

“New Life is Available 2 U”

Acts 3:1-26

6.06.10

In different seasons of our lives, life can seem so mundane or monotonous. We can find ourselves living such a routine that it's like “same thing different day.” Some of you raising babies understandably feel this way. Baby sleeps a little, wakes up, eats, dirties diapers, cries, eats, dirties diaper, and sleeps little. The same pattern repeats itself the next day and the next and the next. When will things change and be different? Or some of you work jobs that are the same thing over and over again. You could almost close your eyes and do the job. Wouldn't it great to experience the extraordinary instead the ordinary?

A few years ago fire fighters who were cleaning up after forest fires in northern California found a guy seriously injured. What made the situation unique is they found him with a wet suit on. Apparently this guy was relaxing and doing some snorkeling in a lake near where the fires were raging. As the water crane swooped down to pick up water it unfortunately picked this guy up and dumped him on a fire. Now that is an extraordinary day.

Another example of an ordinary day becoming extraordinary occurred to Murray Astwhich who was 31 years old at the time. Murray had a terrible life-long stuttering problem. One day he was playing Hockey with his 4 year old son out on the driveway one afternoon when he got accidentally hit in the head with his son's hockey stick. He got knocked out and woke up never to stutter again.

For the next two weeks we will be camping in the book of Acts. We are going to be spending time seeing what changes occurred in people's lives as a result of the Holy Spirit being given at Pentecost. What we will discover is that when the Spirit came upon the disciples their ordinary lives turned into extraordinary experiences. The same can be true for you and me.

This morning we are going to see another example of an ordinary day becoming extraordinary. Please turn with me to Acts chapter 3 **[SLIDE]**

A miracle is performed (vv. 1-10)

Peter and John were going to the 3:00 p.m. prayer service at the Temple when they came upon a crippled man who was begging for money. The man looked at these two men and asked for a handout. It is easy to read through a passage and not get the depth of what is going on. There is a lot of background and emotion to this story. So let's explore a little bit together before we get to the miracle. Let's think for a moment what it would be like to be crippled from birth in Jesus' day. There wasn't welfare. There weren't disability checks. The government didn't provide food stamps. A crippled, blind or mute person survived by begging from others. They ate only if someone gave them money or food that day.

These vulnerable people sought out good places to beg. The best places were near heavy foot traffic. The more people walking by, the better chance you'd have to receive something. This man chose to sit by the "Beautiful Gate." Theologians do not know the exact place but most believe it lead from the "Court of the Gentiles into the Women's Court." [SLIDE] The gate was 75 feet high and 60 feet wide and was made out of Corinthian bronze. That is why it most likely received the name Beautiful. The Women's Court name was derived from the fact that Jewish women were admitted to this location but could not go any further inside the temple area. At the west end of this court stood thirteen trumpet-shaped containers for voluntary offerings of money. This was a very strategic place for the crippled man to beg.

The man had two strikes against him in life because he was born crippled. In Jesus' day, anyone born with a deformity or disability was looked down upon. In those days, they believed either you sinned in the womb or your parents sinned for you to be born that way. So he most likely experienced judgmental looks or frowns or the cold shoulder. But rarely would he ever experience grace and mercy. In chapter 4 verse 22, it says that this crippled man was more than 40 years old. For more than 40 years this man has had to rely on people's pity. For more than 40 years, this man has had to rely on others to carry him to and from the spots where he'd beg. Can you imagine having to be that dependent on people? It is very hard for us Americans to ask for help. We'd rather go without than having to be honest and share our needs. But you couldn't afford to do that back then. Either you ask for help or you die.

This man's life was monotonous. He woke up, was carried to his spot, begged all day and then went back to where he lived. Every day was nearly the same. Until one day- everything would change. In this life there is no such thing as luck. There are no coincidences. God is the great Conductor- orchestrating life's divine appointments. God brought this crippled man and Peter & John to the temple gate at the same time. You know if you look back over your life you can see different times when you collided with God and His love and grace. That was no accident.

Now let's focus on the miracle. The crippled man saw Peter and John and asked them for money. Peter said to the man "Look at us!" Thinking they were going to give him some money he looked up expectantly. But Peter & John didn't have any money with them. Though they lacked wealth they didn't lack God. Paul wrote in 2 Cor 6:10, that he was "poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything."

Peter & John had something more valuable than money- they could offer an opportunity for a new life. Without even asking if the man wanted what Peter had he took the vulnerable man's hand, said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" and helped him up. As the man began to stand his feet and ankles were healed. Look at verse 8, "He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God." This is the man who had never walked in his life. This is the man whose mom and dad never saw their son take his first baby steps. His parents were never able to tell their neighbors, "Hey our boy took his first steps today." At the age of 40+ he took his very first steps. Yeah God!

Can't you just see him trying out his legs, dancing and kicking his feet up and down in praise and joy? That incident kind of reminds me of the dancing that Jeff Olson performed at Family Camp this past weekend: **[show video clip of Jeff's interpretive dance- 3:21-3:40]**.

How was the man healed? Was he healed because of Peter's godly life or by his strength? Verse 12 says, "Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we have made this man walk?" Peter was saying it is not about us. We don't have what it takes to heal people. Our lives of devotion do not heal.

Jesus could not physically heal the man. He is the God/man. And as such He is limited to one place at a time. Verse 21 reads, “He (Jesus) must remain in heaven...” Jesus is presently in heaven- though His Spirit- the Holy Spirit resides in us.

It is the “Name of Jesus” that healed the man. Verse 16, “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through Him that has given this complete healing to him.”

Invoking someone’s name in that culture represented that person and all of his characteristics and authority. When Peter used “in the name of Jesus” He was accessing the authority and healing power over sickness and disease that Jesus had given to His disciples. Luke records this transfer of authority and power in Luke 9 and 10. In Luke 9, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to do ministry with His authority and power. **[SLIDE]** Verses 1-2, “When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases,² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” And then in Luke 10, He sent seventy-two disciples out to do ministry with His authority and power. **[SLIDE]** Verse 1, “The Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.” Verses 16-17, “He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me.”¹⁷ The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

We see this every day when authority is given by someone higher up and exercised by someone underneath that authority. Police have power and authority given to them by the city, state or Federal Government. When a police officer arrests someone they use the authority and power given to them. If you are a supervisor at work, your authority comes from the owner or general manager. You are able to delegate and hold people accountable to their jobs because of that authority given to you. This morning I am exercising the authority given to me from Pastor Scott. He has entrusted me to prepare and lead these next two Sundays while he and Beth are visiting their new granddaughter in England. How would you like me to exercise that authority by letting you go home early today?

The crippled man was no longer chained to his deformed body. By the power of Jesus' name he was given a new life. Many people in the temple courts recognized him. This was the same guy who used to sit and beg by the Beautiful Gate. The miracle created "wonder and amazement" according to verse 10. As a result of this miracle, a huge crowd of men and women came **running up** to them in "Solomon's Colonnade." [SLIDE]

In a short amount of time a large crowd began to surround Peter, John and the new man. Peter quickly realized that this miraculous healing had presented him with a crowd that might be interested in hearing the good news. Seizing the opportunity: [SLIDE]

A message is proclaimed (vv. 11-26)

In order for there to be good news, bad news needs to be shared first. Speaking of good news and bad news, "An artist asked the gallery owner if there had been any interest in his paintings on display at that time. "I have good news and bad news," the owner replied." The good news is that a gentleman inquired about your work and wondered if it would appreciate in value after your death. When I told him it would, he bought all 15 of your paintings. "That's wonderful!" the artist exclaimed. "What's the bad news?" "The man was your doctor."

Peter started the message with bad news. He contrasted the views of God the Father and Pilate with the Jewish leaders and those in the audience regarding Jesus.

Verse 13 says, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him." It is interesting that Peter used the word "servant" to describe Jesus in this verse and in verse 26. That word would remind the Jewish listeners of the book of Isaiah. Isaiah applied the word servant to Messiah. Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 52 and 53 emphasize this truth. Let's look at Isaiah 53 verse 11, [SLIDE] "After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities." Peter was saying that Jesus was the Messiah and the evidence was the God of their fathers, Yahweh glorified Him and raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus, the long awaited Messiah, is the same one they disowned and killed.

And look at the contrast between Pilate's and their views. Pilate's view was that Jesus was innocent of the charges and should be let go. Instead the people wanted him killed. They chose a murderer and rebel over the Holy and Righteous One and author of life.

Talk about bad news. It was like Peter was saying, "Hey Men of Israel, you killed the very One that you have been praying for and reading about for years. You know the One your ancestors taught you about; you had him killed and the blood is on your hands. Didn't you listen to God? Couldn't you see it? Even the pagan Pilate could see that there was something special about Jesus."

Though Peter started out very strong and aggressive, in verse 17 he softened his words toward the listeners. He basically said the same thing that Jesus said while on the cross- that "they did not know what they were doing." Peter words were they "acted in ignorance" when they killed Jesus.

If Peter were here in the pulpit today he would tell us the bad news too. He'd say that we are all sinners- that our sinful actions sent Jesus to death. Our sins build a wall up between us and God. We are guilty and deserve to be separated from God for eternity. And no matter how hard we try we cannot pay for our past sins. That is the bad news of the gospel.

In verse 19, Peter moves from the bad news to the good news. He said, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out." Repent means to make a total change in thought and behavior. It is recognizing wrong thinking and actions and choosing to do and think right. Repentance is often accompanied by sorrow or remorse.

Peter was trying to persuade the Jews that were listening and the nation of Israel to turn and believe in their Messiah. In verses 20-26, Peter brings out the heavy hitters of Israel's ancestry to connect the dots that Jesus is the Messiah. Many Jews wrongly thought and still think that the Messiah would enter history and reign forever on the throne of David. That meant the Jews would finally have their eternal leader in place who would usher in peace and rest.

What many Jews missed in their teaching of the Messiah was that He would suffer first, die, rise again and then return one day to the eternal throne. Look at verses 20-21, [SLIDE] “and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you- even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.” Peter was saying, The Messiah- Christ- already came to suffer for them, and now He is in heaven waiting for God’s timing until He will come again.

Peter tried to jar their memory of the scriptures that spoke of the Messiah. He used the example of Samuel and other prophets, Moses and even the father of the Israelite nation- Abraham to show the Jews that Jesus is the One!

Again, if Peter were here in the pulpit he would say to you, “repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out.” Believe and trust that what Jesus did on the cross for you paid your debt to set you free from the bondage and payment of your sins. As you believe, it is not a one-time act; it is a continual repentance and belief that Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus is not meant to live in our back pockets. He is to be free to live fully in us and allow Him to change our hearts and minds.

Do you know why Jesus has not yet come back to earth? He is waiting until you and others including many Jews repent and turn to God. 2 Pet 3:9 reads, [SLIDE] “The Lord isn’t really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.”

What will you do with what you heard? Will you repent and turn to God? Or will you turn away from Him? Peter warns those who turn away in verse 23 “Anyone who does not listen to him (the Messiah) will be completely cut off from among God’s people.” Accept the good news and receive new life in Christ.

So what happens after this amazing miracle and persuasive message? Next week we will take a look at what the people did with the message they heard. We will also get a glimpse of what the future might look like in America as it continues to become more hostile toward the Christianity.

But before we close this chapter let's look at a few applications from Acts 3

Applications:

Listen to the Spirit of God. God speaks to His children. Jesus said in John 10:27, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." The Spirit of God will direct you to share with others what you have whether it is silver and gold or whether it is the good news. Peter and John experienced a divine appointment and as a result many people were given new lives because they listened to God. It is difficult to hear His voice when our schedules are so full or when our hearts are far from Him. In order to hear we need to set aside time and attune our hearts and ears toward Him. What vulnerable individuals or families might God want to touch through you?

You have the dynamic Spirit of God residing in you. You are dynamic when you yield to Him. Prior to the Holy Spirit arrival at Pentecost, the disciples were not doing any public ministry. They were praying and waiting on the promised Holy Spirit. What a dramatic change when the Spirit came into their lives. They went from fearful, stick-close together-in-one-place kind of people to obeying Acts 1:8, "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Listen to who God has given to us internally. 2 Timothy 1:7, "God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power, love and self- discipline." We will see next Sunday how the Spirit of God enabled the disciples from being fearful of the cost of sharing the gospel in the city where Jesus had been crucified less than 2 months earlier. **You have the same Spirit residing in you!**

The core truths of the gospel don't change but the context does based on the audience.

Know your audience and tailor the good news accordingly. Peter knew who his audience was- Jewish men and women. Therefore, he focused on Jewish history and how the Messiah, Jesus had revealed Himself. When you are speaking to someone learn what his/her background is and look to explain the gospel in that context. In a seminary class, a teacher required the students to make a gospel tract or presentation for a particular audience. One female student made a gospel presentation focused on women that she was going to use when speaking to feminists. The title of her gospel presentation was: "Jesus, the Liberator of Women."

Believers are given authority and power by Jesus over Satan and sickness. Satan and sickness are not to be ignored until Jesus returns. Christians are to be on the offensive against them. We really do not know if God is going to heal a particular person when we pray with authority and power in Jesus name. But we can pray with expectancy and faith because the God who healed in the past hasn't changed. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. Think about the opportunities we have to share the gospel when God does the miraculous. Expect miracles. Miracles are no sweat for God to accomplish.

Lone Ranger Christians are living contrary to God's will. We all know people who love Jesus but are not connected to a church. They may have been hurt by a church leader or another person in the church or they are too busy to worship with others. Whatever the reason they are not living like Jesus taught. If you notice in this passage as well as Luke 9 and 10 Jesus sent out His disciples in pairs. In Acts 3 it was Peter and John ministering together. Ministry is to be done with at least one other person. Ministering with at least one other person enables encouragement, accountability and sharing in what God is doing. Don't go at it alone in ministry.

We are going to be singing "Jesus Messiah" in a few moments. Please close your eyes and listen afresh to some of the lyrics.

"He became sin

Who knew no sin

That we might become His Righteousness

He humbled himself and carried the cross

Chorus:

Jesus Messiah

Name above all names

Blessed Redeemer

Emmanuel

The rescue for sinners

The ransom from Heaven

Jesus Messiah

Lord of all

His body the bread

His blood the wine

Broken and poured out all for love

The whole earth trembled

And the veil was torn

Let's pray