

Peters Sermon About Miracles

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Date: 27 September 1987

Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] I feel like I'm from a slightly different generation because I've been singing that hymn ever since I was in knee pants. Has anybody else ever sung it before? I would like Mr. Norman to notice this, that there are some.

And it's a lovely hymn, and I'm grateful we sang it. And we're this morning on the second hymn. Sorry, we're on the second sermon in the Acts of the Apostles.

And this is the sermon that's preached on the occasion of a famous miracle recorded in Acts chapter 3, which took place at the gate of the temple, in which a man who from his birth had been lame, and who by the best ministry of his friends was laid at the temple gate, almost the way lottery tickets are sold at the liquor control board store.

There's a certain relationship between the two. Mysterious. You don't understand. It's the same reason that the beggar sat at the gate of the temple, hoping to arouse the conscience of the prayers, is the reason I suspect that the lottery ticket sellers set up outside the liquor store, hoping to arouse the conscience of the drinkers.

So it's that kind of familiar scene. The setting is not unlike, I might say, Robson Square.

[1 : 46] This setting was dominated by the great temple of Herod and all the outbuildings that surrounded it and the walls and all that, that was part of a magnificent building scheme fulfilled by King Herod, probably even more magnificent than our courthouse and art gallery.

But that's the kind of center of the city situation that they were in, where this beggar sat by the wayside and begged for alms.

And when he begged, he perceived that what he needed was alms, but he wasn't aware of his real need because he had no hope of it ever being realized.

And so we very often avoid our real needs because we suspect they will never be met. And I would like you to learn from this passage of Scripture that you must expect your real needs to be met.

And there is one who is able to meet them who knows what they are, and so you don't need to be afraid to acknowledge them. I tell you that partly because I came to this passage in a deep sense of personal depression and attributable to a whole lot of different causes that come together in my life.

[3 : 31] And I am just in preparing to talk to you, convinced that we must, in a sense, hold up our hands and cry for alms, but wanting something more from a God who is able to meet us in our situation.

It has often been my secret desire that following a service like this, that when we have a sense of special need, that we minister to one another in praying for one another and in doing what the apostles, Peter and John, did for this lame man, they fixed their gaze on him, commanded him to look at them, and took him by the right hand and said to him, silver and gold, I can't give you, but such as I have, I give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk. And that's the ministry that we have to one another. I'm sure that's what we must do.

Lots of us in the course of our day see lots of what I would call non-miracles. As I proceeded down King Edward last night in the right-hand lane, and somebody in the center lane took a right turn, that was a close non-miracle.

Simply because I didn't want it to happen, I didn't need it to happen, I'm grateful it didn't happen, but it's the kind of thing that takes over our lives, and our lives are full of non-miracles.

[5 : 39] Surely we have a clear call by God to expect miracles in the circumstances of our lives. And miracles can't be defined because if they could, they would not be miracles.

But they are the outpouring in a special situation of the grace and mercy of God. And to meet needs which we may know or we may not know, but which God knows and is able to meet.

I'm interested that in this miracle, Peter and John were together. They were ministering together, as it were. Not only that, but we're commanded that we are to pray together.

And I'm sure in the ministry that we have to one another, it's better we should take somebody with us, a second person with whom we can seek to in the name of Christ and in the power of Christ and in the faith of Christ.

to claim God's grace and mercy on a third person. There's something else about it, too, which strikes me very strongly.

[6 : 58] And that is that what were Peter and John on their way to do? They were on their way into the temple where... This occurred to me, too.

When we kneel, we are almost adopting the position of somebody who is lame from birth.

Our legs are buckled under us. And spiritually, that probably illustrates a very important truth. And it makes it very appropriate for us to kneel, to pray.

Because spiritually, we can't walk in our own strength. Peter and John were in on their way into the temple to pray.

So that just as this beggar held up his hands to them and said alms, they were on their way to kneel before the God of Abraham, the God of Jacob.

[8 : 11] Jacob, they were on their way to kneel before him and hold out their hands and ask for his grace and goodness in their lives.

So they understood in a deep way what he was doing. And what they were expecting inside the temple, they made this beggar aware of it outside the temple.

So, the miracle occurred. And the man was raised to his feet. And having been raised to his feet, you have that lovely line of scripture which says that he was walking and leaping and praising God.

According to page 273 of the book of Alternative Service, Sorry, I guess that one went past you too.

It was a kind of spontaneous response which of a man's heart to worship.

[9 : 24] Walking and leaping and praising God. And witnessing that kind of worship from one whom they recognized, they gathered.

quickly around to see what was happening. And when they gathered around, Peter stood up and preached this sermon. And I want you to hear it as in fact our Peter stands up and reads it to you.

Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this? Or why do you stare at us? Why do you think that you were as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?

The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers glorified his servant Jesus whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate when he had decided to release him.

but you denied the holy and righteous one and asked for a murderer to be granted to you and killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead.

[10 : 39] To this we are witnesses and his name by faith in his name has made this man strong whom you see and know and the faith which is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance as did also your rulers but what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets that his Christ should suffer he thus fulfilled.

Repent, therefore, and turn again that your sins may be blotted out that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord and that he may send the Christ appointed for you Jesus whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.

Moses said the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your brethren as he raised me up. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you and it shall be that every soul that does not listen to the prophet shall be destroyed from the people and all the prophets who have spoken from Samuel and those who came afterwards also proclaimed these days.

you are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God gave to your fathers saying to Abraham and in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

[12 : 29] God having raised up his servant sent him to you first to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness. Peter develops the sermon by telling them first of all that it was not he and John that performed the miracle of healing that it was one who that very crowd had seen tried condemned and crucified in that same city and they said this is how it's happened it's not us it's the risen Lord Jesus Christ in his name by faith in him this man is made whole before your eyes and that Lord Jesus Christ is still among us now the response of the crowd there was you don't mean that that miserable wretch of a man broken under the weight of the cross cruelly crowned with a crown of thorns taken out and suffering an agonizing death on a cross is the anointed one of God that can't be that's how they replied to Peter and John but Peter said to them in this sermon yes I do mean that that is the anointed one of God the prophets told you from the beginning that the Christ must suffer and you albeit in ignorance have been the means by which that prophecy has been fulfilled you have betrayed him you have turned him over to be crucified and the very thing which the prophets foretold has been realized at your hand so that the one whom God has sent to be the Christ you have crucified now at that point in Peter's sermon he might have come thundering down on them and said and now is the day of vengeance of our

God but he didn't do that he said God does not demand vengeance he invites repentance and the wiping away of your sins he promises not vengeance but times of refreshing coming from the very presence of the Lord the times of refreshing which in the midst of the tribulation of our days are the very foretaste of heaven that there is a place of refreshment there is a place of renewal the times of refreshing are to come to give us a foretaste of those good things which God has promised to us in

Jesus Christ and Peter goes on to tell them and they probably understood better than we do but he said Moses you remember promised that there would be such a prophet and Samuel and all the prophets that came after him told you that there would be such a one and that you were to hear him and that not to hear him was to be excluded from the people of God if you don't hear the prophet of God and Peter went on and said to them and the parallel to us I trust is obvious Peter went on to say to them you are the sons of the prophets this prophecy is your inheritance you are the sons of the covenant with

Abraham the promises of this covenant belong to you and he brings the sermon to an end and says in your posterity shall all the families of the earth be blessed God having raised up his servant sent him to you first to bless you in turning every one of you from your wickedness he was saying you have seen this miracle you have seen the very specific blessing of God on this man who was born lame you have witnessed it now that is the evidence of the nature and character of the God who seeks to bless you that is the type of the blessing he wants for all of you every one of you in the circumstances of your life

God wants that blessing in your life and I'm convinced that God wants that blessing in my life and he wants it there for the very specific purpose that because you by God's grace are able to appropriate that blessing you will become the means by which all the families of the earth will be blessed the blessing which you received will be conveyed to others by you in other words you are to be blessed in order that you might be a blessing someone for whom I have profound respect to and who suffers from perhaps good humor

[19 : 28] I guess he tends to think of us as a congregation as a bunch of psychological cripples and not very flattering however probably closer to the truth than most of us would like to admit but you see it's not that reality that we are to wallow in the reality that we are to wallow in or to be immersed in is the reality of God's purpose to bless us as he blessed the man born lame and to bless us in such a way that we might be a blessing to others now

I know that in this congregation this morning there are people who are very mindful of being psychological cripples I'm not unmindful of it myself about me and I know others of you are carrying extraordinary burdens and some of them are long range burdens and some of them are well difficult to share and some of them are very secret and secrets must be respected but I can't see that Peter's purpose in preaching this sermon was not to use that one miracle to tell all the people of God's purpose of blessing for them and that their business was not to qualify for it because all they qualified for

Peter assured them was the just vengeance of God but what they were offered was repent and turn and enjoy the time of refreshing which comes from the Lord and that's I think that's important that we do that it's not a conclusion I want you to come to it's an experience I want you to share in the purpose of God's blessing for you and I don't want to upset you or threaten you or anything but if you were to look in the prayer book on page 584 you'd see a very simple service in which we do for one another what

Peter and John did in the name of Christ and in the faith of Christ for this beggar and I know of one and there may be others of you who would like after the service to gather in the chapel over there that we will have this simple service some of you might come because you have been wonderfully blessed blessed and by your prayers and presence want to be a blessing to others others of you might stay behind because you sense the need for God's blessing in your life and would like to receive the laying on of hands so if you fit into either category you're welcome to stay for that service what happens usually after a service is that everybody gets up and goes

Mr. Norman plays his post lute and when that's over we'll have this service for any who choose to stay behind in the chapel for and it won't I mean it won't take long but how silly that we haven't got time to anyway I just invite you to consider that and if you wish to please feel free to and don't feel anxious about it just in quietness and confidence prepare your heart for what I hope will be a quiet time of appropriating God's blessing to us that we might be a blessing to others by our lives the man born lame walked and leaped and praised

[24 : 56] God and by that extraordinary behavior gathered a crowd of people together to hear the message that Peter had to give them and so he was a blessing very soon and I'd like you in claiming the promises of God to find a blessing in your own life and to be a blessing subsequently to others so that's the invitation I leave with you amen now we sing together hymn number 467 and as we sing the offering will be received

Would you rather see Let him come hither Beyond here will constant be Come with the weather There's no discouragement Shall they give our tree land His words are lifted To the open air Whose soul be set in love With dismal stories Do but themselves For all

His strength The more is No lion Can him fight He'll With a Child's stars Who Can Speak The precise Dead Hyper When I give you a knock, I put you in my ear to the center.

Amen. Amen.

We sing together the last verse again.

[29 : 26] Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Eternal God, in Jesus Christ we behold your glory. Receive the offerings of your people gathered before you, and open our hearts and our mouths to praise your great salvation.

This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen. Let us pray.

[31 : 39] Will you turn in your prayer books to page 395. Let us just take a very quiet moment just to remember the sermon and to remember a word which you heard there from the Lord, and just to still your heart.

at the top of page 395 we say together verses 10 to unasöpalneph else. And to verse 17. Of Psalms 51 together. Make me at a clean heart, oh God, ■ a chape in the name will. God God, be with you. And oportunidad I will get Nar Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy Holy Spirit from me. O give me the comfort of thy help again, and establish me with a free spirit, and shall I teach thy ways unto the wicked, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, thou that art the God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing of thy righteousness.

O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice, thou hast not created, but thou hast not done with darkness.

[33 : 32] The sacrifice of God is a strong spirit, a broken and untruth heart. The sacrifice of God is a strong spirit, a broken and untruth heart. The sacrifice of God is a strong spirit, a broken and untruth heart.

Amen. This is a prayer concerning the offering of ourselves. O God, O God, who desires no sacrifice, but a humble and contrite spirit.

You will accept no gifts, but such as come from a good and honest heart. Save us, we pray thee, lest we come before thee with hands not free from stain.

Mercifully accept the offering of ourselves, who have nothing worthy to offer, but what is from thee, and dare not offer what is not hallowed by thee.

Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, we pray this morning for the Diocese of New Westminster.

[34 : 51] We pray for its spiritual health. We pray for its clergy, its people.

We pray for its deeds. And we pray for its heart.

O God, who has called us to be members together of thy church, which is the body of thy Son, pour out, we beseech thee, thy spirit on this diocese.

And you with strength and love and wisdom, all who bear authority here. Accept our gifts, our labor and our love.

Use them for the advancement of thy kingdom and the glory of thy name. Lead us in all our work for thee. And unite us in the joyful service of thy Son, our Savior Jesus Christ.

[36 : 02] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Pray for the world this morning. Pray for those in special need of God's care.

And we pray for ourselves as we respond to that need. Lord, the wounds of the world are too deep for us to heal.

We have to bring men and women to you. We do now. We ask you to look after them. The sick in body and mind.

Withered in spirit. The victims of greed and justice. Prisoners of grief. And yet, our Lord, do not let our prayers excuse us from paying the price of compassion.

Make us generous with resources you have entrusted to us. Let your work of rescue be done in us and through us all.

[37 : 22] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. We pray now specifically for those known to us who are sick.

Who are handicapped by psychological affliction of depression or of fear. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. I just would encourage you to name them in your heart to God.

Almighty and immortal God, the giver of life and health, we beseech thee to hear our prayers for thy servants, for whom we implore thy mercy.

That by thy blessing upon them and upon those who minister to them of thy healing gifts, they may be restored according to thy gracious will to health of body and mind.

Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, in thy mercy, hear our prayer. Lord, remember what thou hast wrought in us and not what we deserve.

[38 : 52] And as thou hast called us to thy service, so make us worthy of this calling.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Please be seated.

Could we now have the announcements? Good morning.

Welcome to St. John's. We hope that you'll take time to those of you who wish to join in the chapel service after this service and others. Please join us for coffee in the lounge, coffee or tea.

I have a couple of announcements that I'd like to bring to your attention that are in the bulletin and I would draw your attention to them that are coming up in the next week.

[40 : 21] Next Sunday is Food Bank Sunday. Money donations can be put in the plate and food donations can be left in the narthex. We hope that you will fill the hampers that will be there.

The second thing is that next Sunday is also Harvest Sunday and we need some assistance in decorating. That occurs on Saturday.

There is again an announcement in the bulletin. I draw your attention to that. Hopefully some of you will be able to see how you might help at that. I'd like to mention three people who are of particular blessings to all of us.

Two of them I'm going to ask to come up and give announcements. All three of them are seeking and asking us how we might bless them. On the back of the order of service today is a coming event, namely our Harvest Supper on October 16th.

The first person who I want to mention as a blessing to us all is Kathy Thomas and she needs your blessings in terms of helping with the dinner.

[41 : 34] I would ask you to consider how you might help bless Kathy and all of us by assisting with the dinner. Tickets will be available at the coffee hour both today and next Sunday and they will continue to be on sale until a week Wednesday.

But that is the end of the ticket sales so please get your tickets as soon as you can. Even that is a blessing so that we can properly plan for the dinner. Now, Marian Maxwell has an announcement about the upcoming Learners Exchange and I'd ask Marian to come forward.

And after that, David McMillan, another one of those people who I wanted to draw your attention to as being of particular blessings to us, has an announcement about stewardship.

David is the chairman of our stewardship committee. Marian? Marian? Good morning.

Starting three weeks from now is the next round of Learners Exchange and who it's for is anybody who's here who would be interested. What is that we have four exchanges to offer this time.

[42 : 52] We have one called Faith in the Marketplace where six members of this congregation will be talking about their faith and how they handle it in their job situations.

We have one on grieving and loss. We have one called The Unruly Family which is about the Church of England and all of its stepchildren.

And fourth, we have one on a Christian survey of, or a survey of Christian political thought. So, how you sign up is you come to me after the service, get one of these yellow forms.

It has information about all of them on the back, all of the different, the different things we're offering, and you fill it in, either give it back to me or take it to the church office.

These start on the 18th of October and go to the 22nd of November, 9 o'clock till 9.45 Sunday mornings in between the two services. And I hope that we'll see lots of you there.

[43 : 57] Thank you. Thank you. Two weeks ago, Elizabeth Thomas asked us all to say Happy New Year to everybody or to each other because September was a time of at least beginning again.

Well, this week is a time of beginning for the future. We begin this week to begin the preparations for our ministry in 1988. And you will notice in the pew leaflet this morning a message from the Archbishop.

Across the Diocese of New Westminster, each parish is beginning to prepare for 1988 through a shared theme of Stewards in Action. Now, for some parishes, this will be the first time they have reached out in a focused stewardship program.

By God's grace, we as a parish have been doing this for several years. I'm not sure that... Well, we've learned a lot. And from where I sit as chairman of the Stewardship Committee, I think we have grown a great deal.

Many of you have been invited to be visitors this year for our stewardship program. And the training sessions are noted in the pew leaflet Wednesday and Sunday next.

[45 : 17] Four weeks from today, October the 18th, will be Commitment Sunday in this parish. Now, this is something new.

Each of you, every member of the parish, will be invited and encouraged to bring your 1988 Commitment Card to church with you. They will be collected, they will be brought forward, and they will be offered to God as the resources we wish to make available for his ministry in this place in 1988.

Preparing for 1988 begins with our commitment to say thank you to God for our gifts by our gifts. Two weeks ago, we offered our time and our talent at Count Me In Sunday.

Next, we will have the opportunity to offer to return to God a share of the financial resources he has given us. Added together, the time and the talent and our money, these gifts will give shape and scope and substance to our ministry.

As we respond individually to the call of responsible stewardship, our parish, I am certain, will witness the full and abundant promises of our Lord and Savior.

[46 : 38] I publish the bands of marriage between John David Valance Newlands and Helen Louise Malkin, and also between James Bradley Ticci and Leslie Jane Ebern.

If any of you know cause or just impediment why each of these two couples should not be joined together in holy matrimony, you are to declare it.

This is the second time of asking in each case. We sing hymn number 85.

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