

The Gospel for the Lame

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at Christchurcheastbay.org. Good morning. My name is Dorothy and I'm a member of the youth group here at Christchurch.

Today's scripture reading is from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 3, verses 1 to 21, as printed in your liturgy. A reading from the Acts of the Apostles. One day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer, at three in the afternoon.

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 him 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.

[1:13] 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.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 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.

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? 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. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.

[2:16] We are witnesses of this. 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 it comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance as did your leaders, but this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

Repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you, even Jesus. Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks. Thank you, Dorothy, for that excellent reading.

If you are new to Christchurch within the past few weeks, hello, my name is Jonathan, and I'm one of the pastors here. I'm so grateful to our many elders and different friends, guest preachers who've come so that Catherine and I could get some extended time with our families.

[3:26] And I'm very, very happy to be back home here in Berkeley and with you all here at Christchurch. I hope that you celebrated the semi-quincentennial yesterday.

And I know some of you did not get much sleep because of all the noise last night, but hopefully I can help wake you up a bit. Also, I hope that you plan to celebrate a U.S. victory over Belgium tomorrow evening.

And if you're from Belgium, no disrespect, but we do hope to beat you. We're diving back into the Acts of the Apostles. It's one of the most exciting books in the Bible and really in all of literature.

And some of you will remember that we explored Acts 1 to 2, which is the story about how the resurrected and ascended Jesus poured out the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

And the gospel began to go out and it began to be believed. It began to be lived out by new believers. And we read there in Acts 2.42 that the early church devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

[4:39] And it says that the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. So as we read this book, you can almost feel the life of God and the presence of God and the power of God pulsating in the life of the early church.

And today we pick back up in the story in Acts chapter 3 where this lame man sits at the temple gate. He's over 40 years old, as we learn in Acts chapter 4.

He has this congenital disease that has caused him to be so severely disabled from birth that he can't use his feet.

He can't use his ankles. He has to be carried everywhere. He's reduced to begging. And his humanity has been diminished significantly. And so as we look at the experience of this man and as we listen to Peter's explanation of his experience, we want to ask ourselves today, what does it mean to tell us about the church's mission and the church's message?

What does this mean for us today as we seek to carry on the mission and to share out the message here in the Bay Area in 2026?

[5:57] And so I want us to look at three things today. The lame are leaping, the power is proclaimed, and the repentant will be refreshed. So if you're taking notes, three things.

The lame are leaping, the power is proclaimed, and the repentant will be refreshed. Let's start with the lame are leaping. Verse 1.

It says, One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer at three in the afternoon. And in just a moment, we're going to explore the way that Jesus' resurrection power is displayed in the life of this lame man.

But let's first note the source and the secret of how Jesus' power flowed into his disciple community so that it might flow through them.

It says they went to prayer meetings. There was a daily prayer meeting at 3 p.m. And they went to it. It was their holy habit.

[6:58] It was their predictable pattern. It was their regular rhythm to pray in community as a church. Acts 2.42 says, They devoted themselves to prayer.

Just as Jesus had devoted himself to prayer. Mark 1.35 says that Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, and he went out of the house, and he went off to a solitary place where he prayed to the Father.

And this was the source and the secret of power in the life of Jesus. It was from this place of prayer that he went out and healed the lame and the blind and the sick.

Prayer is plugging into the power of God. Anyone have an electric vehicle here? Some of you do, I know. And your life is like that electric vehicle, and prayer is plugging your EV into the supercharger of God's presence and his power.

Until you do that, you're empty. But when you do that, you're full. Right? You go in without any power, and you come out with much power.

[8:08] And Peter and John, they go to this time of prayer regularly so that they can be filled up with the power of God and so that they can be ready when they encounter a situation that far exceeds their own abilities and their own resources.

They know how to respond because they've been in prayer. Can I get an amen? Amen. So, they go to the hour of prayer, and then verse 2 says that now a man was lame from birth.

He was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. And when he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

So, here's this man. He's lame from birth, and he cannot walk into the temple in order to praise God. And really, he represents the helplessness and the hopelessness of the whole world. Right? His physical disability is a picture of humanity's spiritual paralysis before God. That in our fallen, sinful condition, we are not able to enter into the presence of God.

[9 : 20] We're not able to have a right relationship of praise to God. We are lame spiritually as he is lame physically. And did you notice what this man asked for?

Does he ask to be healed in his body? Does he ask to be saved in his soul? No, he asked for alms. He asked for money so that he can buy his daily bread. He just wants to live another day so that he can ask for more alms tomorrow.

He expects very little. He hopes for very little. And it's a sad and tragic situation. And he is the microcosm of the state of our world.

This man is put before us at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles as a picture of the world to which the church is sent. And how do Peter and John respond?

How do these Christians respond? Do they give this man the money that he asked for? Well, you know, Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount teach us that it's obviously important to give alms to the poor as an expression of our faith in God and our love for God.

[10 : 33] It's obviously important to feed people and clothe people and house people and nurse people. It's why Christians invented hospitals. It's why Christians have always, you know, had soup kitchens and all these other things.

But the point here is that the church has something far better than alms. The church has something far better than money to give. It says in verse 4 that Peter looked straight at the man as did John. And then Peter said, look at us. And so the man gave them his attention expecting to get something from them. And 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. And taking him by the right hand, he helped him up and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. You see, Peter and John had been disciples by Jesus.

They had learned how to pray from Jesus. They had learned from Jesus what to do in these kind of desperate situations of helplessness and hopelessness. And so Peter says, I may not have power in the way that the world thinks of power.

[11 : 43] I'm not rich with silver and gold. But also you have problems that money can't touch. And so Peter says, the power that we offer is an infinitely greater power.

It's a power that the world knows very little to nothing about. It's a power that's greater than silver and gold. It's a power that's greater than banks and businesses and governments can offer to you. It's the power of a name. And what's the name? The name is Yeshua. Jesus. It means God saves. That's the meaning of his name.

And the title attached to that name is Christ, which means God's anointed king. And this Jesus, this Christ of Nazareth, just a few months before, God had raised from the dead.

And so Peter says, I'm offering to you the name of Jesus, the power of Jesus. That's what he says to this broken man. Now I just want to pause here and speak to those of you who may be exploring Christianity for the first time.

[12 : 52] And just acknowledge that some people struggle to believe the miracles in the New Testament. And stories like this can kind of feel embarrassing when we read them.

People say, well, these must just be legends of primitive superstition that somehow crept into the oral tradition and then later got written down. But we know that the laws of nature cannot be broken and therefore miracles like this are impossible.

Now if that's you and that's how you think, I want you to consider just a few things for a moment. First of all, chaos theory and quantum mechanics have told us that the world we live in is much stranger than we have ever really imagined.

Secondly, if God created everything and sustains it by the power of his word, then the laws of nature are just another way of talking about God's customary way of sustaining his creation.

But if God wants to go above and around his customary ways, who's to say that God's not free to do whatever he wants? Third thing is that the miracle at the heart of all the miracles in the Bible is the resurrection of Jesus.

[14:03] And if that didn't happen, then we're wasting time talking about any of these other miracles. But if you look at the compelling historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus and if you become convinced that he was in fact raised from the dead, then it follows that if Jesus defeated death in his tomb and if he won a victory over sin on his cross, then dealing with powerless feet and weak ankles, that's not a problem for him.

Right? If he can do the greater thing, he can do the lesser thing. Fourth thing I want you to consider is that miracles, the miracles of Jesus are never naked displays of power.

We never see Jesus acting like Superman in the Gospels. Right? He's never flying through the air. He never has lasers coming out of his eyes. Have you noticed this?

He's never breathing like cold air on people and running at supersonic speed. No. What does Jesus do? Jesus is putting the creator's fallen and broken creatures back together again.

When he's working on people, he's giving the blind sight. He's making the lame walk. He's not suspending the natural order. He's restoring the natural order.

[15:24] He's taking powerless feet and ankles and he's putting his power into them. He's taking people who have been told you're never going to walk again and he's not just saying rise and hobble or limp away.

He's saying, no, you can go walk and jump away. Here's the fifth thing I want you to consider if you're exploring Christianity is that every Jew witnessing this event and reading this story knew the ancient prophecy of Isaiah 35.

And the prophecy went like this that when God comes to his people, when the messianic age begins, Isaiah says this, Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.

Then shall the lame man leap like a deer and the tongue of the mute shout for joy and you shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

And you see, when Jesus heals the disabled and paralyzed in the gospels and when the resurrected and ascended Jesus is healing this lame man now through his disciple community, this prophecy is being fulfilled.

[16:36] The kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Messiah has in fact arrived. And here's the sixth thing I want you to consider if you're exploring Christianity. If you look down in verse 21, Peter speaks about a future time, quote unquote, time for God to restore everything.

And what that means is that Jesus' healings are these small temporary signposts that point forward to God's future restoration of all things.

When what was broken in God's good creation in the Garden of Eden will finally be put right. When all the poverty that we see around us, when all the sickness, when all injustice, when all disease and death will finally be abolished.

every time you read about a healing of Jesus, it tells us that he hates suffering in this sinful world more than you do.

And also that he's committed to someday dealing with it and restoring everything once and for all. And the restoration of this lame man to wholeness is providing for us a preview of coming attractions.

[17:48] It's a preview of the coming cosmic comprehensive restoration that God will give to his entire creation and what Jesus is asking you to do. If you're exploring Christianity, Jesus is just saying, trust me.

Trust the power in my name. And all of this healing, all of the strength that's in me will come into you. Now, that's for those of you who are exploring Christianity.

If you're a Christian, I want to speak to you just for a minute and say that what happened to this man physically, invisibly in his body, it's a picture of what happens to us spiritually and invisibly in our soul that's disabled and paralyzed by sin.

That when Jesus, when the gospel comes into us on that deeper level, that which was dead and useless inside of us is made alive and useful.

that which was bound and held up within us is released and set free. That which was diseased in our soul becomes healthy and the power and the strength of the resurrected Jesus himself comes into your soul.

[19:05] That's what it means to become a Christian. And how do you know that that's happened to you? Well, look at verse 8. It says that he jumped to his feet and began to walk and then he went

with them into the temple courts walking and jumping and praising God.

And 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 and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

You see, God's power to save leads you to praise and then your praise leads other people to wonder and amazement.

And we went to this church last weekend. Catherine and I went to the church where we got married and if you had been there, you would have been blown away at the way that these Christians were praising their God.

It was amazing because it was low budget musicians, right? This was non-professional music.

[20:13] It was just a piano and a guitar and a couple vocalists, no screens, just a page with some notes and some words on it. But, oh my goodness, the power of their praise, the strength of their singing, the depth and intensity of their joy was obvious.

These Christians were like this lame man leaping and they were unashamed to praise the God who had healed them and had saved them.

It wasn't World Cup level but it was approaching World Cup level like Argentinian Mexican level. It was amazing. I don't know if you've seen the fans but that's the kind of way this guy is praising God. And do you know the impact that this had on me and Catherine as we were sitting there listening to their praise, we were filled with wonder and amazement.

Not just at their praise but at the God of their praise. We were strengthened in our faith. We were encouraged in our hearts because we remembered, oh my goodness, the presence of God and the power of God is in this place.

[21:24] the grace of God and the glory of God is available even to us. And we were wondering, we were amazed in a way that only the praises of God's people can cause you to wonder and be amazed.

And you see this man who once sat outside of God's temple not praising but begging. He's been transformed to now become a worshiper.

He's gone all the way inside, all the way into the presence of God and it says that he's leaping and he's praising his God. The lame are leaping.

But also, it's not just that the lame are leaping, it says that the power is being proclaimed. The power is being proclaimed. Look at verse 11. It says, 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. And when Peter saw this, he said to them, people of Israel, 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?

[22:35] This man who's now healed, he's now whole, he's clinging to Peter in a bear hug while Peter's trying to start preaching. And you notice that because Jesus changed this man's life, it causes other people to wake up, it causes them to be hungry and thirsty to hear an explanation for what in the world just happened to him, what power has transformed him.

And that's what happens in the history of the church during periods of revival. You don't have to convince people to come and listen, they start to run. Like this passage says, they're running to hear an explanation of the power.

What is it that makes people whole? And what does the apostle Peter say to these people? Well he's quick to say as the church should always say, don't even think this is about us.

Don't even think that it's our power or that it's our godliness or that it's our, the piety of our prayers that somehow changed this man. He says, why do you stare at us?

Let me turn your focus on the one who's worthy of wonder. And oh, I wish we had time to fully unpack what Peter says here but look at verse 13. He says, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus.

[24:01] You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the holy and righteous one and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life but God raised him from the dead and we are witnesses of these things.

That's the message of the Bible in a nutshell. That the God, the creator God who said, let there be light. That same creator God who came to Abraham and said, I'm going to bless you and through you all the nations are going to be blessed.

That same creator God who came to Abraham's enslaved children and liberated, dismantled an empire to set them free and to walk them through the wilderness and lead them into freedom in the promised land.

He says, that living God of our fathers has fulfilled his promises when he sent Jesus his son and servant out of eternity and into time.

And when the author of life came to us, Peter said, we live in a world that killed him. But God vindicated and glorified Jesus.

[25 : 17] When the only truly holy and righteous person came to us, what do we do? We disowned him. But God raised him from the dead. And Peter says, that is the power that I proclaim to you.

That the once rejected Jesus is now the resurrected and reigning Lord. And so, verse 16, he says, by faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong and in Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him as you can all see.

Peter says, do you want to know how this man was restored and made whole? Do you want to know how that can happen to you? You got to trust in the name and the power of Jesus.

Peter's proclamation of power is actually quite countercultural when you think about it.

Because when you drive through the Bay Area, what is every billboard in the Bay Area about right now?

It's about the power of what? What did you say? The power of AI. It's about the silver and gold that AI is going to give to us. The United States and China are in an all-out sprint to be the first and the best at harnessing the power of artificial intelligence, of biotechnology, of what's called the electric stack of batteries and magnetic motors and power electronics.

[26 : 50] And why are they racing to this finish line? because just like steam power and steel manufacturing and the combustion engines of the industrial age and just like the semiconductors and computers and internet of the digital age, these civilizations know that if we control these technologies, then we'll have the power to rule the world.

We will rule the world. But you see, Peter is talking about a different power. He's talking about a deeper power. He says, this is a power that these nations and the little men and women who are leading these nations know nothing about.

It's a supernatural power. It's resurrection power. It's a power that doesn't come from inside of this world. It's a power that comes to us from outside of this world.

It's a power that comes and lays down its life for the sake of humanity only to take that life up again.

Peter calls Jesus the author of life.

The holy and righteous one, the servant of God. And Peter says, he's been glorified and he's been raised from the dead. And by faith in his name, you can have something that AI and biotech and electric power cannot give you.

[28 : 17] because Jesus in the restoration of all things will do way more for you than he did for this lame man leaping.

He'll give you a resurrection body like his resurrection body. And even now as we wait for that, the life of God can come into your soul because of what God accomplished in his servant Jesus, the author of life, hung up on a cross.

Friends, do you recognize in Jesus a power above and beyond all the powers of this world? It's a power that's greater than your silver and gold.

It's a power that's greater than the United States and China. It's a power that's greater than the robots and all the people building the robots. Jesus can do for you what none of these things can do for you.

Because only he has the power to meet the most fundamental needs not only of your body and your soul but of our planet and of our entire universe. His is a power to heal your soul and to resurrect your body.

[29 : 30] His is a power to restore all things and to enable us human beings made in the image of God to live again in the goodness of God's creation.

No one else can do that and Jesus says this is the power Peter says this is the power that I proclaim to you silver and gold. I do not have and frankly I don't need but I have something far more powerful and it's the glorified and resurrected Christ.

And that's why the lame are leaping and that's why I'm proclaiming to you this power and Peter goes on to finish he says the repentant will be refreshed.

The repentant will be refreshed. The question is how do we access this power? How do we tap into this power that is above and beyond this world? Well Peter says very simply in verse 19 he says repent then and turn to God.

Repent then and turn to God. Peter uses a key word that is repeated over and over in the New Testament from John the Baptist to Jesus to the apostles all of them are talking about this one simple word repent.

[30 : 49] Repent then and turn to God. Peter ends his sermon where all good preaching leads and he emphasizes the necessity and the blessings of repentance.

This Greek word *metanoeo* repent. It means literally change your mind. Change your mind. Make a change of principle and practice.

Peter is calling for a turnaround and an about face and put negatively to repent involves turning away from yourself.

Turning away from all of your self-serving and self-dealing and self-centeredness and turning away from your old worldview and your old mindset and your old ways of thinking about yourself in this universe and put positively to repent means turning to God and embracing a new worldview a new mindset new ways of thinking based on who he's revealed himself to be through the Bible in Jesus by the Holy Spirit.

So repent is a radical change both of your mind and of the direction and the trajectory of your life.

[32 : 14] And Peter says everybody needs to repent and turn to God. and he says if you repent three successive blessings will happen and here they are in verse 19 repent then and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out the times of refreshing may come from the Lord and that he may send the Messiah who has been appointed for you even Jesus heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything.

Did you hear those three successive blessings to those who repent? Number one your sins will be wiped out Number two times of refreshing will come from the Lord and number three God will send the Messiah to restore everything and I just want to try to tie this together as we close.

That first promised blessing to those who repent says your sins will be wiped out even the worst sins he just talked about people who killed the author of life even that sin in an instant in a moment can be blotted out and erased and obliterated it's not hard for God to do that but now let's jump over that second promised blessing to those who repent and look at the third in verse 21 it says heaven must receive the Messiah Jesus until the time comes for God to restore everything and what that means is that Jesus even now is awaiting the signal from God the Father to return as the king who will bring about a restoration of all things and will launch the new creation in which brokenness and sin and self-centeredness will finally and fully be removed and Peter's saying if you repent you'll get to participate in that can you imagine a restored creation how beautiful it will be how pleasant it will be how wonderful it will be to experience that with Jesus

Peter says the Christian life is sandwiched between your sins being wiped out and everything being restored and in between these two great events there's this second promised blessing to those who repent and here it is in verse 19 it says times of refreshing will come from the Lord times of refreshing will come from the Lord that's what the Christian life is meant to be about have you ever been in a place of such oppressive heat I've just come from such a place in the southeast a place of such oppressive heat you're indoors there's no air conditioning it's exhausting it's suffocating and then all of a sudden somebody opens a window or opens a door and this fresh burst of cool breeze just comes flowing in and somebody comes and hands you an ice cold crisp drink and you take a deep breath and you take a deep drink and somehow your strength returns and you feel revived anybody ever experienced that kind of refreshing

Peter says you can have that in the Christian life you can have times of refreshing that come from the Lord and literally it says times of refreshing that come from the face of the Lord times of refreshing that come from the very countenance of the Lord as he looks upon you and you gaze upon him Peter says you can go to God today you can go to God tomorrow morning you can go to God in your worst moment this week and you can look him in the face the face that he's revealed in Jesus Christ and from that place you can ask him please give me a cold breath of air from the Holy Spirit please give me a fresh deep drink from your presence and he will refresh you you can expect the God who has graciously wiped out your sins to give you times of refreshing now today that are foretaste of that wonderful final restoration that's coming at the return of the king times of refreshment that come from the very presence of the Lord himself from his face that because of

Jesus looks upon you with love with mercy with compassion and with grace and you can expect him to give to you an advance anticipation of the final and full refreshment that we expect when God will come and complete his work at last and so my question for you today is friends who here needs deep soul rest just me who here needs deep existential relief who here is longing and thirsting for spiritual refreshment friends do you look around the church in the Bay Area and say you know [37 : 45] I think that the church here might need to be revived I think it might need to be refreshed well the way into this is so so simple repent therefore and turn to God just simply turn away from yourself and turn to God and the Lord will give us a foretaste of that final refreshing that's coming and for which we wait and hope let's just take a moment now as we we're going to come to this table to the very presence of the Lord the face of the Lord where he wants to refresh us and so I just want to give you time and space to ask God to come and do that for you in whatever personal way and particular way you need it today let's go to him now in prayer in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit Amen