

## Acts 3:1-10

### A Healing Church

4/19/15

*Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. **2** And a man lame 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. **3** Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. **4** And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." **5** And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. **6** 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!" **7** And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. **8** And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. **9** And all the people saw him walking and praising God, **10** 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.*

Several years ago, Henry Blackaby wrote a book entitled, "The Man God Uses," and the prevailing theme of the book is that God uses ordinary people for extraordinary things. Honestly, that seems to be the prevailing theme in the book of Acts. And I desperately want that to be the theme of this church and of your life.

As we center ourselves around the Gospel of Jesus and the mission of the church, we become useful tools to a fixing God. It's what happened in Acts 3. In our text, God uses two ordinary men, and by the healing power of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, an outcast crippled man becomes a fanatical worshipper of the Living God. If God uses people, and you are a person, then we need to find out how God can use you to display His power.

We find in this passage:

### **God Uses Gospel People to Display His Glory**

Let's find out what kind of people God uses:

#### **God Uses Changed People – Saints That Have Been Sinners**

I am so glad God is not seeking perfect people to use. In v. 1 the text opens with the picture of Peter and John walking together. These two were disciples of Jesus Christ but they were anything but perfect.

Let's take John for instance. Early on in the ministry of Jesus, John and his brother James were prideful and power-hungry. Mark tells us in Mark 10:35-37, "*James and*

*John the sons of Zebedee came up to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you' ” and He said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit one at your right and one on your left in your glory!”*

Can you imagine? In fact, their pride was so prevalent, Mark tells us that when the other disciples heard it they were indignant. John was proud and power-hungry. What about Peter? The Gospels are slammed full of hare-brained, half-cocked, and non-thinking things Peter did. I suppose the darkest of those examples would be the night of Jesus' arrest when the "big man" Peter would lose his nerve, denying repeatedly that he even *knew* the Lord Jesus. Neither of these men were perfect but something was different in them. They both had been to the cross. They were changed. The sin of John's pride and the sin of Peter's denials had been nailed to the cross. They could say, like Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me." And listen, if God can use John and Peter, then he can use you, but he can't and won't use you until you come to the cross – changed – confess your sins and embrace the crucified life. He uses saints who have been sinners to display his power.

## **God Uses Worshipping People**

V. 1 tells us that Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. Now remember, the Christians at this time were exclusively Jewish and the ninth hour (about 3 p.m.) would be the main worship service of the day, and Peter and John wouldn't miss it because they were serious about worshipping the Lord. We worship. God's people gathering together to sing, pray and to hear God's word explained. It would not have crossed Peter's mind to miss worship or to be "fashionably late" for worship. Peter and John would never have been a distraction in worship. It wouldn't have occurred to them to criticize the music or to walk out saying, "I didn't get anything out of that." They went to worship God with God's people to give Glory to God with very little thought of themselves.

Nowadays, if you want people to be serious about worship you have to have the right parking, friendly volunteers greeting, bathrooms sparkling, something for the kids, you have to make sure there is not a *quality* gap. What they are used to at other venues. And if you aren't careful you're doing all you can to create a good worship experience *except* worshipping. I fight this. What we do here every Sunday is for an audience of one – for God. People will say, isn't Sunday morning about saving people? Not primarily. Our Number One purpose on Sunday morning is *worship*. Lift up the name of Christ and He will, in an irresistible fashion, draw people to himself.

“Doxological Evangelism” Worship is so real and engaging that when someone who is not a Christian comes in and experiences the singing, praying and preaching, the Holy Spirit grips them and they give their lives to Christ. If you want God to use you, you need to get serious about worship. Be here, bring your Bible, be on time, rested, engaged, ready to give, and expecting God to move.

God uses changed people, saints who were sinners...  
God uses worshipping people...

## **God Uses Caring People**

Let's get into the story. V. 2, *And a man lame 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.* It's the picture of the lame man, crippled all his life. He was laid down at the "Beautiful Gate. The gate was 75 feet high, made of Corinthian bronze, stunning to look at. It took 20 men to close it each night. The lame man who was more than 40 years old was strategically positioned at the gate during the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of prayer. Hundreds of people would pass by. There are three essentials in Judaism, 3 pillars of the Jewish Faith. They are the Torah, Worship and Acts of compassion. People could do at least two at once, going to worship they could flip an obligatory coin at a disabled man. V. 2 tells us the lame man begged alms. This comes from the Greek word for "pity" that meant "please give." So like a broken record, that lame man would sit and say over and over "alms, alms, alms, alms, alms," and people largely ignored it.

V. 4 tells us this day was different as he begged. Peter and John stopped and made eye contact and treated him like a human. For whatever reason, God burdened John's heart and Peter's heart for the anonymous lame man. A burden. Every Gospel ministry that's ever had an impact came about because someone had a Gospel burden. Thousands of people passed that lame man that day. Many flipped him a coin, but only two really cared. Those are the two God used.

Let me ask you a question: In the name of Jesus, who do you have a burden for? Outside of yourself, what are you doing to be used by God? Pray for a burden.

God uses changed people...saints who were once sinners  
Worshipping people...  
Caring people...

## **God Uses Sacrificing People**

Notice what Peter tells the lame man right up front. V. 5-6a: "I do not possess silver and gold." The truth is that neither Peter nor John had much. They both left lucrative fishing businesses to live their lives for the Gospel. They both gave up good businesses to follow Jesus. God would use their sacrifice to change the world.

Let me tell you the students God's going to use: the one who puts down his X-Box, gets his face out of a screen and lives an abandoned life for Jesus. God will use the young lady who turns her back on the low-cut trash the world is peddling and lives her life recklessly abandoned to Christ. God will use the young couple that goes counter-culture in raising their children, teaching them honor, love, commitment and service. But it takes sacrifice. That's who God uses, people whose lives are completely out of balance, weighted heavily with a love for the Gospel, a love that dominates everything in life. The

average mediocre people, the humdrum safe people, will ride a cream-of-wheat wave right into eternity never knowing the thrill of being *used* by God. But if He is going to use you, you have to be sacrificing.

### **God Uses Risking People**

In v. 6, *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!"* Here's what Peter believed: he believed in the power of Jesus Christ to change lives. Because of how Jesus gripped Peter and John, they believed Christ could and would transform that lame man, and the rest of the story is that God used the miracle to gather a crowd, and then Peter preached the Gospel because he believed in the transforming power of Jesus Christ. Chances are, God would use you a whole lot more if you really believed in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene. That's how God displays His power. You know what else?

### **God Uses Encouraging People**

Watch Peter in v. 7. Peter was not afraid to touch this outcast and to help him get up. He was 40 years old and had never walked, and he needed some encouragement. God uses people who are willing to encourage and get involved and invest in people's lives. If God is going to use you, you must be willing to get involved in someone's life. To reach in by the power of the Gospel and in the name of Jesus and pick them up. And when you do, look what you create: *And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God,*

### **God Uses People That Are Not Ashamed**

Think about it. Peter had been ashamed of Jesus. Before, John wanted to use Jesus for power. But because of the cross, they could say with Paul, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the Power of God for Salvation to everyone who believes. To the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

*(Pastor Shares the Gospel and prays)*