

Acts 3:6

In the name of Jesus of Nazareth walk.

It is said that the thirteenth century theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)

- Visited Pope Innocent II, who was counting a large sum of money
- The Pope remarked, 'You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say ..
- "Silver and gold have I none"
- to which Thomas Aquinas said:
- 'True, Holy Father, but neither can she now say, "rise up and walk".'

The writer of the book of Acts is Luke, the evangelist writer of Luke's Gospel

- Luke has spoken of the early Christians' continued attendance at the temple
- The wonders and miracles the apostles did
- The awe that many of the people felt
- And the importance of the apostolic teaching
- Having introduced these important themes he proceeds to illustrate them

The outline of this story is simple enough to rehearse

- Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer
- The pattern of prayer for Jews was to pray, morning, afternoon and evening
- This is the afternoon prayer, at the ninth hour, what we would call 3 o'clock
- Going to the temple is always spoken of in terms of 'going up'
- Partly because the temple was located at the top of the hill
- But principally because of the respect that they had to worship
- In an age where informality is represented by Presidents and Prime Ministers
- Appearing in public with open-necked shirts, swigging coffee from mugs
- Suggesting any sort of formality goes very much against the grain
- It seems to me, however, that there is nothing wrong with 'going up' to worship
- That is that it is a good thing, as soon as we come through those double doors
- To focus on being in or at least preparing to be in the presence of a holy God
- We might not have much of a concept of sacred space
- But let us not lose the vision and hope of sacred presence

On their way to the temple they were passing through the 'Beautiful gate'

- The precise location of this gate is lost in antiquity,
- Perhaps it was the Eastern Gate, or the Nicanor Gate, we do not know
- But we do know that it was a busy gate, and entrance to the temple
- And consequently, because almsgiving was a meritorious act in Judaism
- It was a good pitch for a beggar, especially one crippled from birth
- Consequently, it was a place to which he was carried every day

The familiar picture is sketched out

- As Peter and John are passing the beggar calls out to them for a gift
- This would normally be met with one of two responses
- Passers-by would either turn their heads and avert their eyes from the beggar
- Or throw a small coin into his bowl to salve their conscience or gain some merit

Peter's response is different

- To gain the man's attention he tells him, 'Look at us'
- This is the very thing that passers-by don't normally want beggars to do
- Thinking Peter was going to give him money the beggar looked up expectantly

Peter said to him:

'Silver and gold I do not have but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'

(Acts 3:6)

Then stretching out his hand, Peter helped the cripple to his feet

- And the lame man's feet and ankles became strong
- He jumped to his feet and began walking
- And he too went into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God
- As for the people they were 'filled with wonder and amazement'
- The power of the Messianic Age was breaking through
- As the prophet had promised, 'then will the lame leap like a deer' (Isaiah 53:6)
- We should not forget that the end product of all this for Peter and John
- Was that they were arrested for it
- And commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus

There are two issues arising as we consider our application of this story

- The first is, ought we, ordinarily to expect instant healing in the name of Jesus
- The second is, ought we, ordinarily to expect spiritual salvation in the name of Jesus

Regarding the first issue, ought we ordinarily to expect instant healing in the name of Jesus

- It seems clear to me that the healings in the gospels and Acts were frequent
- But it also seems clear that the healings outside of this time were rare
- There is no simple answer as to why this should be the case
- The idea that healing is only conditional on the sufferer's faith is dangerously wrong
- The idea that taking regular medication shows lack of faith is dangerously wrong
- The denial that such healings took place in New Testament times is wrong
- The denial that God can do such things, as described in the Bible, is wrong
- We can only conclude that God in his sovereign power, instantly heals as he will
- And if that be less frequent in our time than in New Testament times it is his will

The second issue is - ought we ordinarily to expect spiritual salvation in the name of Jesus

- It seems clear to me that spiritual salvation in the gospels and Acts was frequent
- And it also seems clear that the spiritual salvation outside of this time was frequent
- Therefore, the simple answer is that we must always expect spiritual salvation
- The idea that spiritual salvation is unnecessary today is dangerously wrong
- The idea that everyone is unwittingly saved by God is dangerously wrong
- The denial that spiritual salvation was a New Testament emphasis is wrong
- The denial that we should expect such things today is wrong
- God in his sovereign power saves people as he wills
- And yet the preface of the inaugural sermon in Acts ends with this wonderful promise
- 'and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved' (Acts 2:21)

What we see throughout the gospels and Acts is the ministry of Jesus to ordinary people

- an exhaustive list of these would be too long and unnecessary for our purposes
- the sum total of it all is this: Jesus meets us at the point of our need
- the instance that we are considering is a lame man at the temple gate

I AN OVERWHELMING PROBLEM

The daily ritual performed by family and friend of laying the man at the gate

- is described by the Bible commentator Matthew Henry as ‘a miserable spectacle’
- the daily routine continued every day, he begged alms
- no doubt some days were better and other days worse than others
- but the underlying situation did not change
- his circumstances were well documented
- people knew him, people recognised him – but nothing changed

This is one of the besetting problems of our age and society, of us as individuals

- one of the great things about modern communication is the power to describe
- with photographic and cinematographic media we can see things as they are
- in the world, in our society, in our own community
- we are already familiar with things in our church and in our own lives
- no doubt some days are better and other days worse than others
- but the underlying situation does not change

One of the fascinating things about the New Testament

- and the ministry of Jesus and the Apostles
- is that although Jesus presumably had the power to do worldwide miracles
- only very rarely do any of his miraculous acts extend beyond individuals
- I make brief mention of the largest number of individuals that I could recall
- The feeding of the five thousand, who with women and children
- No doubt made up a considerable company, perhaps doubling the number of men
- But although it was a sign
- through which Jesus would later expound himself as ‘the bread of life’
- there was no saving benefit to the multitude

When it comes to healings and saving benefit Jesus deals personally

- even when the paragraph heading in the Bible says ‘Jesus heals many’ (Luke 4:38)
- Luke writes he laid his hands ‘on each one’ (Luke 4:40)
- Which leads me to the inevitable conclusion that Jesus deals with us personally

The significant thing to notice here is that Peter, as the Lord’s appointed

- Did not turn his eyes from the man in need but fastened his eyes on him
- In response to his invitation the man in need looked to the Apostles
- In actual fact he did not need to be told twice to look at them
- It was as if his physical eyes looked upon the Apostles
- But because of the declaratory words of Peter
- His spiritual sight is directed beyond the Apostle to the source of his authority
- That is Jesus

And so today, we have come with needs that are many and various

- As the writer of the old hymn rendered it
- Some are sick, some are sad
- Some have never loved thee well, some have lost the love they had
- In our congregation today we have those who are sick
- And those who are concerned about others who are sick
- Sickness can take many forms, illness of the body, weariness, depression
- We have those who are sad
- And those who are concerned about others who are sad
- Sadness can take many forms, bereavement, grief, disappointment
- There can be a sickness or sadness of the soul or spirit
- Leaving us feeling restless, guilty, hopeless, despairing
- Perhaps we feel that some days are better and other days worse than others
- but the underlying situation does not change
- this is not the time to be vague or to utter platitudes
- but the time to invite you to engage with God, who through Jesus calls you
- and Jesus calls you with these words 'Look at me'

Later in the same passage, Peter will unfold the good news about the Lord Jesus

- this is the same Jesus they had handed over to be killed
- this is the same Jesus they had disowned
- this is the same Jesus whom God raised from the dead
- this is the same Jesus to whom the apostles were bearing witness
- this is the same Jesus that calls men and women to repent
- this is the same Jesus that will come again and restore everything
- this is the same Jesus through whom, by faith, the cripple now walks, leaps, jumps

This is the good news about the Lord Jesus that I must unfold to you

- the sins we commit are the same sins that handed Jesus over to be killed
- the sins we commit are the same sins that disown Jesus
- yet, in the wonder of his grace, God uses the cross and death of Jesus
- to transform our relationship with him, commending his love and forgiveness

If you are not a fallen, unworthy sinner, if you are in no kind of need

- this word is not for you – but if you are sick or sad in any way
- suffering, grieving, restless, guilty, hopeless or despairing
- if you have never come to transforming, personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- or if you have come previously but are now a long way from where you once were
- then this word is for you

We must take a lesson from the lame man

- he looked to Peter and John for a small coin, perhaps even a little more
- they did not have any coins at all
- but when he looked up what he received surpassed his expectations
- I do not know what you might like up for in hope of receiving
- I cannot guarantee what you will receive for that is in the sovereignty of God
- But I believe that what you can receive surpasses all your expectations

For in Jesus: AN OVERWHELMING NEED is met with

II AN OVERCOMING POWER

‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.’

(Acts 3:6)

In Jewish thought, a name does not just identify or distinguish a person

- It expresses the very nature of his being
- The power of the person is present and available in the name of the person
- Peter proclaims the authority of the risen Jesus
- They were in touch with the power of Jesus, they had been in the presence of Jesus
- They were anointed by the Spirit of Jesus
- There is no name that is higher than the name of Jesus
- And the power of the risen Jesus, coupled with the man’s response of faith (3:16)
- Effect the healing – healing grace is given by the word of Christ (Psalm 107:20)
- Peter took him by the right hand, helping him in fellowship
- In the same name in which he had commanded him to walk

It was not by the power or godliness of the Apostles that any miracle was accomplished

- But through the power of Jesus – and real engagement with him
- Too often today we have lapsed into the language of going to services
- What we really should be saying is meeting with Jesus
- When we end our service you can say, ‘I went to the service’
- But did you meet with Jesus? You can meet with Jesus. We must meet with Jesus.

We cannot look at it now but we should not miss the point that the gospel has real content

- The miracle did not take place in isolation, it was part of the proclamation of Jesus
- In the gospels, so often miracle stories precede the preaching of the kingdom
- A significant feature of the evangelistic sermons in Acts
- Is that the most important thing is a person’s relationship with God
- What matters is how God has met all our needs in Jesus
- And how we as individuals respond to that
- What draws a person to Jesus is the answer he provides to their needs
- People come under the sound of the good news seeking the power of God
- But they stay because they know that the message of Jesus Christ is true

Now, you should know that I am not given to emotionalism or sensationalism

- I look much the same whether I am happy or sad
- I am not emotionally disabled – that is just my temperament
- But that is not to say that the gospel does not require us to engage with Jesus
- And so that no one feels manipulated or swept along on a tide of emotion
- I am hereby giving due notice that I shall be giving you the opportunity to respond
- But not to respond to me, God willing the Lord’s messenger, but to Jesus
- During the next few minutes you must make a critical decision as to your response
- You need to fasten your physical eyes on me and your spiritual eyes on Jesus
- And as you look and listen you must also pray

The apostles, Peter and John are on their way to the temple

- When a man calls out to them for a small coin or gift, they have no money to give
- But Peter says to him, Look at us
- In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk
- He asked for one thing but the gift that he was given surpassed all his thoughts

Sickness can take many forms, illness of the body, weariness, depression

- I cannot guarantee you healing, that is in the sovereignty of God
- But Jesus can give you more than you ask or think

Sadness can take many forms, bereavement, grief, disappointment

- I cannot guarantee that every hurt or problem will disappear
- But Jesus can give you more than you ask or think

Sickness or sadness of the soul or spirit can leave us restless, guilty, hopeless or despairing

- Perhaps we feel that some days are better and other days worse than others
- but the underlying situation does not change
- I cannot guarantee that everything will disappear
- But Jesus can give you more than you ask or think

If you have never come to transforming, personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ

- or if you have come previously but are now a long way from where you once were
- then the promise is for you, for those who are far off, for those whom the Lord calls
- ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’
- saved from sin, from guilt, from shame, from death, from judgment and hell
- saved in a moment, saved in an instant, saved not by works but by faith – in Jesus
- Jesus: betrayed, crucified, risen, ascended, coming again
- Who commands each everyone of us to repent and believe the good news
- This same Jesus who counts guilty people innocent
- Who counts condemned prisoners set free
- Who makes the dead alive
- This same Jesus who makes ‘nobodies’ into ‘somebodies’
- Because of his grace and because of his love
- This same Jesus who knows you and knowing all about you loves you still

This cannot be allowed to rest at the level of theory but must move to personal engagement

- Now to be fair, this can happen in the seat in which you are sitting
- It is certainly more to do with a movement of the heart than a movement of the feet
- But very shortly I shall invite people who want to engage with Jesus to come forward
- those who come forward will kneel at the communion rail
- if you do not look at me, it is your private time with Jesus
- if you look at me, I will come and offer a prayer with you
- if you want, tell me your prayer requests in a word or two (literally one or two words)
- if you want me to anoint you with oil for healing I will anoint you with oil
- your prayer can be for healing, for peace, for forgiveness
- for salvation for restoration – Jesus wants to turn hurting people to whole people
- Jesus wants to make ‘nobodies’ into ‘somebodies’

For in Jesus: AN OVERWHELMING NEED is met with

II AN OVERCOMING POWER

The people respond with

III AN OFFERING OF PRAISE

People God has healed love those whom God has made instruments of his grace

- Yet, Peter and John are not there to receive hero-worship
- They are simply servants of the Lord Jesus Christ and instruments in his hand
- They do not delay going to the temple, to worship and preach Christ
- Now they are joined not by the lame man but by a new man
- He is walking and jumping and praising God
- He is as vigorous in his praises as he had ever been in his begging
- And listening to the message of the Apostles as they preach the good news

All who have come to a time of engagement with Jesus know the delight of worship

- Yet, most of us would readily admit that worship too easily becomes 'services'
- The trouble with services is that they too easily become about *us*
- When worship is properly all about *him*, that is Jesus, the Lord and Saviour
- The Israelites were glad to go to the house of the Lord
- For the best company to keep is with those who are worshipping God
- The New Testament pattern is one of giving a reasonable account of faith
- Evangelistic preaching and a spiritual ministry
- We cannot fall into unhealthy extremes of arid and dull scholarship
- Or of fiery and uncontrolled sign-mania on the other
- Physical healings might be rare today – that is in the sovereignty of God
- Full salvation is as readily available today as it has ever been

The Christian faith is not simply about an answer to personal problems

- But about repentance and trust in Jesus
- It is not primarily about how we feel
- But about faith in Jesus

The Earl of Shaftesbury (1801-1885) was a great social reformer in Britain

- Working zealously to improve life for the poor and the mentally ill
- Fighting against child-labour and setting up schools
- Shaftesbury said: 'all life is reduced to a transaction ...
- Between the individual soul and the individual Saviour'
- 'My faith is summed up in one word, and that is Jesus.'

Jesus can meet our overwhelming needs with his overcoming power

- he will give us more than we ask or think
- in bereavement, grief, disappointment, restlessness, guilt, hopelessness, despair
- seeking repentance and trust for the first time or afresh
- 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'