

SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES • October 8, 2017

Pastor Les Smith

SERIES: Preparing the Church to Leave the Building

SERMON: The Message Behind the Miracle

Text: Acts 3:1-10; John 4:48

Central Message:

In the book of Acts, Luke not only tells us about the beginning of the church, but believers are called to do the same works as Jesus. He is showing us what the Holy Spirit can do through ordinary men like Peter and John, which should encourage us to seek to do the same.

General Observations

We are told in Acts 2 that many wonders and signs were taking place among the people. Luke chooses one of those miracles in chapter three as the backdrop for Peter's second evangelistic sermon in Acts 3. Today, just as in the time of the apostles, people often walk right by while God is doing a great work, totally ignorant of what is going on. We often miss what God is doing because we are so focused on going to church that they neglect God-give opportunities to be the church. People may be bound by religion or tradition, but when God does something miraculous in their lives, they are amazed and filled with wonder. If Peter and John could heal a man crippled from birth by the power of the Holy Spirit, that same power is available to us today. Even in the time of the apostles, God did not work miracles every day, but that same power that raised up Jesus

and that gave strength to the ankles of a lame man can be appropriated by the church today. There are four movements in the text that help us to analyze the signs and wonders in Acts and their significance in our lives.

Movement #1: The Beggar’s Predicament: The Need for a Miracle

Peter and John were going up to the temple to pray around the time of the evening sacrifice. As they arrived, a man with no use of his legs because of a congenital condition was being carried to his accustomed begging place. This man was born into this situation, and he was never going to live a “normal” life. He had never stood up on his own two feet, never taken a step or gone for a walk. He was going to be subjected to poverty and dependence on others for the rest of his life. The most regrettable part of his situation was not that he had never had the ability to walk but that he no longer had the hope that he would ever walk. He needed a miracle.

Movement #2: The Apostle’s Proclamation: The Offer of a Miracle

We learn a couple of things from Peter in this movement. First, Peter had compassion for him. Most people don’t have time for a guy like this. He’s not going to be a benefit to anyone. Usually, people are looking to connect with those who can help them, but this guy was a total liability. Knowing that, Peter still embraced him, maybe even made him feel welcome. Instead of wanting to get some kind of benefit, Peter wanted to give something to him. Peter helped him in a way that he needed most. Money wouldn’t solve his problem. He needed to walk. He needed to be healed of his beggar’s way of thinking. Peter wanted to get to the root of this man’s problem and solve that problem. And Peter knew that only Jesus could do this. Peter looked directly at the beggar and commands the beggar to look at him. At first, Peter disappointed the beggar by declaring his lack of money. This served only to heighten the value of the great gift he does offer: complete health. But it was *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* that it had to be given. Peter took the man’s hand and raised him up. Immediately, his feet and ankles gained strength,

and this man who had never walked before leaped to his feet. That is the miraculous power of God.

Movement #3: The Beggar's Praise: His Response to the Miracle

Instantly the man's ankles received strength. Peter took him by the hand and he jumped up and stood on his feet for the first time in his life. He tried out his new freedom by walking around, and then, it seems that he automatically knew that he had been touched by the power of God. He had been miraculously restored and he was walking and jumping, and praising God for his miracle.

So, the question that we have to answer is do miracles still happen today? Miracles were most often associated with the apostles, and they are no longer with us. Even in the first century, miracles did not happen every day. But, the Spirit of God is still present, the Spirit of God is still working in the church, and God can do anything He wants to do. I believe that miracles can happen, and I believe that many have experienced the miraculous power of God.

I further believe that miracles happen when God has determined that only a miracle will do. I don't necessarily agree with the people who dogmatically declare that "God wants to work a miracle in your life". That may be true, but I believe God demands more of us. I fully believe that God can work miracles, and I further believe that you should not be surprised if and when He does. You should recognize when God's power has moved in your life, and you should respond in the only appropriate way...give God praise.

Movement #4: The Crowd Pondering: The Reason for the Miracle

All of the people gathered at the temple, who had known the man in his previous condition, became witnesses to the miracle's authenticity. More than that, they were filled with amazement (the state of being lifted out of one's habitual life and thought by encountering the power of God; compare Luke 5:26.)

Witnessing a miracle cannot produce "saving" faith. It may contribute to a person's

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readiness to embrace faith, but it cannot actually produce faith. (“But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:31))

That is why God's Word must now be preached. It will interpret the extraordinary and call for a decision. By the Spirit's power, this proclamation will work repentance and saving faith in its hearers.