

Jesus' Power

August 5, 2018

Acts 3:1-10

We have before us this morning a text that follows a familiar format: man of God is walking along, encounters someone who has suffered with a debilitating condition for a long, long time. The person cries out for attention. The man of God stops, heals the invalid. Instantly, he is healed, jumps for joy, and joins the man of God on his journey. The people watching are stunned.

There, that is the formula. What makes this story noteworthy is that the man of God was not Jesus. It was actually two men, two of Jesus' disciples, two of the 12 apostles. This changes the game. They healed this man in the same way that Jesus did. In fact, it was as if Jesus was actually there doing it. They did it in Jesus' name. And that feature, the using of Jesus' name to heal is going to be the central feature we focus on this morning. Said another way, "There is power in the name of Jesus!"

Follow along as we continue our study of the book of Acts by reading Acts 3:1-10.

Main point: There is Jesus power in Jesus' name.

Under the right conditions (meaning it is not automatic or magic), the name of Jesus has great power for His people, yes even the power to save! As you might expect, caution is needed in attempting to access this power. Indeed, later in the book we will meet a man who attempts to buy this Jesus power. And we also know of examples where this power was called upon and no power was exhibited. But the truth here is that there is power in Jesus' name, power to heal, power over spiritual forces, power to move mountains, power to save. Know that we will have to be careful how we apply the truth of this passage, but I don't want you to miss the main point: there is Jesus power in Jesus' name. (2 parts)

I. Situation: a lame man begs from the disciples. vv. 1-5

If we were studying the gospels and we came upon this story, we would begin by categorizing the story. What kind of story is this? And clearly, this is a miracle story. It has all the characteristics of a miracle story as we noted at the outset. The gospels are filled with such accounts. In fact, it is not a unique miracle, it is an example of a miracle. In other words, at the end of chapter 2, we learned in the text that “many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.” There was not one miracle, or a few miracles, but many of them. So, right after that statement, we have this story. This would be exhibit one of all such miracles that were performed. Indeed, by chapter 5 we learn that the people brought such hurting folks as this and lined the streets with them, hoping that as the apostles passed by, they would stop to heal them or perhaps even have their shadows fall on them, hoping just their shadow would convey this healing power.

So, the fact that this miracle happened was not unique. Indeed, we know that Jesus had sent out His disciples two by two during their years of training and they came back with reports of using this power to heal, power to command spiritual forces. So, this situation is not unique, it is exemplary.

v.I- One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.

The wordage here leads us to go into the story as if this is routine, not out of the ordinary. The disciples were doing what they normally did. They were going up to the temple at one of the three normal times of prayer. I see here two possibilities for their trip: it could be that they were being good Jews and joining their fellow Jews in doing what they always did. But it could also be that they were going there at this time because this is when the most people were going to be there and they used such occasions to preach the gospel of Jesus to them. The text does not make clear which

of these two is the case. (Or, there could have been a totally different reason.) What we do know is that God used their routine trip to do the spectacular, which then provided Peter with the setting, audience, and testimonial to preach the gospel of Jesus. So, whatever their purpose, this is what happened.

2 Now a man crippled 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.

Here we are introduced to the man with the problem. His condition was such that he could not walk, he had to be carried. He probably was limited in what he could do to make a living. So, he did what all such people did and still do, he begged from people to give him money. He enlisted the help of others to position him in just the right spot so that good people, who were going in or out of the temple would take pity on him and give him alms, or charity. And, it would not be unusual for such good people to do just that. Helping the poor would have counted as giving an offering to God. In that day, in that place, as in many places even now, this is how the system works.

My question at this point is, “What was he doing there?” I say this because he was brought daily to this spot, and it is at a gate to the temple. Wouldn’t Jesus have passed that way many times? Why had Jesus not healed him before? I say this to make the point that healing people was not Jesus’ primary purpose. And it could be that He intentionally left him there for Peter and John to heal. But for those who think of Jesus as simply a healer and teacher, the fact that this man was still there and had been there daily for decades tells us something important about the ministry of Jesus.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Again, the scenario is as expected. Here come two people, two potential donors. They may even have looked important, if there was a crowd of people following them. I know what it is like for me to travel in Haiti. Being white, shall we say, I stand out. And there is an automatic assumption that I have money. And there is an assumption that I am the type of person to care about Haiti and Haitians (since I am there), so it

is really, really common for them to ask me for money. The problem is that there are many such people, and we are instructed not to give them money. That can create tension. But here, we simply see the routine being carried out yet again: the needy person asks the disciples for money.

4 Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!”

What do we see here? The strange thing is that the text says they looked straight at him. In other words, the man caught their attention for some reason. In fact, it was the same for the both of them. Clearly, God was involved with this. The Spirit was getting their attention and pointing out this man. It is as if the Spirit was saying, “Do something about this man’s situation.” We must not miss this detail. They were prompted to do what they did. Their attention was drawn to him out of all who would have been there. And they wanted the man’s attention as well. “Look at us!” In other words, You’re used to just asking whoever walks past you for money. But you need to focus on us. We are here to actually help you. “Focus, people!”

5 So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

The man is expecting the usual scenario to play out. It is not unusual for people to give to such people without even thinking about it. Just give them the money and move on. This was different, but the man did not recognize that. He might have thought these were “important” people, who demanded your attention before they did something nice to you. Perhaps he would have to be especially thankful to these two. Maybe they would give him a large gift???

II. Jesus uses the occasion to show His power. vv.6-10

As is true with all miracle stories, it is into such situations that God shows up and does something unexpected, miraculous. That’s the nature of miracles: He does the unusual, the impossible in settings where you would never expect it. In other words, if I were to say to you, “Look out the window, the corn is growing!” you

probably wouldn't think that was miraculous. What makes it miraculous is if it is happening all in one day, or in the middle of winter, or stalks that are 50 ft. tall. What makes miracles miraculous is that we do not expect them.

6 Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

As usual, Peter speaks for the group. And he starts by announcing that he has no money to give to this man. Does he really mean this? Is Peter declaring to be broke himself? Probably not. The point he is making seems to me to be somewhat larger. "I don't have what you are asking for, but I have something of much greater value to you." You are looking for something to carry you through for the next day or so. But I can give you something that will change your whole life.

But once more, the focus is not on the fact that the man could be healed as it is that this gift to him came through Jesus Christ of Nazareth. When Jesus healed, He didn't have to add that phrase. He could just do it. But when His disciples healed, they could only do so in His name.

Pause: We are used invoking the name of Jesus. We pray in Jesus' name. We identify ourselves with Jesus, we are Christians. But for these first days Christians, this was all new. They saw Jesus do such things. But now, they were seeing such things done by the apostles utilizing Jesus' name. In other words, not only did Jesus have such power, but now that same power was utilized by His disciples simply by invoking His name. There is power in the name of Jesus.

Are you catching my point? They could have said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but I bring you healing. Get up and walk!" They did not do that. They tied together the command and the person of, the power of Jesus. They used the miracle to bring glory to Jesus. And Jesus was pleased to enable the miracle. They did not have wonder working power. Jesus had wonder working power. They should not get the credit, Jesus should get the credit. They didn't heal, Jesus healed. The miracle was not theirs, it was His. The power was not in them, but in the One who resided in them, in whose name they ministered. He was authenticating their ministry, their teaching.

Can you see how we must be careful in how we utilize such power. What if we simply went through life invoking the name of Jesus in everything we did? What if

just added those words to every conversation we had, every action that we took? Would all kinds of miraculous things happen simply because we uttered the name? No! That would make Jesus our servant, our slave, our genie in the bottle.

It is the opposite of that. Jesus prompted them and backed it up by healing the man. Or said another way, what if they had said the same thing but nothing happened? What would be the impact of that? Can you see why I say we must be careful in how we utilize this power? It is wonder working power, but invoking His name is putting Him to the test. If I am going to put Him to the test, I want to make sure I am on solid ground in doing so. I want Him to tell me, “Focus on this one. I am going to do something spectacular here.”

Our society actually does the opposite. We have made the name of Jesus a common swear word. I am not going to go through the various forms or the various “less offensive” ways we do so, like “Geez.” But the one that particularly bothers me in this context is when people actually use the formula before us, “For Christ’s sake.” I can’t help but think that is offensive to God and ought never come out of the mouths of His followers unless we do so at the specific prompting of God because He wants to do something miraculous. Resume.

7 Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.

Notice the role for Peter: helping the man to his feet. I often say, God does the work of healing or raising the dead. Our role is simply to help them to their feet or cut off their grave clothes. He heals them, we help them.

And sure enough, the man was healed, instantaneously. His legs functioned normally. He suddenly had strength where he had none before. The man was healed!

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.

Not only could he walk, but he could jump up and down. Notice he became a follower, he joined the crowd of people to hear the teaching of the apostles. I'm intrigued by the image here. Before, he was confined to his space at the gate of the temple. He was "this close" to salvation and he might not even have known it. But God drew him to Himself and put him in a position where he could hear and respond to the gospel. The gospel came to him!

Notice who gets the glory: God gets the glory. The man shows the new nature of his heart by praising God for what had happened to him. The man got it. He knew the truth, he expressed it publicly and God got the glory.

[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.

The miracle template is now complete. The people saw him, recognized who he was, and could see the change. They then responded with awe and wonder. They saw it as a miracle. They responded as a miracle of God. End of story...not quite. You see, as we discussed last week, miracles were not just to show off or put on a show. Miracles were signs to attest the message. And what follows is the message Peter preached on that day when he healed the lame man. But that sermon is next week's sermon.

For now, as has become routine for us, how should we apply this passage? Is this wonder working power still available to us? To all of us? At will? The first thing I want you to know is that I have experienced such wonder working power. In fact, depending on how you define it, I have had it happen many times. But in a specific way, I have invoked the name of Jesus in spiritual warfare situations and seen the exact thing mentioned here: instantaneous answer, relief, obedience of spiritual forces. And I know some of you have also experienced this. And I have also been frustrated when it didn't happen. So, I know it is not automatic. I have prayed with people for healing, and was even confident that God was answering those prayers, but then had to do their funerals when the healing never came.

And I know that Jesus' name has the power to save people, to give them eternal life. I am really, really certain about that. But I don't want to just spiritualize this

passage and say it is all about and only about the power to save. Rather, I see this wonder working power as intended to give us the confidence that when we entrust our lives to His name, He will be found faithful. The reality of His wonder working power is designed to bolster such confidence. The power to save is demonstrated by the power to heal.

So my approach to a passage like this is to affirm the wonder working power of Jesus' name, to go forward boldly should He prompt me to utilize it. But I ought not leave here with an attitude of, "Cool! I want to try out this new power!" That would miss the point entirely. Rather, I am going to leave this place with an attitude of, "Wow! My Savior is very, very powerful. There is power in His name! And should He prompt me, I will seek to bring Him glory if He calls on me to utilize it." Praying for healing? Of course. Public pronouncement of miraculous healing? Only if prompted.

If we believe this passage is the Word of God, then what should be different about our lives?

- 1) We will remind ourselves of the power of Jesus, even in His name.

- 2) We will remind ourselves that He is still in the business of showing that great power.

- 3) When prompted, we will utilize the great power of His name.

- 4) We will make sure that God gets the glory and remember that such power is intended to authenticate the message of the gospel.