

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Fourth Sunday After Trinity, June 23, 2024

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 331, 318:1, 326, 325, 36.

Lessons: Isaiah 12:1-6, Acts 3:16-26, Luke 15:11-32.

Sermon Text: Acts 3:1-16.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Is it profitable to be a Christian? The unbelieving outsider would say: No, there's nothing in it for me. He sees no material advantage in being a Christian. In his sinful pride he doesn't like to be told that the life he is living is sinful apart from Christ, and that his so-called 'good' life is not acceptable to God because there is no faith in his heart. So, he says, it is unprofitable to be a Christian.

But the believer in Christ knows it is profitable to be a Christian – not in terms of silver and gold – but as a Christian he has something far more valuable than anything this world has to offer. He has full and free forgiveness of all sins by God's grace for Jesus' sake. He has a happy heart and a conscience free from guilt. He has full confidence that heaven is his eternal home. These are gifts that last – last forever. They are of eternal value.

These gifts of eternal value are all given in the name of Jesus, for He has won them for all by his redemption on the cross. Let us meditate on the words of our text and learn of

THE BLESSED POWER OF JESUS' NAME.

We see it:

1. **In the performance of the miracle;**
2. **In the explanation of the miracle in Peter's sermon.**

1.

“One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. 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. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.” Acts 3:1-3

Peter and John worked together as disciples of the Lord in carrying out the great commission to preach the Gospel to all nations. At the particular time mentioned in our text they were about to worship God in the temple. It was the custom of the Jews to pray to God regularly three times during the day, at nine in the morning, at noon, and at three in the afternoon. The early Christians also kept this good custom, though they were not commanded to do so in the Law. So also devout Christians today observe the good custom of having regular family devotions as well as regularly attending public worship services.

As the two disciples were about to enter the temple they saw the lame man at the gate called Beautiful. This man had been born lame and had never walked in the forty years of his life. Friends and relatives regularly carried him to this place so that he could ask alms or beg for a few coins from the people who passed by. As Peter and John passed, he also held out his hand, expecting a gift from them.

Then a wonderful thing happened. *“Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, ‘Look at us!’ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. 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.’ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.”* When Peter and

John saw this poor cripple before them, they looked on him with pity. And the Lord put into their hearts the thought of healing him, according to the power that the Lord had given them on Pentecost Day. They asked the lame man to look on them. They wanted his complete attention because of the important thing which they would do.

The lame man did as they said expecting some gift of money from them. But the apostles did not have money to offer. They were not in a position to give him financial aid. The apostles were poor in worldly goods. The poor cripple, however, would not be disappointed. Peter and John had something far more valuable to give him. Without further delay the apostles told the cripple to rise and walk. He was asked to make no preparation for this miracle; he was asked to fulfill no conditions. Without waiting for any response from the cripple, Peter took him by the hand and assisted him in rising to his feet. Immediately he was healed. The legs and ankles that had been crippled and stiff now suddenly became firm and strong. He was now sound and healthy in every way, and was able to use his limbs as other men.

Here we see the blessed power of Jesus' name. Peter performed this miracle in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In the name of Jesus, the Savior, in the name of Christ, the anointed One, the promised Messiah, this wonderful miracle was performed. The lame man had undoubtedly heard of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Now he experienced the wonderful power of the name of Jesus by being healed.

Now we hear of the result of this miracle. ***“He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”*** The man not only walked, but he leaped and jumped for joy. And the first use that he made of his healed limbs is that he entered into the temple with the apostles praising God. His heart was overflowing with gratitude so that his lips broke out in words of praise to God. What a reminder to us who have enjoyed these blessings all our lives! Do we think of what wonderful blessings we enjoy? Do we use our healthy limbs to go to God's house of worship to hear his Word and praise Him for His blessings and serve him? If we do not appreciate the blessings of God, he can very easily take them from us.

This miracle had a profound effect on those who witnessed it. ***“When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 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 attracted the attention of many people. They knew beyond doubt that the man who had been healed was the beggar they were accustomed to seeing by the temple gate. To see this man perfectly healthy filled them with great astonishment. With all these people gathered together in one place Peter had an excellent opportunity to explain to them the miracle they had seen. In Peter's explanation of the miracle in his sermon we also see the blessed power of Jesus' name.

2.

“While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: ‘Men of Israel, 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?’” People were coming out of the inner courts of the temple after the hour of prayer. It was quite natural that they should wonder at the miracle that was performed. They saw the healed man clinging to Peter and John and showing his thankfulness to them. Thus the attention of the multitude was drawn to the apostles. The question was in their minds: How was the lame beggar healed? It was necessary for the apostles to answer this question. Peter began to speak to the people. What he had to say was both for the benefit of the healed man and the people in general. Peter addressed the people as men of Israel. He wanted to remind them of the fact that they were God's chosen people of old and the responsibility which rested upon them as God's people to whom the Savior had been sent. True Israelites should not be confused by the miracle that had been performed. True Israelites should not think that the two apostles had healed the man by their own power. True Israelites should know that the apostles did not have this divine power as a reward of their godliness. True Israelites should know the truth of' this miracle. Therefore, Peter in his sermon explains it to them.

“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. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of

life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.” Peter reminded his hearers, the Jews, of the God of their fathers, the God who had made the covenant with the Israelites that he would be their God and they would be his people. And He would send the Savior to them that they might be saved. Peter reminded his hearers that it was this God of their believing fathers who had glorified His Son Jesus by this miracle.

Now Peter told the Jews what they did, how they did not glorify their Savior, but disowned Him and disgraced Him. The Jews took their Savior to the Roman Governor Pilate with the demand to crucify Him. When Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent and was determined to let Him go, the Jews boldly and shamelessly declared that Jesus was not their Messiah and King. Even the heathen Pilate wanted to free Jesus whereas the Jews wanted Him killed. That was a most horrible crime. The one whom they denied and rejected was the Holy and Righteous One, He who had no guilt nor flaw in anything. The Holy and Righteous One was not good enough for them; they desired a murderer to be granted unto them. What terrible blasphemy they were guilty of! Peter wanted the Jews to know that true Israelites ought to be in accord with God, ought to delight in God’s holy and righteous Servant, ought to rejoice in the Prince of Life. But they had done the exact opposite. They crucified the only one who could give them true life by delivering them from sin and death. Jesus said ***“I am the way and the truth and the life.”*** John 14:6 Over against what the Jews did, God raised Jesus from the dead. With that one great act of God, all the wicked efforts of the Jews were contradicted, condemned and nullified. And God’s great Servant, Jesus, was approved and glorified and exalted. And Peter adds that he and the other apostles were eye-witnesses of this fact. They saw the risen and glorified Savior with their own eyes. And they now were doing their God-given work of proclaiming this risen Savior to all nations.

Now with the foundation facts of Jesus’ life established, Peter explains how the miracle was performed on the lame man.

“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 given this complete healing to him, as you can all see.” Peter emphasizes the blessed name of Jesus. Jesus’ name is not merely a sound uttered by human lips, but it is a blessed word which points out to us the Savior. In his name Jesus stands before us, revealed to our hearts as the Savior of sinners. To know His name is to know Him; to believe in His name is to believe in him.

It was by faith in Jesus that the crippled beggar was healed. The apostles believed in the blessed power of Jesus’ name. They did not heal the man in their own name and by their own power. But they performed the miracle in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The bodily blessing which the beggar received is not nearly so important as the spiritual blessing which he received in Jesus’ name and which the people who heard Peter’s sermon received. That name of Jesus with its blessed power healed the beggar so miraculously to show all the world the power of Jesus’ name in freeing lost souls from Satan’s grip. So believers go throughout the world today still proclaiming Jesus’ name in the Gospel message so that sinners may know the blessed power of Jesus’ name, come to faith and be saved eternally.

In summary let us learn from this miracle these truths: Not suffering and poverty, but sin and unbelief is the worst thing in the world. To be a beggar is pitiful, but to reject the Prince of life is a thousand times more pitiful. To find silver and gold may be good fortune, but to believe in the name of Jesus in true faith is eternal wealth. God grant us grace to believe in Jesus’ name, for that means for us eternal life, the greatest of all gifts. Amen.

(Reprinted from a Ministry By Mail sermon for August 21, 2011. Sermon first preached June 25, 1950.)