

## Acts 3

Last time we were together we took a look at Acts chapter 2. We found the disc waiting in the upper room for the promise of the Father, and just like He said, with perfect timing, the Promise came upon those faithful few. The working of the HS gave them utterance and people were drawn to this brand new style of communication to find out what exactly was going on. We learned that the gift of tongues is a special language and is still used to this day in private times of prayer and worship between God and His children. Tongues can be used in corporate settings but there are some guidelines that apply, you can pick that study up if you need some clarification.

The point is that God drew the attention of a crowd of people and then used Peter to deliver the gospel message. Strait truth, without misleading or confusing statements. ***Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.*** You can't get much more clear than that. ***Acts 2:37-47 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."***

***And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, "Be saved from this perverse generation." Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need. So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.*** Notice vs 43..***many wonders and signs were done through the apostles ...***Acts Chapter 3 is simply the story of one of those signs and wonders.

This is one of my favorite portions of the bible. Its a very important story because this example gives us a real world outline on how to properly walk with Christ and witness to this world after the dust has all settled down from an incredible worship experience. The events of the first 10 vs in chapter 3 model for us the way that a follower of Christ should respond to the lost and hurting world that is constantly around us and it brings to us an excitement and a boldness to share the gospel in our everyday lives.

1-10 A recent study revealed that there are nearly **700,000** homeless people on the streets this great nation. Most live in bigger urban environments, New York, Los Angeles, etc. But there are individuals and families in shelters and out in the open air living in almost every city you can think of. Joplin is no exception. A 2011 report shows almost **8,000** people living without permanent residence in the state of Missouri. Souls Harbor, one of our local shelters housed around **700** people for at least one night in 2011 and a recent study shows Joplin having around **378** individuals without a home. **302** who currently live in some form of shelter, Souls Harbor, Watered Gardens, The Salvation Army, etc and around **76** with no shelter at all. All of these stats were gathered before the events of May 22, so without a doubt these numbers have gone up.

I don't want you to be discouraged by these figures, but rather empowered to go and make a difference. It's a pretty overwhelming task. A population 700,000 is way to big for any person to tackle on their own, but fortunately we don't have to worry about the bigger numbers, we just have to deal with whats been given to us, the difference you and i can make focuses on a much smaller area. *Acts 17:26-28 And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;* Just where are those boundaries..well for me its Joplin. Those numbers are a little easier to deal with. This is our community and God has placed us here for a very detailed and specific purpose. Homeless and hurting exist in every corner of the world, we have been given the opportunity to share the love of Christ in this one right here in SW Missouri. This encounter here in Acts gives us the tools we need to move about and get things done for the Kingdom in our own back yard.

The disc. have been empowered by the HS, they have been gifted with a new vision and a fresh awareness of Jesus in there lives. That's the key. Everyday, somewhere in the world , miracles happen by the power of His name, not by our efforts and our many works, but by His name, people are saved and needs are met. For the past three years the disc. had served with and ministered to their communities along side of Jesus. Helping Him do the work of the Father, watching as He worked miracles among the people and now that He has returned to His rightful place in Heaven, the work just doesn't stop because Jesus is not longer around in a physical sense.

The works of God still continue to be done, they do however get done in an entirely different way. The physical hands of Jesus that touched and healed the lepers, brought sight to the blind, and raised the dead are no longer available here on this earth. After Jesus ascended, the hands of healing, the hands that work miracles, the hands of Jesus, are the hands of you and I...That's crazy!!!

1-3 Just as people have needs to be met in our world today, there were needs to be met back in this time as well. Jesus said in *Matt 26:11 For you have the poor with you always,* and that's exactly what He meant. There has never been a time in history, nor will there ever be a time in the future when there are no poor people. Poverty, hunger, thirst and those types of things are just a part of our time here on earth.

How someone winds up in those circumstances is really not important, our reaction to those needs is the lesson for today.

People may not know Christ, they may not have a personal relationship with Him at all, but that doesn't mean they don't know about Jesus, it's usually quite the opposite, they know exactly what He has told His followers to do. ***Matt 5:42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.*** and again ***Matt 14:16 "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."*** There are those who know nothing of the bible but they can recite to you these vs..It's very important that we understand just what is going on here in Acts so that we don't become manipulated by the needs of others and just run around putting out fires everywhere, running ourselves ragged in the process. On the other hand, we don't want to become calloused and indifferent to those needs and not do a thing to help. More importantly, we need to be in tune with the desire that Jesus has to save and restore those who need to know Him.

The focus of this moment is not really the needs of this man, the story is really the lesson of obedience by Peter and John. Obedience to the prompting of the HS, That's really what God wants out of His kids, simple obedience, that's what I want out of my kids, just do what I say, I know what I'm doing. Unlike us, God really does know what He's doing. If you take a look at some of the things that Jesus had these guys do while He was still walking the earth it's pretty crazy. The feeding of the 5000 comes to mind, ***Matt 14:13-21 When Jesus heard it,(speaking of the death of John the Baptist) He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities. And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."***

***And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.***

Jesus had compassion on this crowd, no doubt, but He never misses the chance to teach a valuable lesson. It's interesting that there is not a mention of any of this crowd later on in scripture, This is so and so, who was fed at the sea and went on to to this great thing and blah blah blah..nothing like that. The lesson here for us to learn is one of obedience, a little peek into a very special day and the results of trust, faith and like I said, obedience.

The Lord used this situation to train His followers to listen to His voice..*you give them something to eat....*God wants you to do something, it's a big deal. When you realize you can't do this thing on your own, bring your fish and bread to Jesus and let Him do the work.

The point here is not so much meeting the needs of the people as it is learning to trust the voice of God. Here in Acts we see the results of that training.

We find Peter and John going to the temple. it's around 3 in the afternoon. Maybe they were headed there for the same reasons we go to church, study the word, spend time with God and with friends. They also might have been going because they had some inside information about the crowd that would be gathered and wanted a chance to witness after all this was their city, they were familiar with the business and culture much like we are with our own towns.

Notice how It was the same back then as it is today. These guys were begging at the gates of the church, same thing today, If someone has a need or is hurting they come to the church. If there is a doctor bill or electric bill, or some gas needed or groceries or whatever else that you can think of, the calls come in on a pretty regular basis. It never really bothers me to get those calls because it gives me a chance to talk about Christ. The church has the responsibility to validate the reputation of Christ and Christ is about meeting needs. We should be mirrors of His love and grace and therefore, people know that, so here come the phone calls and the requests

We can't be stupid about these needs, things have to line up. It's never just call and get 20 bucks. Real compassion comes with pretty strait talk, I'm always reminded of Jesus at the well in John 4. Jesus meets this woman and begins to share the unending fulfillment found in Himself. Living water, never thirst again, just ask and you can have it. The woman is taking notice and Jesus knows she is really listening, ***John 4:16-18 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly."***

No games here, she tells the truth and is commended for it. it's the same way in our church, don't play with me, let me know what's really going on and we can go from there, if you can't be honest with me then its very difficult to move forward. (energy drink)No doubt there were those in this crowd, gathered at this gate who had a genuine need, but there were also those who just wanted to use the church for a financial resource, some were simply playing games. In either case, they all wanted support, but in this instance God wanted to do more that just meet a temporary need, God wanted to change a life.

**4-5** Here is one of those workings of the HS that we need to pay attention to. This gate was one of the main entrances into the temple, hundreds if not thousands of people made their way through it on a regular basis. If this guy had been lame from birth, then no doubt this was a frequent hang out.

His daily routine most likely placed him here at this gate everyday so that he could receive whatever support the passing crowd would give. If you really think about it, most likely Jesus would have passed through this gate multiple times as He moved about the city, going to the temple to teach and walking around with His disc. if thats the case then why is guy still lame? wouldn't he have been healed by now if he encountered Jesus.

There are a handful of miracles reported in scriptures. For some reason or another, Jesus would chose an individual out of a crowd to make His power known, Blind, deaf, crippled, lost on the inside and on the outside, Jesus touched the lives of so many and yet there were so many left.

Here is where the perfect timing of the HS steps in, this day, something about this man caught the eyes of Peter and John. Of all the people passing by this man asked these two for help. I'm pretty confident that Peter and John heard loud and clear the HS speak something special. they had no intention of giving money or food or anything like that. The HS had guided them to this man, the business of the world stopped for just a few minutes, God was getting ready to do an awesome work.

Moments like this happen from time to time in our lives as well. (lawn) Just out and about in our daily routine and then out of no where, we hear that still small voice of God speak to us..go over there and help that guy, smile at that kid, whatever it is..and just by one simple action a series of events is set in motion and we are right in the middle.

**5-6** Keep in mind here that Peter and John are not some super spiritual guys that have an unusual grasp on the workings of God, they are just two followers of Christ, responding to the guidance of the HS. They have no money, but that doesn't concern them at all. It's not really our job as Christians to make a bad situation more bearable, that really doesn't help. Our job is to share Christ, lead people to the cross so that Jesus, and only Jesus, can meet whatever the need may be.

For some to hear that you don't have any money is the worst thing that you could have possibly said. The church is broke, God's out of money, we can't seem to afford this or that, the church is in ruins!! Nonsense..pay attention to what is going on here, Peter simply said he didn't have any money, he did not say he had nothing to give at all. *what I do have I give you* Not having any money may seem like a bad thing, but how much worse would it be if we, the church, have unlimited finances and yet don't have the spiritual power to say, In the name of Jesus. Sad, but that's so true in our modern churches. Just throw money at the problem, what people really need is Jesus.

We have the most precious and valuable gift known to man. Money is nice to have, I've heard good things about it, wouldn't mind trying some myself, but I don't and you shouldn't rest in material things to fix problems. Those types of things can be bandages but they will never heal. We have to keep the eternal perspective. **Ps 65:4**

***Blessed is the man You choose,***

***And cause to approach You, That he may dwell in Your courts.***

***We shall be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Of Your holy temple.***

The real treasure lies in knowing that God has allowed you into His courts, that He has chosen you to become an heir to His kingdom, He and He alone will satisfy any need that you may have. All of the blessings that heaven holds, all of the promises that will keep us steady in this ever changing world everything that we need or will ever need is found only in the person of Jesus Christ. How confused we become when we lose sight of this powerful truth.

**7-10** This is where real faith is demonstrated. It's good that we can hear from the Lord and are ready to move, but actually moving can be a fearful time. The what ifs begin to flood our hearts and minds. What if it's not really the Lord, What if I stick my hand out there and this guy doesn't respond. What if he does respond and then I stand him up to let go and watch him fall over? On and on these things play with our mind and if we let them control us, we simply walk away. No we can't do everything but the worst thing we can do is nothing.

Faith is most at work when we can't control things. It's amazing what we will put faith in on a daily basis (shoe), chairs, cars, banks but then when we need some real faith to act upon a calling of God, the doubts step in and suddenly that strong faith is gone.

Notice the faith here of Peter to extend his hand and lift the man up. We have faith working both sides of the fence, Peter on his end reaching out and this man actually grabbing hold. We should take notice of the fact that in these moments God is at work in us and whoever it is we may be serving. I think that's the determining factor at play here, only God knows what's going on in our hearts, just step out in faith and act upon what God has spoken, either to extend your hand or take the hand of someone else. ***1 Cor 3:5-8 Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.***

**8-10** We are almost finished but I want to spend a few minutes on this last portion. This man gives us a great example of what sanctification really is. Sanctification is just a fancy term for the working of the HS. To become sanctified, or set apart, holy, used by and for God is what we all really want. ***2 Tim 2:19-21 "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.***

Notice how this guy responds, He attaches himself to people, (in this case Peter and John) who will help him grow. The people you surround yourself with are the most important circle in your life. Yes we should witness and that might mean we rub up against sinners or bad attitudes or whatever, it does not mean that we compromise the walk Jesus has called us to and place ourselves into arenas that do nothing but promote our failure. Unsaved family and friends are a part of life, just be careful that your walk reflects the holy standard of Christ. Sanctified for every good work,

## **2 Tim 2:22-26**

***Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.***

secondly, He immediately puts to use the things God has given him..Remember, just moments ago he had nothing and now he can walk. Might not seem like much, but what ever you can give, talents , time or whatever..you need to give those things to God. Those gifts God has given you are yours and yours alone, not to keep hidden away, but to use for the glory of God.

and finally, He praises God. It's so important for us to know from where we came and to realize that it's because of the grace of God that we live and breathe.

That kind of life is infectious,. look how the crowd took notice, they may not have understood what is going on, they were just staring with wonder, but they heard him praising God. It was made clear to them by who this man was healed, and you can read for yourself how God once again draws another crowd close to Himself to hear the truth of the Gospel, thats next time.

Believers, we have wasted a lot of time and energy doubting what God has called us to do, let us be encouraged today to end that pattern and by faith, step out and be used for the kingdom.

