

THE ONCE AND FUTURE CHURCH

#5: What I Do Have

February 25-27, 2006

¹One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now 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. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶Then 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.” ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. ¹¹While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. ¹²When Peter saw this, he said to them: “People of Israel, 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? ¹³The 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 before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. ¹⁴You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. ¹⁵You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶By 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 completely healed him, as you can all see...”

Acts 3:1-16 TNIV

Introduction: In Luke’s history of the church, as in other Scriptures, it is important to pay attention to the context within which particular stories are revealed. For instance, the story that follows immediately the account of Pentecost and first description of the Early Church, tells us what is most important about the church’s mission. That story is about healing, transformation, and access.

I. Stopped at the Gate

- A. The “man lame from birth” encountered by Peter and John was begging outside the Gate Beautiful, the entryway to the outer court of the temple, or the women’s court.
- B. Like other Jewish men at the hour of prayer, Peter and John

would have been passing through the gate, then through the women’s court and into the Jewish men’s court.

- C. Even Peter and John could not have passed from the men’s court into the priestly court, much less the Holy of Holies.
- D. Any person with a deformity, even a Jewish man, could not enter the temple courts to pray.

II. Jesus Stormed the Gates

- A. After Jesus turned over the money changers’ tables, “the blind and lame came to him in the temple, and he cured them.” (Matthew 21:14 and parallels)
- B. When Jesus was crucified, the veil to the Holy of Holies was torn in two. (Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38)
- C. Jesus himself claimed to be the new temple. (John 2:19-21)
- D. The Apostle Paul speaks of the believer as “the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, 6:19)
- E. The church has become the “Body of Christ,” its mission to offer access to relationship with God through Jesus.

III. Unstopping the Gate

- A. The lame man at the Gate Beautiful was hoping for a little of the money being carried into the temple for sacrifice.
- B. Peter and John no longer sacrificed in the temple (Jesus was their final sacrifice), so they had no money to offer, but they could offer transformation, healing, and access.
- C. Once healed, the formerly lame man went with them into the temple courts to praise God there for the very first time.
- D. The purpose of this healing was to bear witness to the death and resurrection of Jesus and bring honor to his name.

IV. Believers Storm the Gates

- A. This story, the first in God’s Word following the account of Pentecost and the first real description of the church, teaches us the overarching mission of the church.
- B. Believers meet the physical needs of people, offering healing to the broken.
- C. Believers share Jesus Christ, offering transformation to those distant from God.
- D. Believers storm the gates that hold others out, offering access to the disenfranchised.
- E. Jesus said, “On this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not stand against it.”

Conclusion: What we do have—the love of Jesus Christ—we give, and it is more than enough to change the world.