

A Lame Man Leaps

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[0 : 00] Amen. Well, open your Bibles, if you would please, to Acts chapter 3. As the church, in terms of the purposes that we are to fulfill, as belonging to the Lord Jesus, and belonging to one another.

And we got to see over the last several weeks, from Acts chapter 2, verses 42 to 47, this church that is beginning to show the evidence of spiritual life.

Life that has happened because of the work of Christ in their life, and a life that is visible as they are sharing their life with those around them. It's been a church that we'll continue to see as we move our way into Acts chapter 3 and the continuing chapters.

The church that is committed to teaching, a church that is committed to fellowship, a church that is committed to selling possessions and sharing those possessions with others, ministering to needs, meeting the needs of those around them.

A church that is celebrating and worshiping the Lord together as they're attending temple day by day. And a church that is seeing and experiencing the work of God among them.

[1 : 32] As day by day, the Lord will add to their number those who are being saved. They get to experience that because of the work of God working in and through them, showing the testimony, the mark of God's gospel work in their hearts, in capturing the attention of those in Jerusalem who see it for themselves.

The tangible evidence of that gospel work now is coming to fruition, and God is drawing people to himself as a result of that. This morning, as we turn our attention now to chapter 3, we're going to see this continuing work through the apostle Peter and John, as they're going to be ministering to a very specific individual, a lame man who comes to the temple to have his needs met.

And because Peter and John don't just pass up this opportunity, but see this man and his needs for what they are, are willing to step in, then God will do a work again in this man, but also in Jerusalem.

It really is an evidence to us of how gospel ministry works. It doesn't just happen by other people in other places, doing God's work in those foreign places, but it's a work that God has called us to do. It's a work that God has, the purpose that God has called us to meet as we are interacting with individuals day by day in very ordinary, very mundane places, stepping into where they are and seeking to be used of God right where they are.

[3 : 10] This is the same kind of thing that happened back in the 1800s, a name that I'm sure many of you are familiar with, the name Helen Keller. Helen Keller suffered from an illness when she was very young, and as a result of that illness, she would lose her sight and also her hearing.

Her situation seemed hopeless. She was essentially cut off from communication, cut off from the outside world, unable really to enjoy the benefits of relationship with individuals because from a communication standpoint, there was no way for her to bridge that gap.

Her father looked for help. He wanted to try to help his daughter in this situation, and he found someone named Ann Sullivan who had a step into this role.

Ann was no stranger to difficulty herself. Ann had also been one who had suffered from blindness because of a bacterial eye infection that happened also while she was young.

She lived in poverty. Ann did live in poverty. She lost her mother when she was very young, and her father abandoned her, and she had to go and live in an almshouse before eventually being admitted to a place where it could help to rehabilitate her and help her to learn how to communicate in the midst of her blindness.

[4 : 41] So by the time Ann Sullivan arrived in Alabama to come help, she understood that Helen Keller was intelligent. She understood that Helen had the ability to learn, but there was just these

obstacles in the way.

And she tried to teach her through those hand motions, doing hand motions in her hands so she could kind of see and feel the letters, but it wasn't making any sense to Helen until a breakthrough happened when Ann would take Helen, take her to a water fountain and help her to see that this water that she was feeling in her hand and the symbols that she would feel on her other hand, the letters that were being spelled out, actually spelled out the word water, and then everything began to make sense for Helen.

The breakthrough happened. The light bulb moment took place. And then as a result of that breakthrough moment, Helen would come to learn even 30 words, 30 brand new words that very first day.

You see, Ann Sullivan entered into Helen's world. She was willing to overcome this obstacle, willing to address her own personal insecurities and the difficulties of her life, and that helped her to step into Helen's experience, to be patient with the challenges that Helen had.

She did not treat Helen's problem as too difficult to address. She took her by the hand. She worked patiently. She gave what she had.

[6 : 19] And as a result of her faithful, patient ministry to Helen, God used that to overcome this challenge, this communication challenge, and allowed through patience and through touch for Helen to overcome this communication barrier.

It's a lesson for us because if any of us are to step in and to minister to others, we need to follow the same pattern. We need to be those who are willing to encourage and help those around us by using what we have, stepping into their situation, and being willing to address their problems patiently as ministers of the Lord.

As we come to chapter 3, we're going to see a number of situations in the next several chapters where things will happen that seem quite unexpected.

This morning in chapter 3, we're going to see that Peter will heal this lame man, this man who's been lame since birth. And we need to begin to ask ourselves this question. The ministry that the Lord Jesus had and the ministry that we'll see in these first several chapters, is it a ministry that God has called us to have as well?

A ministry of miracles. A ministry of working wonders. And so we come to understand that Acts is this transitional book.

[7 : 44] And it's describing things that are happening in the here and now, but aren't necessarily those kinds of things that we can anticipate that God has instructed us to do as a church.

The technical word is, it's descriptive, not prescriptive. It's not instruction orders or the marching orders that God has given to the church to then carry out miracles in and among ourselves as well. Now, God can do miracles. He does it through prayer as we are asking the Lord to do things for the people around us. And He does. He heals.

He delivers. He saves. He preserves. He helps. God is in the business of answering prayer. But what we're going to see in the ministry of the apostles, they're laying foundations.

This is an apostolic work. And you remember from Ephesians 2, verse 20, that God allowed the apostles and prophets to lay this foundation for the church.

[8 : 45] And Jesus Christ Himself was the chief cornerstone. This was a unique time. An unprecedented time. This was a time that hearkened back to the Lord Jesus who also helped to heal lame and blind men.

We find that in Acts 2, verse 22. Peter will say, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst as you yourselves know.

God confirmed His message through Jesus by miracles, by signs, by wonders. And God was going to do the same thing in this apostolic era.

He was going to confirm the word, the teaching that we saw last week, confirm this teaching through His apostles through miracles. So we find ourselves in Acts chapter 3, and we pick up the story there in verse 1.

Let me read this for you. If you have a pew Bible, or if you're using the pew Bible, let me encourage you to turn. It's on page 911. Here's what it says. It says, Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

[10:04] And a lame man from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate, to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, Look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

We're going to see a number of things through this passage, and there are more verses for us to look at, but I want to just draw your attention to some directives, some things we see in the apostle Peter and John that help to inform us in the ways that we also should relate to the people that God has put us in communion with, in relationship, with the spheres that God has allowed us to interact with others.

And the first is this. We learn the lesson of being attentive to notice hurting people. Be attentive to notice hurting people.

Peter and John are here. They're going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. It's the ninth hour. And what's important to observe right at the start of this account is while something spectacular will happen, it all comes out of a very ordinary experience.

[11:28] It was an ordinary day. It was just like any other. Peter and John are doing what they have done now for the last several years. They've learned. The importance, the rhythm of going to the temple.

They do this during the time of prayer. And this at the ninth hour was the third and final time of prayer for a Jewish individual.

It would happen, it would coincide with about three o'clock in the afternoon. It would begin the first hour of prayer was happening there at, actually it was the third hour of prayer.

It was happening in the morning around nine o'clock in the morning. Then three hours later there'd be another designated time of prayer at noon. And then three hours later at three would be this other and final time of prayer.

This time of prayer was also coincided with the morning and evening sacrifice. A time where the priest would go into the temple, he would offer a sacrifice of a lamb.

[12:28] It was a symbol of the forgiveness that God was offering his people through himself. also in the morning and the evening were the time where incense was being burned at nine o'clock and at three o'clock.

You remember this from Luke chapter one. This is where Zechariah, you remember, during this time of prayer would go into the temple, he would offer incense at the holy place. It was a picture of God, the prayers that would ascend to the Lord.

And so this was the moment, this was the moment in the rhythm of praying, God's people coming to pray. I think what's important for us to understand is that while this church age was beginning, these individuals who had come to Jerusalem had not lost their Jewishness.

They had not lost the rhythm of the things that God had called them to do. And even in the mundane things, the ordinary things, the routine things, here they are again offering prayers to God. And now, it captured new meaning, it had new purpose, they were doing it with new energy, they were doing it with renewed hope because of what God had accomplished for them in salvation.

[13:47] It amplified their worship. And in this way, it's important to note that structure and routine can be beneficial, it can be helpful. Those routines that we develop maybe once a week as we come to church on a Sunday or the routines that you have in spending time with the Lord in prayer and in Bible reading, while they may seem kind of routine and pattern, God can use those patterns, those routines to encourage your heart to do, to do the things He's called you to do and help to amplify worship to God.

And Peter and John have come together. We're going to see this duo. They are regularly together. And we're going to see that as we move through this book.

We'll see them here in Acts chapter 3. We're going to see them again in chapter 4. They're arrested together. We're going to see them in chapter 8 where they go up to Samaria together. This group, this duo, Peter and John happen to do ministry together.

But it was an ordinary day. It's an ordinary day. And God will do some of His greatest work in your life and through your life on ordinary days, on mundane days, the unexpected days.

You're working through the rhythms of life and all of a sudden this unexpected opportunity will come. Will we serve the Lord and have eyes that are open to ordinary, ordinary days?

[15 : 25] Well, it wasn't just an ordinary day. We're going to see in verses 2 to 5 that it was an opportune moment. An opportune moment. Notice, verse 2 says, a lame man from birth was being carried whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the beautiful gate to ask alms of those entering the temple.

Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him as did John and said, look at us. And he fixed his attention on them expecting to receive something from them.

They encountered this man, this lame man who is being carried to this position where he was going to ask for alms. This being carried helps us understand that he was still in transit.

It was still in process. He hadn't quite arrived at his spot yet. But seeing Peter and John, he capitalizes on this moment to ask for some help.

Here we are at the beautiful gate. This is a perfect place to ask for alms. This is one of the three places we find throughout the Gospels that beggars will come.

[16 : 35] They find themselves either asking from rich men like Lazarus did to the rich man sitting at his house or coming to very populated areas the highways and byways to try to capitalize on people who are moving past or in the temple whether it was at the beautiful gate or other places at the temple so they could ask for help.

We find that he was crippled from birth. Lame from birth. His case was hopeless. He had experienced this affliction. This affliction that no doctor and no other individual could help to resolve. And here he was a man who we find in chapter 4 verse 22 he's been lame not just for a little bit of time he's been lame since birth and he's 40 years old.

This was part of his routine. His situation seemed hopeless. And his condition was well known to those who were there in Jerusalem. We find that in verse 10.

It says they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called beautiful. It's fascinating to think.

[17 : 51] I wonder how many times Peter and John having gone up to the temple had passed this very lame man as he was sitting there. I wonder how many times had Jesus in the three years of his public ministry having gone up to the temple this same lame man sitting at this beautiful gate how many times had Jesus passed this lame man and knew in his mind this day was going to come.

I wonder how many times the religious men and women who were moving up to the temple didn't even bother giving a glance at this man who was sitting there.

But here we find Peter and John on this occasion they stopped they looked and they speak they address this man and get his attention. Typically donors would flip a coin at a beggar on their way into the temple but on this occasion Peter fixes his gaze on him and he says look look at me this was not going to be just a chance occasion this was going to be a deliberate opportunity that Peter will capitalize on.

No doubt this man is expecting some temporary relief he's in dire straits he needs some help and no wonder now that he's getting some attention from Peter and John there's no doubt that he is expecting something to happen and to come his way.

Peter is going to capitalize on this but I wonder I wonder how many of us would have missed this opportunity. Just a couple days ago on Friday I was on my way back from Cedarville on my way back to Columbus and as I was getting on to the on ramp to get on to the freeway there was a man with a sign standing there on the on ramp and it said Columbus and he's standing there he's got his backpack there and I noticed him and in this split moment this very brief moment I'm trying to process what I'm about to do and I'm driving up up the on ramp and by the time I finally decide you know what it would probably be a good idea for me to pick this guy up and take him to Columbus I was already on the freeway making my way in my heart there was not a readiness in my heart there wasn't quite an awareness

[20 : 23] I had things on my mind there were things to do there were pressures ahead there was a desire to get home and because of not being ready and not being aware I missed an opportunity I wonder how many mundane opportunities we have moment by moment day by day that we just pass right on by but Peter and John they step in they step into this moment and they are willing to address this man's this man's lameness how easy might it have been for Peter and John to say hey listen listen man I'm on my way to pray or hey I've got I'm going to the temple right now I've got some really important spiritual things to do right now or how many might have said you've been here for 40 years every single day I see you here

I'm sure I'm going to see you tomorrow and by the way Jesus didn't heal you so I guess tough luck it'd been very easy to have passed him by but Peter and John step in Peter and John are willing to address this man's problems you see life is full of mundane moments are your eyes open to them is your heart ready and willing to step in have you already begun to tune your heart to the moments that God may put in your path in this coming week are you asking the Lord to fill you with a heart of compassion and are you asking the Lord to bring to your attention those opportunities that he wants you to address see Peter and John stop they turn they notice this man they get his attention and they're willing to step in they capitalize on this opportunity you see we need to be alert to notice hurting people next we're going to see in verses 5 and 6 that we need to be available to give what you have be available to give what you have verse 5 says and he fixed his attention on them expecting to receive something from them 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 be available to give what you have it would have been very easy for Peter to have made excuses but they didn't they didn't make excuses it would have been very easy for Peter to have said sorry Charlie I got no money to give to you I've got no silver no gold no help so I'm going to be on my way no but what Peter does and he models this along with John they're willing to give what they have Peter makes two statements that I'm sure would have shocked this man I have no silver and no gold but what I have I will give I don't know what you're asking for or I don't have what you're asking for but I've got something better I've got something better and what I have I'm going to extend to you in this important phrase what I have I give to you it's similar to what the apostle Paul will say to the

Thessalonians in 1st Thessalonica chapter 2 verse 8 he says so being affectionately desirous of you we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves that's the essence of Christian ministry the essence of Christian ministry is to give what God has entrusted to you especially the grace that you have enjoyed the benefits of God's goodness and kindness first in Jesus of giving himself of forgiving you of your sins of bringing you to the point of salvation and to extend that blessing to those around you but also the benefits the physical and financial benefits that God has given to us to step in to give what we have this is what I love we're not ever expected to give what you don't have but God wants to take and to multiply the little perhaps that you do have and he can use that instrumentally to change the people around you just give what you have I think Peter was prepared in that moment to address this situation to allow this very personal ministry to happen because Peter himself had experienced the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus and experiencing that ministry from a very personal savior Peter is willing to step in and express a very personal ministry it was Jesus who modeled this to his disciples Peter would see have seen this in the life in ministry of Christ Jesus who mixes it up with all kinds of people he's a friend of tax collectors and sinners Peter got to see that first hand and Jesus who gave himself personally to people he expended himself he served people late into the night he was willing to serve people when it was really inconvenient when he was on vacation as it were and feeds the 5,000 and it was really inconvenient but the crowds just keep coming he wanted to get away with his disciples but the crowds kept coming and what does he do he doesn't push them away he serves them and Peter would have seen this this model of the

[26 : 15] Lord Jesus he was willing to have personal ministry with others he was willing to rub shoulders with the lowest of the low he was willing to weep with Mary and Martha in a moment a tender moment of pain that they were experiencing he had compassion on the masses he bounced babies on his lap he made sure his mom was in good hands when he was hanging on the cross and ready to die Jesus was constantly thinking about others in his ministry Jesus was a personal man who extended personal ministry so here we find Peter Peter touched and encouraged by the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus is now extending this same personal ministry to this lame man this is why I think it's important for us as the church to understand the significance of personal ministry yes it's good to give a check yes it's good to come and sing and to praise the Lord together in this place but if it ends there without a personal touch without this personal element you miss the opportunity that God wants us to capitalize on this personal

Christian ministry that includes this personal touch and perhaps the reason why Peter didn't have any money to give I'm inclined to think that he along with the other apostles were kind of setting the stage of what we saw in the last part of chapter two remember they're selling their possessions and they're distributing to anyone who had need I think the apostles were in the front of the pack as it

were in doing that for others and so Peter didn't have anything to give because he'd already given it all away so they didn't make excuses they had lots of reasons to make excuses but they didn't but they also saw the deeper need here and I see we turn to verse 6 and we see this again 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 you see

Peter didn't let this lack of funds cause him to pass up on this man he saw the deeper need the deeper issues that were at stake yes there was a financial need yes there was a physical need but I think Peter saw even deeper than that and he recognized there was a spiritual need that needed to be addressed and that's why he says in the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk you see it's the giving that Jesus wants from us is the giving that originates from him in the name of Jesus Christ rise up and walk it's a giving that points to him it's a giving that's strengthened by him it's a giving that gives glory to him it's a it's the kind of giving where Jesus receives the praise so Peter what he does here is significant and it's really easy to miss it's easy to miss that Peter is not just caught up in this moment but Peter is being instrumentally used by God in this moment to minister to a need and to draw attention to Christ we find in verse 7 he looks at him he took him by the right hand and raised him up and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong notice the features of this miracle that's important for us to draw attention to that it sets itself apart from the so-called miracles that happen today that the healing was done in

Jesus's name the healing was instantaneous the healing was complete it involved the totality of all that this man needed his feet his ankles were strengthened in totality it wasn't incrementally but happened all at once and then there was this immediate skill to walk there was this coordination there's this motor skill there was this proficiency you see God overcame not only the physical needs of strengthening but also whatever the mental needs might be to help with coordination and proficiency happened instantaneously that for a man who was 40 years old to be able to walk and as we're going to see leap here in just a moment that he is able to do this because a miracle has happened it was clear it was unmistakable a work of God had just taken place because Peter and John were willing to give what they had

I wonder this morning what do you have to give today whatever small whatever large what what do you have to give in terms of your life in addressing the hurt or the pain or the challenges that somebody in your circle is experiencing maybe as simple as a word of encouragement maybe it's as simple as a note that you write whatever that is what is that ministry what do you have to give today we need to see that God has strategically placed us he has placed you he has placed me in the spots where he is already working he's working ahead of us he's put people in our spaces he wants ministry to happen and he's given us the opportunity to do that we just have to give what we have and you are qualified you are qualified if you are a recipient of God's grace in coming to faith in him you are a recipient of grace and so you have something to give you have the grace of God to give the ministry of God's grace imparted to you to encourage and bless those around you and finally not just be alert to notice not just be available to give but be active to point people to

[32 : 44] God we see that in verse 8 it says in leaping up he stood and began to walk and entered the temple with them walking and leaping and praising God and all the people saw him walking and praising God and all the people saw him walking and praising God 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 you see what happens here do you notice what's taken place now this man is not limping he's not shuffling he's not even just walking he's leaping he's leaping because a miracle a miracle has happened it's moved him from hopelessness to joy it's led him to from being kind of self-focused to being God-focused it's moved him from being one who is carried to one who is moving on his own he's moving with direction he's moving with purpose he's one who's rejoicing in his physical fitness but also rejoicing more importantly in his spiritual fitness that this has created joy this personal ministry of

Peter and John has led to joy in God it's been directional the apostle Peter has ensured that God would get credit for this that he is doing this in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and I wonder if any of you have had an opportunity to be part of that to see that or experience that for yourself that your ministry to someone else however big or small that ministry might be that it leads to joy in them have you ever experienced that and seen that this past week as I was driving to Cedarville my odometer turned 233,333 it was notable just because of all the threes that were there but it

reminded me of how that car came to being for us it was a family a family 10 years ago when actually I guess it was 16 years ago now because my son Timothy was just about ready to be born and this family in this church decided to give us a gift it was a gift that was kind of targeted to helping us as a family get things going and get some supplies for how that all goes you have a new baby but I was able to use that money and to buy this car the car that I was driving to Cedarville this past week and it was a reminder to me of how God meets needs without people even knowing and it led my heart to praise the Lord 16 years ago and it led my heart to praise the Lord again in that drive to Cedarville on Friday afternoon to say thank you Lord for the way that you use others to be a blessing and God has given us all the opportunity to be a part of that in some way big ways and small ways as you step in to the hurts and pains of others and as you extend yourself in some way to encourage them not to get attention to yourself but to give attention to the Lord and so we see that we see that here as as as Peter has has directed attention to God and this man is is now directing attention to God as well he's no longer broken he's no longer a beggar he's no longer dependent on his friends to carry him and and now he's entering the house of worship on his own up to this point as a broken man as a lame man he was confined to the threshold of the temple he would sit there day by day begging for money but now because of this healing now he's moving in he's moving into the center he's able to worship God for himself this work of God has allowed him to enjoy something more than just a physical healing but it's allowed him to enjoy this this new found special relationship with the Lord as one who is moving from the threshold now entering into the center he's full of praise it's used it's used of God then to ignite the hearts of the people who are also there in the temple and that's where we direct our attention last in verses 10 and 12 so not only does a lame man direct attention and glory to the Lord but Peter will also direct attention to God we see that at the end of verse 10 and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him they were shocked Jesus had filled Israel in Jerusalem with the same kinds of things filled with wonder filled with amazement and in the final week this final passion week I don't think it's any coincidence that we find in Matthew chapter 21 that Jesus hailed a lame man Matthew 21 verses 12 to 15 Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple he overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons and the blind and the lame came to him in the temple and he healed them but when the chief priest and the scribe saw the wonderful things that he did and the children crying out in the temple [38 : 36] Hosanna to the son of David they were indignant you may see wonderful things you may see amazing things but it's never meant to stop there it's meant to direct your heart to him to God and that's the fatal flaw of the scribes and Pharisees they saw these wonderful things that were done by Jesus him healing the lame him healing the blind and instead of their hearts being turned towards God they were set against him they were furious they were indignant they were not full of faith they rejected their Messiah and this miracle of healing a lame man I think is significant because it would have created that immediate connection with what Jesus had done just a few weeks before it led to wonder but it wasn't enough for them to wonder and that's why Peter will now transition to verse 12 we'll see he will now speak the words of Christ and draw their attention to him verse 12 and when Peter saw it he addressed the people men of Israel why do you wonder at this or why do you stare at us as though by our power or piety we have made him walk see you gotta understand this isn't a work of us this is a work of God I want to direct your hearts to him and we're gonna see next week as we finish this out that God will use this miracle to this lame man and he'll use this ministry of teaching of the apostle Peter and 5,000 men will come to faith in Christ God often uses routine routine moments to accomplish his power this past Saturday I was driving down to the church it was just trying to get some last minute studying and preparation done preparing my own heart for ministry and wouldn't you know as I'm driving down I think it was Nike Boulevard driving down Nike and here's this guy he's outside of his car for some reason the door is open and as I get closer I notice that he's pushing he's pushing his vehicle and then I remembered okay I missed an opportunity a couple days ago Lord Lord thank you that you have not given up on me to give me another opportunity to minister in a very mundane very routine moment see God cares God cares enough about us to give us opportunities to raise awareness and to let us then step in and I probably didn't do as well as I would have liked because after pushing the car

I didn't have enough breath to say anything meaningful but by God's grace he gives us opportunities God gives those opportunities to us every single week I wonder do we have hearts and minds that are ready to press in to be used of God not to give what you don't have but to give what God has entrusted to you and most importantly to give the grace that God has given to you to share with the world around you oh may God help us to capitalize on opportunities a personal God who's ministered to us so that we can minister to others in very personal ways Lord thank you for modeling this for us and for being patient with us in the process oh how many opportunities we miss and not necessarily because we intend to but just because we're blind to them so God open our eyes and raise within our hearts may they grow in compassion for the world around us for our neighbors for our coworkers for our fellow classmates wherever you place us Lord even on those chance moments when we're when we see individuals who are in need and we have some time and Lord I pray that you would help us to press in to step in so that we can see your work in ways that we never expected Lord go before us this week may your glory shine in Jesus name Amen God bless you have a great week