

The Church Grows

Acts 3 & 4:1-31

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.^[a] ² And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. ³ Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. ⁴ And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, “Look at us.” ⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. ⁸ And leaping up he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ And all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

¹¹ While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's. ¹² And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant^[b] Jesus, whom **you** delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ But **you** denied the Holy and Righteous One, and **you** asked for a murderer to be granted to you, ¹⁵ and **you** killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶ And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus^[c] has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

¹⁷ “And now, brothers, I know that **you** acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸ But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, ²⁰ that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. ²² Moses said, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. ²³ And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.’ ²⁴ And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. ²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.’ ²⁶ God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness.”

And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ **But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.**

⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. ¹¹ This Jesus^[a] is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone.^[b] ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men^[c] by which we must be saved.”

¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But seeing the man who was healed standing beside them, they had nothing to say in opposition. ¹⁵ But when they had commanded them to leave the council, they conferred with one another, ¹⁶ saying, “What shall we do with these men? For that a notable sign has been performed through them is evident to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But in order that it may spread no further among the people, let us warn them to speak no more to anyone in this name.” ¹⁸ So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, ²⁰ for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” ²¹ And when they had further threatened them, they let them go, finding no way to punish them, because of the people, for all were praising God for what had happened. ²² **For the man on whom this sign of healing was performed was more than forty years old.**

²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant,^[d] said by the Holy Spirit,

“Why did the Gentiles rage,
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers were gathered together,
against the Lord and against his Anointed’^[e]—

²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants^[f] to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Read Acts 3:1-10

The Lamé Man

I was struck this week as I was reviewing this passage by the lame man who was healed. I want to try to put ourselves into his world for minute because I believe there is an important message here.

What do we know about the man who was healed?

- He was lame (vs. 2)
- Seemed to be his feet and ankles (vs. 7)
- Was carried where he needed to go (vs. 2)
- Was laid in the temple gate daily to beg (vs. 2)
- Was doing this for over 40 years (4:22)

What can we infer about the man who was healed?

- Was poor
- Was humiliated
- Was dependent of others
- Was maybe in pain?
- Was a burden to his family and friends?
- Could not work
- Probably did not have a family of his own.
- Was drawn to the temple daily – either from as sense of God or for economic reasons.

What might this man have thought of God?

Often in the Bible sickness and disease is associated with a curse from God. People felt that if somebody was suffering from sickness or a disease this was a curse from God. That God was displeased with them, or that they or their family had sinned. **Remember back to the law and the punishment for breaking the law was sickness and plague, a difficult life. (Deuteronomy 28 is a good example of this).** We don't know anything about the family life or the life of this man. We don't know about his sins, or if he felt there was something in his life that caused it. Did he blame himself or did he blame God?

I can imagine that his prayers were often what did I do to deserve this?

We believe that there is a justice in the world and that if bad things happen to us there is probably a reason for them. **We sometimes think of God as this black robed figure that presides over our lives and administers punishments and pain that is fair and equitable with our sins and our rebellion?**

Do we sometimes feel the same way about our suffering or sicknesses? Do we feel like these are God's punishment on us?

My prayer would be – God, why did you allow this to happen to me?

Did He Miss Jesus?

I imagined this week that this man might have known that Jesus was in the temple courts just a few months ago and healed many people that were lame as well – but not him.

Matthew 21:12-14

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,

¹³ And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.

This, I imagine made it worse for him. Why wasn't he there that day? Why wasn't he healed like the rest?

Imagine the questions that might have been going through this man's mind for the past 2 months since Jesus was there.

God's Plan is different

We often have a tendency to think of God's plan as a plan to make everything in our lives good – and by good I mean the American dream. We think that God's plan is a really exciting version of our plan. We think that God should only want for us what we want. We think that God's plans revolve around us not that we revolve around him.

- Pastor John has used the illustration before that we think that life orbits around us, and God is responsible to make sure that all of the things in our lives maintain that nice easy orbit – around us. But God teaches us in his Word that life is really orbiting around Him and true pleasure, true happiness is when we find our life's joy in God not in the things that we want God to give to us or do for us.
- John Piper says it this way, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him."

I want to share with you a short video today of a person who suffered amazing losses in her physical body.

(video)

God's Promise – He is enough

Jeremiah 29:11-13

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare^[b] and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and **I will hear you**. ¹³ You will seek me and **find me**, when you seek me with all your heart.

God does not promise that life will be perfect, or that we will have all of the things in this world that we wish for. He does not promise that if we believe in Jesus we will have the American Dream, He promises that, no matter how hard things in this world get He will be enough.

God accomplishes Great things in suffering

John 9:1-3

As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ² And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³ Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

God allows sickness, pain, poverty, loss, rebellion, divorce, and death so that he might accomplish His purposes - not ours.

Read Acts 3:11-4:4

God allowed this 40-year-old lame man to suffer with his infirmity for 40 years so that God could use his healing to save thousands of souls. Is 40 years of suffering worth the souls of thousands of men?

In this same story Peter and John are thrown into prison – another great outcome of God’s plan. The rest of chapter 4 had them telling Annas (the High priest who presided over Jesus trial) and Caiaphus (also in Jesus trial) the Gospel – and giving THEM an opportunity to repent! God’s plan is great, and He will accomplish His purpose. We might not always see how He plans to work it out, but our job is to simply trust and obey.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
And lean not on your own understanding;
⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He shall direct^[a] your paths.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?^[a] ²⁸ And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³² For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.