**In The Name of Jesus**

Acts 3:1-26

Key Verse Acts 3:6 – *“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.””*

Over the last two weeks, we studied how the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to profess the amazing wonders of our Lord that have been revealed to us in Jesus Christ. By His death and resurrection from the dead, He triumphed over the power of sin and death that have held us prisoner since man first rejected God. Now Jesus is exalted, sitting at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and mediates to Him on our behalf. It is through Him that we too share in His victory as He draws us ever more into His presence so we may experience it fully within our lives. In today’s message, we see this clearly demonstrated as a beggar has both his body and soul restored and many others come to repentance through the power of Jesus’ name. May God help us to have faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

**Part One – “In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk”**

May we read verse 1 together; ***“One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.”*** The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought many changes to the ministry, the most obvious being that the believers were now a church with many people joining them day by day. However, the Holy Spirit brought personal changes to the hearts of the believers; case in point, Peter and John. In the past, these two were engaged in a heated rivalry to see who would be the best disciple of all. Peter outwardly boasted his undying loyalty to Jesus while John’s own mother even implored Jesus to make him and his brother James Jesus’ prime ministers in His kingdom. It must have been nearly impossible for them to get along but now we see them going together to pray at the temple. They were transformed from men who sought their own glory into brothers who humbly prayed and co-worked together to help build up Jesus’ ministry. Through the Spirit, they became loving shepherds in the image of Jesus and the great spiritual leaders the early church really needed. In the same way, I pray the Spirit may continue to bring us closer together as a family and raise us to become spiritual leaders within our own walks of life.

But this idyllic scene was interrupted by the sad reality of one particular man. May we read verse 2 together; ***“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.”*** It is ironic that at the foot of a gate renowned for its beauty sat a man who could be described as anything but. It is hard to imagine what life must be like without the ability to walk. He could not socialize with people as freely as others did. He had zero job prospects as it was hard enough for an able-bodied person to find a job in those times. He had no freedom to go where he pleased. But what must have been the hardest thing to deal with is that he was completely dependent on everyone else for everything in life. His very survival depended on the kindness of passers-by who felt pity on him as they went into the temple courts. He even had to be brought to the spot every day so he could beg. Although he was at the very gates of the Lord’s house, he must have felt like a complete outsider. How difficult must it have been for him as all he could do was watch the rest of the world literally “walk on by” and carry on without him? But haven’t we too felt the same way as this man; that everyone else is moving on to greater things in life while I am stuck here struggling with no way out in sight? Is there anyone out there who can help me?

Peter and John did not walk on by; they took notice of the man as he begged them for money. However, they gave him something that no amount of money in this world can ever buy. May we read verse 6 together; ***“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.””*** From this verse, we can learn two things. First is that Peter had neither silver nor gold, nor did he give it to him. If anything, any money he did have had already been given to the needy as written in the previous chapter (Acts 2:45). This verse also speaks directly to our sinful tendency of believing that all our greatest problems in life can be solved with money. What this man needed most was not money; he needed Jesus. This truth leads to the second point to remember; all Peter could give him was the name of Jesus and as we see later on, Jesus’ name is all we ever need. But we need to stop and think of what “In the Name of Jesus” means. What is so special about Jesus’ name, why are we supposed to do things in His name and does this mean we can tack it to the end of any request we have like some kind of incantation or magic spell and it will be granted?

Jesus’ name is unlike any other. In the past, a king’s commands were fulfilled just from the mere mention of his name for the king’s name had authority. However Jesus’ authority goes far beyond any monarch as the apostle Paul boldly declares: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). Only Jesus name has power to give life for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus Himself implores His disciples to ask for anything in His name and it will done so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13-14). This does not mean we can just invoke Jesus name whenever we want something. Rather, our requests should be for the kind of things God desires and that truly honour Him.

Peter’s request is a perfect example of this. In the past, he would have viewed the lame beggar’s condition as to be the result of the either the man’s own sins or his parents’ (John 9:2). Now Peter could see the lame beggar’s situation as an opportunity for the work of God to be displayed in him (John 9:3). In putting his faith completely in the name of Jesus, Peter took the lame beggar by the hand, helped him up and watched as the man took the very first steps he had ever taken in his entire life. No sooner had the man taken his first steps did he start walking and leaping and praising God all throughout the temple courts to the amazement of all the people who knew him (7-10). All the man had was faith in the name of Jesus and he was healed completely. The name of Jesus did not just give the man the ability to walk but an entirely brand new lease on life. The name of Jesus saved him from a life of dependence and self-pity and brought him into a life of freedom and joy! This is the same offer Jesus extends to all who believe in Him and are willing to call on His name. I pray we all may reach out towards Him just like the man did and receive this wondrous gift of life in Him.

**Part Two – The Lord Brings the Time of Refreshing**

With the man now embracing both Peter and John, people came running towards them so they could find out what great miracle had just taken place (11). Once again, all the people’s attention squarely rested on Peter. He almost seems shocked when he says ***“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?”***(12). Yet rather than bask in their amazement and adulation for a while longer, Peter immediately directs their attention to Jesus by reminding them of their role in His crucifixion (13-15). Peter exposed their sin with a broken shepherd’s heart. They participated in condemning the innocent Lamb of God to death. But Peter’s words were not of condemnation. He understood them because he was just the same as them. He too had disowned Jesus. Yet in spite of his betrayal, the Risen Christ visited him and forgave him. It was the marvelous love and grace of Jesus for Peter. Peter believed this grace was available to all who had gathered. This is why he said to the crowd, “You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead.” Peter’s main point is that God raised Jesus from the dead as proof that Jesus is indeed both Lord and Christ. God Almighty is greater than the power of sin and death. God is greater than man’s evilness and it is because of this that God’s victory has been guaranteed through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is through Christ that God brings true life and restoration to our beings.

May we read verses 17 to 20 together; ***“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…”*** Once again, Peter urges everyone to repent of their sins and promises them that from their repentance, they will experience the times of refreshing that come from the Lord.

In life, we are weighed down by many things; our failures, our imperfections, the nagging sense of inadequacy and our guilty consciences due to sin. Our lives start to feel dry, empty and devoid of real purpose. But like rain showers in the most arid of deserts, Jesus wishes to quench our souls of all these things that distance us from Him and leave us in a constant state of physical, mental and spiritual thirst. He offers Himself as living water that will spring into eternal life so we may draw from Him and never thirst (John 4:14). It is just the same as when we are spiritually “lame”; feeling utterly powerless and self-pitying. Jesus wishes to bring true refreshment and restoration throughout our entire being so that we may be able to go out into the world, do the good works He has made us for and know Him through them.

Joni Eareckson-Tada is one such example. As a teenager, she had an incredible passion for the outdoors and spent all her time riding horses, hiking, tennis and swimming. However, a diving accident caused a fracture in her neck that left her as a quadriplegic, paralyzed from the shoulders down at the tender age of 17. During the two years of recuperation and rehabilitation, she struggled with anger, depression, suicidal thoughts and religious doubts because she felt that all her dreams were shattered, that she would trapped forever in her broken body and anguished over how God could allow something like this to happen to her. However, it was during that dark period in her life that she came to feel God’s loving embrace the most. Through learning to paint with her mouth and eventually writing books and recording music, she has helped so many others experiencing hardships and pain in life. Joni’s greatest work has been championing the needs of people with disabilities, ministering to them through various Christian groups and in doing so, spreading the name of Jesus to people who we often ignore, think little of and care little about. I would like to conclude this message with two of my favourite quotes of hers as she puts all that she has gone through in the context of Jesus’ own life. I pray the Lord will continue to give us faith in the name of Jesus so we too may live out and share His Gospel in the same way:

*“Jesus went without comfort so that you might have it. He postponed joy so that you might share in it. He willingly chose isolation so that you might never be alone in your hurt and sorrow. He had no real fellowship so that fellowship might be yours, this moment. This alone is enough cause for great gratitude!… My wheelchair was the key to seeing all this happen—especially since God’s power always shows up best in weakness. So here I sit … glad that I have not been healed on the outside, but glad that I have been healed on the inside. Healed from my own self-centered wants and wishes.”*