his time in front of a computer.

[3 : 42] When I go and work, do my 40 hours in the week, I'm sitting in front of a computer all day. And as much as I like my legs and I'd rather not lose use of them, if I were to lose the use of my legs, I'd still be able to do my job.

I'd still be able to work. But unfortunately for this guy in the first century A.D., computers hadn't quite yet been invented. It was still a year or two to come on that.

In fact, it goes beyond that, though. In the first century in Judea at the time, the literacy rate was under 10%.

In other words, the number of people who could do more than even write their name was less than 10%. So it's not just a case of there weren't computers. It's a case of being able to read and write, which for any desk job is kind of a requirement.

90% of the population couldn't do it. And I'd say given where we see this guy at, he would have been one of those 90%. He couldn't do physical labor.

[4 : 51] He couldn't do a desk job. He had no professional options at all. The second issue this guy had was, okay, there's no professional options.

He can't get a job. Well, what about government services? See, we're blessed here in Ireland, and I don't think we realize how blessed we are. I don't think we understand how desperate things can get when you don't have the government safety net.

We lived in Lebanon for several years, and you would see people begging on the streets because if they didn't beg, their choice was starvation.

That was the only other option they had. There was nobody going to come and give them a meal.

There was no weekly benefit, workers' allowance, any of that.

There's nothing. If you don't work, you don't get money. Nobody's going to give you anything. And so this lame man had one choice, well, two choices, two options.

[6 : 08] He could either beg or he could starve. Now, there was one small ray of light here. In Judaism at the time, in the scriptures, in fact, in Deuteronomy 15:11, there was an expectation that you would be giving to the poor.

There's no government benefits, but there was this expectation that those who had would at least give something. And in Deuteronomy 15:11, you'll see it says, For there will never cease to be poor in the land.

Therefore, I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land. There's this expectation. It's a commandment made by God to help the poor.

But even in that, I don't know how widely open most people's hands were in those times. I know how widely open most people's hands are in our times now.

So this guy would have had an expectation that if he begged, there might be some people who would give him something. He's not ever going to get rich off of it. He's not going to make a great living off of it.

[7 : 30] But he could at least eat. So the lame man has a plan. Every morning, he's going to get up and he's going to have somebody take him and drop him off at the temple gate.

The one called Beautiful. And every day, he's going to sit there for hours. Just sitting there.

Asking everybody who goes by. Do you have any change? Any spare change? Can you give me anything? And he doesn't need much.

Most people are going to walk by and ignore him. He doesn't need much. All he needs is a few people. Just a few people. To give him just enough. That he can eat.

Just enough that he's not going to starve. This man knows what he needs. And it's not a lot. But he knows what he needs.

[8 : 36] And I want you to picture this. This is where his head is at. When Peter and John are walking by him into the temple. So he calls out to them. He's like, hey guys. Can you spare any change?

And let's think about it. What's his expectation? Maybe one of these two guys is going to reach in their pockets. Pull out the spare change. He'll get 50p. I don't know.

Something. A little something. Just the tiniest bit. Maybe he's hoping and praying that they'll give him a euro or two. Enough to go and get a sandwich. He's looking for, you know, just something.

But his expectation. Let's face it. What's his expectation? His expectation is that these guys are going to do what 90% of the population does. And they're going to walk right on by him.

But they don't. Peter and John stop. And they look at the guy. And they give him their full attention.

[9 : 44] And then Peter says these words. Look at us. So they're not just giving him their attention. But they're getting his attention back. And the man does.

And I want you to put yourselves in his head at this moment. You picture yourself. You're in this place. You've just asked for something. And these guys, instead of walking by, they've turned and looked at you.

And they've said, one of them has looked at you and said, look at me. Look at us. And you're expectant. Okay? At this point, this guy's just said, look at me.

You're thinking, okay. These guys aren't going to be talking to me if they're not going to give me something. They're not going to be, I mean, what kind of person pays attention to somebody who's begging and then walks away without giving them anything?

You're like, no. These guys stopped. They looked at me. They're going to give me something. Just a little something. And you're hoping and praying that that something is going to be just enough to

get you through the day.

[10:54] But in your wildest dreams, you're like, maybe it's going to be more. Maybe these guys are going to give me something amazing. Maybe they're going to give me enough to cover me for a week.

Imagine that. Enough money to feed yourself for a week. Or a month. Wouldn't that be amazing? This is what you need.

And then that guy, the guy who spoke to you, the guy who said, look at us. He then shatters your hopes. He says these words, silver and gold I do not have.

I don't have any money. And I want you to picture the lame man's heart at this point. Like his hopes are just being shattered.

These guys have stopped to look at him. They're paying attention. And they're saying, we don't have anything. But then this guy takes everything you've known.

[12:04] Everything that you've ever understood. Everything you knew. Everything you thought you knew. And he throws it out. And replaces it with something that is deeper and more alive than you can ever imagine.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Walk. Those words.

What do they mean to you? You've never walked in your life. You don't know what it feels like.

You've never had any strength in your legs. But you're sitting here on the ground.

And as this guy says these words to you, he reaches down and grabs you by the hand. And you can feel something happening in your legs. You can feel the muscles actually starting to work.

For the first time ever, you're feeling something there that has never been there before. And the guy pulls you up. And you're standing.

[13:15] You've never done this before in your life. And you are standing on your feet. And what do you do? What would I do?

I've never stood in my life. And this guy has just raised me to my feet. And I am standing. I'll tell you this. I wouldn't be walking around all dignified like, Oh, I can walk now.

This guy is walking and jumping and leaping around and praising God. He knows where this has come from. My picture, I've got kids.

My picture is of my youngest kid on Christmas Day. Unable to sit still, dancing around, jumping around, just pure excitement.

This is what this guy was feeling. Pure excitement. Something that he would have never in his wildest dreams imagined. Something that he was convinced years and years ago would never happen.

[14:22] Has just happened. And he is now able to walk. His life is never going to be the same. You see, this guy, this lame man, thought he knew what he needed.

And he thought what he needed was enough to get through the day. Just enough money to make it to tomorrow, to get enough food in my stomach that I'm not going to starve.

That's what he thought he needed. But God looked at him and said, You know what? I'm going to address your real needs. This man would not need to beg again.

He can now go and earn a living. He now has that ability to work out in the fields. And his life is no longer about surviving day to day.

His life, it can now be about something far bigger. And you know what I think is so amazing? It's not just one of those things where it's like, Well, this happened and it was kind of secret.

[15:26] It was kind of quiet. Everybody could see this. Everybody looked at this man. When you read those last couple of verses, When all the people saw him walking and praising God, They recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him. People are seeing what's happening to this guy. They're looking at him and they're saying, This is amazing. This guy's life is completely different.

And I think the reason I love this story is that it's a reflection of us all. So you see, all of us have an idea in our heads of what we need. Maybe it's something simple like a house or a new car.

Maybe it's a new job or less stress than our current job. Maybe it's just the grace to make it through the day. Maybe it's a new job or less stress than our current life. I know for myself, I've got something that I've been praying about pretty much daily for the last number of months.

Praying that God would sort out. And he hasn't yet. And it's what I think I need. But you know what?

[16:51] we're all in this place where we have these things that we think we need and some of them we do but the real need that we have the deepest need just as god addressed the deepest need for this lame man just as he went and looked at him and said you think you need this you think you need spare change to make it through today to make it through tomorrow i'm gonna go to the deep deep need i'm going to go to the root and the reality is we are all broken like this lame man we are all lame in our hearts for lack of a better way of putting it and the good news is that jesus came to heal that was broken when you read the stories of jesus as he heals people one of the things i love is that before almost every healing he says these words your sins are forgiven because that is the root that is the root that is what we need that is what we need more than anything else more than the new job the new car anything else we need a savior and this is at its core the message of the cross our god has forgiven us he loves us and he wants to be with us forever and when we realize that when we realize that it's all about being with him forever so many of our needs get put into perspective and god wants to deal with them don't get me don't get me wrong it's not that god's ignoring those needs he wants to deal with all of our needs but he his main focus is on the root of what we need the core need that we have and just as this beggar this lame beggar he had this he had this daily thing of i need just enough money to survive it was a desperate need and when god touched his real need that became irrelevant it became inconsequential yeah he still needed to eat don't get me wrong i'm not saying he magically never had to eat again he still needed to eat but his real need had been touched and the other needs became far less important so i want to encourage you guys is uh as we go through our days as we go through life there are going to be times when we're feeling overwhelmed and alone there are going to be times when we feel like we are forgotten maybe that we're abandoned remember that you have a god who loves you more than anything that he went up on a cross not because we've earned it not because we somehow did something to get it but because he saw that need that we have that core need in our hearts and he said you know what i'm going to do whatever it takes to bring you home i'm going to do whatever it takes to have you be with me forever and he was willing to give his life for that he was willing willing to give his life for each one of us let's pray father we just thank you

we thank you for this story of the uh the lame man and peter and john we thank you for the ways that you didn't just have peter and john give him some spare change but you addressed his root need and lord as you look at each one of us you want to be addressing the core needs that we have and ultimately the core need that we all have the need for a savior and so lord i just pray as we're going through life as we especially as we're struggling remind us that you are there with us we are not alone you do not abandon us you do not leave us to go through it but that you are there with us that you're carrying us and you love us and lord even when it feels like you're not responding even when it feels like we're not getting the answers we're looking for you are there and you love us and lord i just pray that when when you do fill that core need that we would just recognize it and that we would be walking and leaping and praising you in the name of jesus amen amen then
Thank you.