

Blessed at the Beautiful Gate

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[0 : 00] Let us now read from the New Testament.

From the book of the Acts of the Apostles in chapter 3. The New Testament, the book of Acts in chapter 3.

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

And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have, give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

[1 : 45] And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he, leaping up, stood and walked, entered with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God.

And all the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him. And as the lame man which was healed, held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Why look ye so earnestly on us?

As though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers hath glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up and denied him in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go.

[3 : 09] But you denied the Holy One and the just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you, and killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead, whereof we are witnesses.

And his name through faith in his name made this man strong, whom ye see and know. Yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

And now, brethren, I watch that through ignorance he did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before hath showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the time of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

To ye shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you, whom the heaven must receive until the time of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began.

[4 : 32] Amen. And may God bless to us that reading from his truth. Let us further sing to his praise from Psalm 18, and at verse 30.

Psalm 18, and at verse 30. As for God, perfect is his way, the Lord his word is tried.

He is a buckler to all those who do in him confide. Who but the Lord is God, but he who is of rock and stay.

Tis God that girdeth me with strength, perfect makes my way. He made my feet swift as the hounds, set me on my high places.

Mine hands to war he taught, mine arms break bows of steel in pieces. Let us sing these verses. As for God, perfect is his way.

[5 : 35] Amen. Amen. Not perfect is his way.

Music is a mutant. His word is trying. He is the handkerchief of the Lord.

He is the handkerchief of the Lord. He is the handkerchief of the Lord. In the devil is God the king.

He heals the rock of steel. His love that he does me with strength.

Unperfectness my way. In my dreams will God's love.

[7 : 03] Set me on my heart. My heart is still in pieces.

Let us now turn to the passage that we read.

And we may read at the beginning of the chapter. Acts chapter 3. Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

And a certain lame man from his mother's womb was carried, whom they lay daily at the gate of the temple, which is called beautiful to ask alms of them that entered into the temple.

And we'll take these words as our text, a certain man lame from his mother's womb or lame from birth.

[8 : 29] I am sure that you are all aware that the gospel writer Luke is also the author of this book, the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

In the second chapter, we are told in verse 43, that many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

And these wonders and signs were done after the fulfillment of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Luke writes of preaching in the power of the Holy Spirit and of a church filled with the Holy Spirit.

And in this chapter, we are told of how the power of God was experienced in the life of a lame man, resulting for him in a life-changing experience.

[9 : 43] The change that was effected was so dramatic and so radical and so very obvious that both men and women are filled with amazement and wonder at what took place.

They ask about the power that results in such a life-changing experience in the life of a man who had always been lame, helplessly lame.

Now, you may remember that in John's Gospel it is recorded, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, that is in John's Gospel.

But these are written, that is these signs are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ. Many other signs.

And when you read about these signs in the early chapters of John's Gospel, you discover that there is a message behind all of these signs.

- [11 : 00] For example, where he gives sight to a man who has been born blind, Jesus speaks of himself in these words, I am the light of the world.
- When he fed thousands with what seemed woefully inadequate provision, you find Jesus teaching, I am the bread of life.
- And we can say that there was instructive teaching behind all of the signs that are recorded. And in this context, what comes across is that the power possessed by the Spirit of Christ to raise to health a man lame from birth, is the very same power that raises those who are dead spiritually and makes them spiritually alive.
- How we would all surely love to see this power visibly at work today. To see the quickening power of Christ at work in our homes, our families, our communities, and in our congregations.
- For do we not often complain of the lack of power in our midst? It would be wrong for us to expect another day of Pentecost.
- [12 : 30] That was a one-off. You're not going to have Pentecost repeated. It was a one-off just like the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- But because the Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, should we not expect to see the effect of the power of the Holy Spirit?
- And should we not be asking ourselves whether we are responsible for grieving the Spirit and therefore suppressing His power?
- Well, let us therefore take a closer look at our text, A Man Lame from Birth. Four thoughts. First, the providence of this man.
- Second, the place where we meet Him. Third, the purpose of His being there. And finally, the power that touched Him.
- [13 : 31] Providence, the place, the purpose, and the power. First, the providence of this man. This nameless man. We're not told his name.
- He was lame from birth. We don't know whether it was a birth injury or whether he was born this way. But the implication would appear to be waited in favor of his being born this way.
- And what we do gather is that he was virtually helpless, dependent on the goodwill of others to get Him from place to place.
- And at this point where we are introduced to him, he was over 40 years of age. That information is given in the following chapter.
- For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than 40 years old. 40 years a helpless cripple.
- [14 : 32] 40 years of suffering. 40 years without any hope of healing. But merely to face more of the same.
- It reminds me of a man I was privileged to befriend in my early years. He was a patient in what was then called the County Hospital.
- Located just beyond Willow Glen where there is a call center today. And if my memory serves me right, this man was a patient there for over 40 years before he died.
- I remember him telling me on one occasion. There was tall trees outside the building then. And him telling me, I remember, he said, when these trees were planted.
- And they were stately fir trees with thick trunks. And I was trying to, in my own mind, trying to come to terms.
- [15 : 44] With this man looking out the window at the same view. Over all these years. Seeing these trees going to maturity. And he just waiting for the final ferry.

He was totally dependent on others. On the staff of the then hospital. And he too was incapable of walking. But for those who got to know this man.

We counted it a tremendous privilege to visit him. His room was like a magnet for us. He was a bright Christian.

And to be in that room with him, sharing fellowship, it was indeed a spiritual bezel. There was frequently a heavenly fragrance to be enjoyed there.

And there is no doubt in my mind. But that God was doing for him, as the psalmist writes in Psalm 41. The Lord will on his sick bed give him help.

[17 : 03] But for this limbless man, the outlook was bleak. Forty dismal years without relief, without hope. Forty years without relief, without hope.

Experiencing the daily drudge of being carried to the temple gate in the hope of receiving a little charity to keep body and soul together.

Forty years of gazing on the faces of worshippers as he lay helplessly where he was placed. Forty years a poor, helpless beggar.

He knew nothing else than a beggar's life. An empty, unfulfilled life. Without a shred of hope that his providence would be different.

In many ways, I believe that this man, his life is symbolic of the lives of all who are separated from Christ.

[18 : 02] Alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world.

You know, at a physical level, it is awful to be without hope, isn't it? Anyone who has been faced with the judgment of a doctor that nothing more can be done for a loved one will have known the sense of crushing despair at such an announcement.

But it is even sadder to be without hope and without God in the world. People look for meaning and reason for hope in many different places.

And at the end of the day, they are looking for a reason to hope based on human resources or even in creation itself. But human resources are of little help when the problem is spiritual.

For wherever we look for hope and satisfaction, out with God. The writer in the book of Ecclesiastes tells us it is meaningless.

[19 : 27] He tried different paths and all were deeply disappointing. They were unable to satisfy his quest for hope and meaning.

All he says is meaningless. It is but a chasing after the wind. That is how he viewed the futility of his search.

We all belong to a broken, lame, sin-seek world. As a consequence of our disobedience and rebellion against God.

Sin causes such enormous destruction that it just cannot be grasped by the finite mind. We all have sin-seek souls.

And our spiritual illness is seen in many of the problems that beset our world today.

[20 : 27] Well, this man's providence was extremely debilitating, discouraging, dismal, and depressing. His physical providence symbolic of a world without Christ as a Savior.

The providence of this man, a helpless cripple. Secondly, the place where we meet him. And we meet him at the gate of the temple that is called the beautiful gate.

This is where we are introduced to this helpless man in his pitiable condition. And it seems to me that Luke the writer is comparing the hopeless state of this man with the very gate where he is placed by those who deposit him there day after day.

The gate of the temple that is called the beautiful gate. Now, that was a huge gate covered in brass and apparently very costly.

And beside this very costly gate, this helpless individual who is in total penury is placed.

[21 : 47] And it's as if Luke is putting side by side the beautiful costly gate. And this man in penury, whose life is distorted by his lameness without any beauty, day after day taken to this spot and left outside the chief place of religion and worship in the nation.

And yet, between this man and the religious leaders of the day, there was a huge gulf. It wasn't a gulf that came about because of a language problem.

For they literally spoke the same language. But they had nothing to offer to this man that would touch his circumstances.

They had no real message of hope to inspire and uplift this man. And again, the disability of this man and the inability of the then church to offer any hope appears to be representative of the spiritual powerlessness of the Judaistic church of that time.

As if the God that they worshipped in the temple was powerless. And so he and those who frequented the temple area have become used to this way of thinking.

[23 : 13] Now, should we not be asking whether we too are in danger of falling into that way of thinking?

The danger is that we go through the motion of worship, but not really believe that God is capable of bearing his mighty holy arm and stretching out his right hand.

Oh, perhaps we will not admit it. But do our actions suggest it? Do we accept that God is powerless and incapable of action?

That's certainly the kind of image that Satan would like us all to believe. But that is not the image that is projected by the disciples and by the gospel writer Luke.

They set before us a God who is powerful, mighty to save, who raises the dead to life. A God who does not leave men as he finds them, when he effectually touches upon their lives.

[24 : 26] A God who restores broken, shattered lives, piece by piece. That's the kind of God who is set before us in the scriptures.

And every life that he restores is a broken life. And requires to be put together, piece by piece by piece, by the God who is merciful and gracious.

The God who restores. And in a broken, battered, lame, sin-sick world, is this not the very God whom the world needs?

The mighty, omnipotent God who makes an eternal change to the life of man. The place where we meet in the gate of the temple.

The providence of this man. The purpose, thirdly, of his being there. And he was there to beg basically for charity.

[25 : 45] To ask alms or gifts from those who were entering the temple. It was a busy thoroughfare. You would expect to find people always passing by that way.

It was a regularly used pathway. And because of this, if there was anywhere where you might expect to receive a coin or two, would it not be at the entrance to the temple?

Surely this was the place where you might expect to receive empathy and charity. And you know, is that not the perception to the present hour?

I remember during my own time living in Mansus, being visited by those who were seeking charitable help, coming to knock at the door.

Others coming for food. Others coming for money. And the perception was and still is that the church ought to be engaged in seeking to alleviate poverty, helping those in need, helping the homeless, engaged in providing help to third world countries who do not enjoy the privileges that are enjoyed by ourselves.

[27 : 11] Involved in assisting those with alcohol-related issues or drug addiction. And that might be our perception of the work of the church in the world.

A body engaged in social work, seeking to address the innumerable social problems that exist in our society.

And in my view, there is a very real danger that we think along these lines. If we do, then we believe that that ought to be the sole focus of the church in the world.

And you know, there is a certain attractiveness in the perception that we are able to alleviate the circumstances and providence of others.

You know, there is the feel-good factor. We help this person or that person and the next person. But however attractive that might be, in my view, it is not the primary purpose for which the church of Christ has been placed in the world.

[28 : 34] Nor do I believe that that is the image that is depicted for us by the scriptures during the days of the apostles. What else then?

Well, my understanding of scripture is that the church exists for the primary purpose of propagating the good news, proclaiming the gospel.

Now, don't misunderstand me. I am not saying, and I repeat, I am not saying that the church should not be involved in these areas I mentioned in seeking to provide help to the needy in the world.

The church certainly has a role to fulfill in that area. However, these things are secondary. The primary purpose is to know the power of God at work.

The church surely exists to demonstrate how the power of God is able to revolutionize the lives of men, women, boys and girls by bringing them from darkness into the marvelous light of divine grace.

[29 : 47] To bring men and women from death to life. And nothing short of the power of God in Christ, who was crucified for sinners, is able to heal, pull, broken, wounded humanity.

It is God and he alone in Christ who is able to forgive and grant peace so that deeply troubled, sinful lives come to experience the joy of salvation.

You remember how in the very first psalm that we sung here today, how it was the crave of the psalmist with thy salvation, O my God, to visit me draw near.

Why did he want that? And he goes on to say, That I thy chosen's good may see and in their joy rejoice.

May with thine inheritance triumph with cheerful voice. God in Christ, able, able, to transform lives.

[31 : 14] The purpose for which he was there, charity, the place where we meet him, finally, and the providence of this man, finally the power that touched him.

What caused the people to be filled with wonder and astonishment? That they were asking questions about this man. They would surely be very familiar with this man.

After all, he had been sitting for all these years beside the beautiful gate. And even if they were not personally acquainted with him, perhaps many of them had sought to help over the years by placing a coin in his hands.

many eyes must have looked on this man in his wretched state. And on this particular day, and we're not told by Luke what day it was, all we are told about this day is that it was the hour of prayer being the ninth hour.

Now that would be about three in the afternoon. The Jews had three particular times for prayer. The third hour, nine in the morning.

[32 : 37] The sixth hour, twelve midday. And the ninth hour, three p.m. And it was at this particular time that these men, that he saw these two men approach the beautiful gate.

And as it was his custom and practice, he asked to receive alms. And Peter is the first to respond. And you know, the impression created from the Bible is that Peter always spoke first.

That's the impression you get. He was never backward and coming forward, to put it in another way. And Luke on us, he says, and he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

He was, the layman was surely encouraged to expect that he was going to receive some form of charity. These two were not going to pass them by as if he were not there.

And I would be surprised if some did not behave in that way. You know, being the parent of someone with learning difficulties, I know how people can pass by and pretend that they're not seeing what they're seeing.

[34 : 06] And I would be surprised that if people did not pass this man by as if he didn't exist. But not Peter and John.

They didn't behave as if they pretended he wasn't there or that they didn't see him. They didn't give the impression that they were so deep in conversation and so take up with their intended worship that they didn't see the man.

Their initial reaction must have appeared very favourable to the helpless cripple. Only for his raised and expectations to be brought crashing down.

Peter said, I have no silver and gold have I none. You know, Peter acknowledges what many perhaps might be too proud to admit.

he had no money. He had nothing of this world's goods. What a deep disappointment that must have been to the man who was thinking that surely this was his day.

[35 : 26] Only to learn that these men are just as poor with regard to worldly goods or money-wise as he is himself. how quickly his eyes would look down only for him to hear.

But such as I have I give to you. And the words that are spoken by Peter seem to exalt the power that God is going to demonstrate through him.

He has no doubt about this power. it is far in excess of the riches of the world. And on what did Peter basis assertion?

On the promise and gift of God. But also on his own experience of other miracles. I have nothing of what other people might give you. good. But there was something that he could impart.

You know how often it has been that a poor church and I mean in material terms has been a miracle working church church.

[36 : 48] When it could not say I have no silver and when it could not say. And yet the reverse is true. When it could say that it had no silver or gold.

But when it does become materially prosperous and it says I have silver and gold it has lost the power of saying in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

And you know the actual miracle is most graphically narrated. Peter filled with the boldness of divine grace making known the name of Christ so that any might hear.

He takes the name that had been used in scorn and it's almost as if he shakes it like a banner of victory.

The confidence that Peter had was not a confidence in his own ability or in his own confidence but confidence solely in the Lord.

[37 : 58] When we speak forth the name with as much assurance of the miracle working power as Peter did we too shall be able to make the lame walk.

look. And the promise is minutely described. Peter put out his hand to help the lame man up while he was doing so.

Paul came into the muscles that had withered and shriveled. Immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. He received much more than he anticipated. At best a few meager coins hands but now he received new life through the creative power of almighty God so that the cripple felt that he could raise himself.

And though all that passed in a moment the last part of his rising was his own doing and what began as being lifted ends in his leaping.

He began to walk leaping and praising God.

[39 : 19] You know the new power that he experienced was so wonderful that sober walking wasn't just enough.

You know the sheer exuberance of his newfound health at the transformation that had taken place.

One moment helpless and crippled the next moment able to leap and to walk and he is praising God.

He recognizes the giver of health and the restorer who was come to intervene in his broken life.

And you know my friend if you are here today and God the restorer has intervened in your life then you too know something of this sheer exuberance of joy as you experience the wondrous blessing of salvation through Christ.

[40 : 41] Christ. And so you find these people wondering at what had taken place.

Why do you stare at us? Why are you amazed? And you know in a very real sense it would have been amazing had they not been amazed.

amazed. But you see they were just looking at the men.

And Peter wants them to raise their focus to look much higher than Peter or John. To raise their focus to the God who works wonderful miracles.

And you notice what he says the God of Abraham the God of Isaac the God of Jacob the God of our fathers glorified his servant.

[41 : 44] In other words he is directing them to Jesus Christ who is the servant of the covenant keeping God it is no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ. The one who is spoken of in the Isianic songs in the Old Testament as the suffering servant of Jehovah.

He is the one to whom Peter directs their attention. And you notice the condemnation that he passes upon them. You delivered over that is you delivered him to the Roman power as if to rub in the deepest depths of Israel's shame to hand over their Messiah to those who knew him not.

What could be more complete faithlessness in the life of the nation? But that was not all undenied.

And you can't help but wonder did Peter remember an incident in his own life? was there a sudden throb of conscious fellowship even in that sin?

Did it make his voice tremble for a moment? Israel's denial was aggravated because it was in the presence of Pilate.

[43 : 15] You remember how Israel had overruled the determination to release the prisoners? the Gentile judge Pilate would rise in the judgment to condemn them.

For he at least had seen that Jesus was innocent and they had hounded Pilate to an illegal judgment and killing.

That is the judgment that he directs before them. And these were daring words, you know, to speak in the temple to the crowd.

Here is a humble fisherman who had been filled with the Holy Spirit who is the strengthener so that the fear of man was removed. And isn't it wonderful how the infilling of the Holy Spirit transformed those timid disciples to become forceful proclaimers of the truth.

A dead Christ lying in an unknown grave could never have inspired his crushed followers with such courage, insight, confidence and gladness in the face of a frowning world.

[44 : 44] as they proclaimed the glorious gospel of free grace. And if you ask me, what was the secret that made these men so bold?

My response would be this, they were totally dependent on God and prayer. and that seems to me why we are told at the very outset of this passage, it was the hour of prayer.

The hour of prayer. How important it was for them to gather for prayer. They were wholly governed by the teaching of the Lord in Scripture.

and so they proclaimed Christ and the Christ whom they proclaimed intervened in helpless lives and transformed them wonderfully and amazingly.

The providence of this man, a helpless cripple. The place where we meet him, at the gate beautiful. the purpose for which he's there, to get a few coins, a little charity, and the power that touched him, that transformed his life and made him a totally different person.

[46 : 25] Oh, my friend, has that power, has it touched on your life today. Let us pray. eternal and ever blessed God, we thank thee for the wondrous power that is exercised by thee, that touches upon so many broken and battered lives and begins the process of restoration, a restoration work that results ultimately in such broken lives, reflecting Christ, in perfection.

Oh, grant that none of us be strangers to that power in our individual lives, and the glory shall be thine. In Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen.