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### **See What God Has Done Acts 3:1-26**

One day Peter and John were **going up to the temple** at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup> And a **man lame from birth** was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. <sup>3</sup> When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, **he asked them for alms.** <sup>4</sup> Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." <sup>5</sup> And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup> But Peter said, "**I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,**<sup>[a]</sup> **stand up and walk.**" <sup>7</sup> And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. <sup>8</sup> Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup> All the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup> and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with **wonder and amazement** at what had happened to him.

#### **Peter Speaks in Solomon's Portico**

<sup>11</sup> While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished. <sup>12</sup> When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, "You Israelites,<sup>[b]</sup> **why do you wonder at this**, or why do you stare at us, **as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?**" <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant<sup>[c]</sup> Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. <sup>14</sup> But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, <sup>15</sup> and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. <sup>16</sup> And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and **the faith that is through Jesus**<sup>[d]</sup> **has given him this perfect health** in the presence of all of you.

<sup>17</sup> "And now, friends,<sup>[e]</sup> I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers.

<sup>18</sup> In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah<sup>[f]</sup> would suffer. <sup>19</sup> **Repent therefore, and turn to God** so that your sins

*may be wiped out,<sup>20</sup> so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah<sup>[a]</sup> appointed for you, that is, Jesus,<sup>21</sup> who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets....*

Today we are starting a **six-week study** of the Book of Acts, and a study of the Book “*Acts: Catching Up With the Spirit*” by Matthew Skinner. The full title of this Biblical book is: *The Acts of the Apostles*, And that’s what it is—a narrative of the apostles in the early church. It is a **sequel** to the Gospel of Luke, actually written by the same author, about events that happened around 30-64 A.D., even though the book was likely written much later. It is Part II to the Gospels, the next chapter after Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension.

### ***What do you know about the book of Acts?***

Many people say that this is a history of the early church, But it is much more than that. It is not a history as much as it is a book of stories, a **narrative** of the early church. And **Jesus is central** to the story—we hear sermons about his life, people are healed in his name, he speaks to people in dramatic ways. In fact, some would say that Acts is **proof that Jesus was and is** very much **alive and at work** in the world today.

But it is not the same Jesus in the flesh that we saw in the Gospels, is it? Because now he’s at work through the **Holy Spirit**—another central figure in the Book.

### ***Do you know how the book starts in Acts 1?***

It begins with the resurrected Jesus telling his followers that they should wait to receive the Holy Spirit---the Spirit who will give them power, and make them his witnesses. This is how Jesus will pass along his ministry and message.

Soon, all the followers are filled with the wind and fire of the Holy Spirit at **Pentecost**—marking the birthday of the church, when 3000 people are baptized.

All throughout Acts, we see the Holy Spirit, sometimes referred to as the “Spirit of Jesus”, at work in amazing and powerful ways.

The book is very **trinitarian**, long before there was an official doctrine of the Trinity—we hear about God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit working in relationship with one another, especially in Peter’s sermons.

Acts is a book about **POWER**—the power of what **God** has done in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, and the power of what the **Holy Spirit** is doing in our lives today.

It is a book about **TRANSFORMATION**—for the Spirit changes the lives of believers in new and unexpected ways, almost on every page!

In our story today, we see that transforming power at work—in the **first healing** by a disciple. Peter and John encounter a crippled beggar outside the temple. Peter says: *“I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the **name of Jesus Christ** of Nazareth stand up and walk.”* *And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.*

This miracle is so incredible that the man hangs onto Peter, and the **crowds follow** Peter into Solomon’s Portico in the temple, to hear more about it!

So Peter begins his **second sermon**—the first one was at Pentecost, which explained the miracle of the wind and fire and people speaking in different languages.

This sermon is meant to **explain the healing of the beggar**. **But--why** does he need to explain something that appears so straightforward? Peter and John healed this man—right? Well, not exactly.

Everyone assumes that Peter and John are the **source** of the healing, so Peter wants to set the record straight. The healing does not come from them, it comes from the **power of Jesus Christ**, at work in the world after his resurrection!

It comes from the **power of God**—the God that these Jews going to temple know—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their ancestors.

Peter, a Jew, wants to connect these Jewish witnesses to the story of Jesus, who was also a Jew, but whose life was the fulfillment of the prophets of Israel. That's what we hear in the beginning of his sermon after the miracle.

### ***So what does all this have to do with us, in 2020?***

Well, did you notice something in Peter's message—**a call to action** after the people witness this miracle?

He says in verses 19-20:

***Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out,<sup>20</sup> so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus,***

The miracle they've just witnessed is **not just for the crippled man**.

It is not just a cause for **awe and wonder**.

It is meant to **CHANGE LIVES**—the lives of all who see it.

For when we see that Jesus is still at work like this,

We are called to do two things: **repent, and turn to God**.

**Repent**—what does that word mean to you?

It actually has a very simple meaning.

The Greek word means to **change your mind**, change your thinking.

In other words, the amazing things Jesus does are meant to change the way we think about the world, about God, and ourselves.

In what ways **do WE need to change our thinking?**

Are we stuck thinking we are always **RIGHT**?

Are we stuck thinking we've got **GOD FIGURED OUT**?  
 Are we stuck thinking the amazing works of God are all in the **PAST**?

When you think about this story of the man being healed—  
 do you picture tent revivals or **televangelists**?  
 Or something contrived for an audience?  
 Or do you think that was **then, this is now**?

***But is that really true?***

I want to invite you to think about the last time you had **a God-sighting**.  
 A God-sighting is a time when you feel or experience God's presence.  
 Maybe it is as simple as seeing someone smile,  
 Maybe it is a sunset,  
 Maybe it was the healing of a friend who was sick.  
 Maybe it was something so dramatic it defies all words or explanation!

What if we see and experience the power of God **ALL THE TIME**,  
 If we have the eyes to see that?

Can you think of a time when **a God-sighting changed your view of the world**?  
 Changed your thinking—about God, or yourself?  
 That's what Peter is talking about.

The next part is simpler-- **turn to God**. That's pretty straightforward.  
 But isn't that easier said than done?  
 How often are we turning to **everyone and everything** else, besides God?

What's the first thing you do under pressure?  
 Do you pick up the **phone** to call a friend?  
 Do you get inside your own head and start **doubting** everything you know?  
 Do you get **online** looking for answers?

***What if we conditioned ourselves differently?***

When faced with the pressure—what if we picked up time in **prayer**.  
 What if, instead of looking online, we looked to **God's Word**?  
 What if we turned from our own thinking to the wisdom of other believers who  
 are also steeped in prayer and the Word?

Now maybe this story of something that happened in the first century has ***everything to do with what is happening in this century!***

***We are all faced with problems, right?***

We are faced with this crazy pandemic, and all that entails.  
We are faced with choices about how to respond to that,  
And to all that is happening in our world,  
With the racial injustice, and the political upheaval.

So what if we ***opened our hearts and eyes*** to see where God is at work?  
What if we opened our hearts to the ***power of the Holy Spirit***—  
at work in our lives?

Today.

***Friends, that is our Good News of the Gospel today!***

Jesus is alive, and at work through the Holy Spirit—in your life!  
May God help us ***see and believe*** this—  
May Jesus help ***change our thinking*** and ***turn us more*** and more to Him!  
For this Good News, all God's people say, Amen.