

The Heart of Jesus' Church – part 2: A faithful Church

Acts 3:1-26 ; Acts 4: 1-22

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- Walk!

I remember watching each of our 3 boys learning to walk. It was exciting. And frustrating. These little bodies with little legs trying to support their huge head. Holding on to things like chairs and tablecloths, pulling themselves up, falling, crashing into things. And after watching 3 children learn to walk over a few years, I cannot IMAGINE this miracle! A man over 40 years old. Lame, unable to walk, from BIRTH, healed and walking in an instant!

- The beggar

It was 3 in the afternoon. After another full day of begging at the gate to the Jewish temple, this 40 year old lame man asks the two apostles, Peter and John, for money.

Have you ever been stopped by a beggar? Have you ever been asked for money? Maybe you felt pity. Maybe you felt annoyed. Maybe you thought – “I’ll give then \$2 for food”. Maybe you thought: “I’m not giving them anything – they’ll just spend it on alcohol!”

But imagine the lack of dignity this man had. I am told that this is the greatest loss for someone who is a beggar. The loss of dignity. Unable to help yourself. Unable to get a job, hold down a job. Unable to work. Whether through physical problems, or disability, or mental illness, to be a beggar means to have lost your dignity. It means believing you are not WORTH anything. And after a long day of begging, he calls out to Peter and John for money. And they respond in verse 4:

- ***4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John.***

They looked straight at him. That verse really gets me. Have you ever looked a beggar in the eye? Have you watched the way people walk past beggars in the city? They way they move their eyes in the opposite direction to avoid eye contact? Peter and John looked straight at him. Possibly the first people that day to do so. They see him. They recognise him as a person. A person with dignity. A person WORTH their attention. And Peter says: “Look at us! I don’t have any money! No silver. No gold. I’ve got nothing like that to give you!”

You can imagine the man was disappointed.

- *“BUT”, says Peter, “what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”*

And the man jumps to his feet and walks! He jumps. He praises God. People stop in the street. They recognise this man as “the beggar”. And they praise God.

And THAT is a miracle. A TRUE miracle. Why?

- **Because *true* miracles do two things:**
 1. True miracles happen by **faith in Jesus**.
 2. True miracles result in **praise to God**.

That's a true miracle. This man was healed by faith in the name of Jesus. And God was praised.

So a huge crowd of Israelites gather around Peter and John. And what does Peter say? "Why does this surprise you? We haven't done this! The power of JESUS has done this! Remember Jesus? The man YOU handed over to be killed? The man YOU had crucified? The man GOD then raised from the dead? The author of life?

And then we have this amazing statement of faith – verse 16:

- ***16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.***

Peter and John called for healing in the name of Jesus. It is because of FAITH in the name of Jesus that this man was healed.

And where did that faith come from? The rest of verse 16 says:

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

The name of Jesus... and the faith **THAT COMES THROUGH HIM.**

Here is what I believe is the BIG teaching point of this passage for us:

FAITH comes THROUGH Jesus. Faith does not come from *within* ourselves. When we allow Jesus into our life, when we call on his name, **HE** is the one who provides the faith we need. Faith comes **THROUGH** Jesus.

And we must get this right!

YOUR faith comes FROM JESUS! When you open the door to Jesus, when you call on his name, when you allow him into your life, **HE GIVES YOU FAITH!**

We CANNOT do it on our own. We CANNOT have the faith required to follow God from within ourselves. It comes from outside of us. It comes from Jesus.

And then Peter calls on the crowd to do the same – to come to Jesus. He calls on them to repent and turn to God to have their sins "wiped out"! Verse 26:

26 When God raised up his servant, (Jesus), he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways."

HE turns us from our wicked ways. When we call on the name of Jesus, it is by HIS power and HIS strength, that we are given faith to follow him and the strength to turn our lives around.

Faith will not come from finding out all the **facts**. Faith will not come from trying to overcome all the **doubts**. Faith will not come from **knowledge**. Faith will come by calling on the name of Jesus. By calling "Jesus help me!" "Jesus save me!"

Faith comes from recognising that we are ALL lame. That we are ALL powerless.

- **That we are ALL beggars.**

That we are ALL lacking dignity, because we ALL need help from outside of ourselves.

That's what defines a beggar isn't it? Someone who needs help from outside of themselves to live.

The answer, the strength, the faith that we need to LIVE, will only come when we CALL on the name of Jesus to save us. When we confess that we are wretched, broken sinners who need help and that we cannot help ourselves. And like that lame man, we have been lame from birth. But that MOMENT we call on Jesus, we rise up and walk. We rise up and LIVE!

III – I remember a sad story of a man in my sailing club about 20 years ago. He was sailing in a race and he got stranded on some rocks. His son passed by and said: "Dad, do you need help? I'll stop and help you!" And his dad replied: "No, I'm OK – you go on with the race!" The son continued on. The son came around the next lap to find his dad, on the rocks, dead.

How sad it is when we do not recognise that we need help for outside of ourselves. How sad when we do not realize that faith *in* ourselves, faith from *within* ourselves, will not save us – **CANNOT** save us. We need to call for Jesus.

In Acts 4, the tension around this miracle healing continues. The Jewish leaders question Peter and John. They throw them in jail overnight. Meanwhile, the word spread and another 5,000 people became believers of Jesus. The next day, verse 7:

7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

And Peter and John answer in verse 10:

"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed."

Can it be any clearer! "WE did not do this!", say Peter and John. This is the power of Jesus! And then to make it totally clear to them, they make this amazing statement, which is probably about the most unique statement of Christianity that has ever been made – verse 12:

- **12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."**

There is NO OTHER NAME that will save. There is NO other King. NO other Lord. No other way to salvation. NO other gods. NO other faith. NO other religion.

You cannot save yourself. You cannot be saved by living a good life. You cannot be saved by being nice. You cannot be saved by following any other path. It is by the name of Jesus that this lame man stood up and walked and it is by the name of Jesus, and his name alone, that YOU can be saved!

And the leaders look at these ordinary, unschooled followers of Jesus. They were not university graduates. They were not priests. They were not really even educated. But there was nothing they could say, because there was the lame man, over 40 years old, **standing** next to them.

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So they talk with each other. "What do we do? How about we tell them not to talk about Jesus anymore? OK. Sounds like a good plan."

So they say: "Peter and John – don't speak anymore in the name of Jesus." Done. Problem dealt with. Verse 19:

19 But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

They might as well have asked the lame man to sit back down at the gate and start begging again and never stand up! **Because you cannot stop true faith.**

The heart of Jesus' Church is a **Faithful** Church. A church of people who call on the name of Jesus. A church of people whose faith comes FROM Jesus. A church of people who recognise that without Him, we are powerless. A church of people who realize that our faith, our strength, our courage, our generosity, our discipleship, our service – all come from the heart of Jesus at work within us. HIS power in us, by His Holy Spirit.

And that faithful heart, GIVEN to us by Jesus, cannot be stopped.

A faithful heart will walk and run and dance with the life that we have received. We will not be able to STOP sharing this gospel. Faith that does not walk – is no faith at all. Faith that comes from within ourselves – is no faith at all. Faith that does not trust – is no faith at all. Because true faith cannot help speaking. Why?

- **Because there is NO OTHER NAME by which people can be saved.**

Let's pray.

Father, you have healed us from our sin. You have given us new life. You have given us faith to stand up and walk and run and dance. Help us to remain faithful Help us to remain in you. And please help us to never stop sharing the name of Jesus, for there is NO OTHER NAME for salvation for the people of this world. Amen.

To give our life for this gospel means to walk, and run, and dance with the gospel that has given us life, and dignity, and healing, and freedom.

Acts 3:1-26

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. **2** Now 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. **3** When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. **4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John.** Then Peter said, “Look at us!” **5** So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

6 Then 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.” **7** Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. **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. **9** When all the people saw him walking and praising God, **10** they 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.

11 While 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. **12** When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, 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? **13** 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 before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **14** You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **15** You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. **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 completely healed him, as you can all see.**

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. **18** But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. **19** Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, **20** and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. **21** Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. **22** For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. **23** Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’

24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. **25** And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ **26** When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

Acts 4:1-22

4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. **2** They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. **3** They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. **4** But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. **6** Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. **7** They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! **9** If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, **10** then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. **11** Jesus is

“the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.’

12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. **14** But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. **15** So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. **16** “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. **17** But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John replied, “**Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! 20 As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.**”

21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. **22** For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.