

Acts 3:1-10
A Gate Called Beautiful
WRCoB 4.14.24

May God bless people who daily care
For those with special needs

Like those in our story who daily
Carried this man, born crippled
To the entrance of the Temple.

They brought him there everyday
To beg from morning to night.

When these same people
Would carry him back to wherever he stayed

The worshipers who went to the Temple
Would pass him outside the gate
They called Beautiful.

They would place him just “outside” this gate.

A good place from which to beg, to be sure.

But they placed him outside the gate
Because he couldn't go any further
Even if he wanted to.

His kind weren't allowed in the Temple.

He was an outcast

A gate called Beautiful

The entrance into the House of Worship

And the one who needed prayer the most

Was forced to sit outside begging for alms.

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They justified this exclusion from Scripture of course

But took it out of context

2 Samuel 5:8b Therefore it is said, “the blind and the lame shall not come into the house.”

On this particular day, during the 3 o’clock prayers

This guy sees Peter and John approach

And he begs them for money.

Peter stops and says

Acts 3:6 KJV

⁶ Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

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Remember, he was crippled from birth

He’d never walked before in his life.

Acts 3:8b CEB

⁸ Jumping up, he began to walk around. He entered the temple with them, walking, leaping, and praising God.

Not only are we witnessing a miraculous healing

Not only do we see his marvelous exuberance

He *enters* the temple!

One who, for his whole life, had been forbidden to enter
Now walks, jumps, and praises God
On his way through the gate called Beautiful.

He, who was an *outsider*, now joins those on the inside

And everyone in the temple sees it
And they are astonished and amazed.

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The Temple which was exclusively for the righteous
Now through the power of the Holy Spirit
Has opened its gates wide to the outcasts!

The gate called Beautiful
Which was once closed to outcasts and outsiders
Through the saving powers of Jesus Christ
Becomes the gateway unto salvation.

The blind
The lame
The leper
The tax collector
The prostitute

And sinners like you and me
Can now walk through that beautiful gate
Into the graces of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is our healer and our liberator.

He said as much in his first sermon.

Luke 4:18 NRSV

**¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to set free those who are oppressed,**

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Every healing story in the Bible
Points us in four different directions.

I borrowed the four points from the late Rev. Timothy Keller.

The four points point

1. Upward
2. Forward
3. Inward
4. Downward

Every healing story in the Bible
Whether it is God, Jesus, or Jesus' disciples
Doing the healing
All point upward to God

Here as we see in other healing stories
We see an inexplicable miracle taking place.

There is no explanation other than it was God's doing.

It was in the name of Jesus
That Peter told the man to get up and walk.

For many in the Christian world today
It's embarrassing to talk about the miracles in the Bible

For in today's society, we know better.

Though many believe in God
They have a hard time accepting
That God would work
Outside the laws of nature.

But as I understand more about quantum physics
Which is extremely little

I've learned that creation does not necessarily run
Like a fine-tuned watch.

Rather there is more chaos in the order of things
Than was previously thought.

Tim Keller proclaims
Miracles are an accreditation to the power of God.

Maybe someday,
Science can explain away the miracle
But it cannot explain away God's presence in it.

Healing and miracle stories point upward
To the power of God
And God's ability to heal and make whole.

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Secondly, the miracles and healing stories in the Bible
Point forward to the biblical vision of a restored world

A place where suffering and pain and tears
Where illnesses and disease
Where wars and violence cease.

Where God's kingdom is ushered in
And a new creation comes to be.

For God grieves any kind of human suffering.

Suffering has no place in God's coming kingdom
Just as it had no place in the Garden of Eden.

Miracles point forward to the future

Isaiah 35:4-6b NIV

**4 " . . . your God will come . . .
he will come to save you."**

**5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.**

**6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.**

Miracles point back to the time in paradise
And look forward to the restoration of that paradise.

They point in a forward direction
To the promise that Jesus will come
And make all things new.

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Thirdly, miracle and healing stories
Point in an inward direction.

The man who was asking for money
Was not looking far enough or deep enough

The man's request was for money
Money that might satisfies for a little time

What the man needed was so much more.

If only he had known the power of healing
Through the name of Jesus Christ.

He would have, could have asked
And received much more than just daily bread.

Often prayer requests and needs are superficial in nature.

We want God to save us from the superficialities life brings.

When we could ask and receive a joy and a peace
This world cannot give nor take away.

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And our fourth point of direction is downward.

Quite often, healing and salvation occur
When we are at our neediest
When we are completely at the mercy of God.

We talked a little about this at our last Bible Study.

We studied the first beatitude in the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5:3 NRSV

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

That when we become aware
That what we need more than anything else
Is God in our life.

We open ourselves to God
And the presence of his healing power.

When we have that relationship with God
We can put up with whatever life throws at you.

As the Apostle Paul writes

Philippians 4:13 NIV

¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

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In any healing or miracle story found in the Bible
You will find the four different points of direction

1. They point upward to God
2. They point forward to the coming of God kingdom
3. They point inward towards the need for a personal relationship with God
4. And they point downward towards total reliance on God

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Our good brother at the gate called beautiful
Was begging for loose change
And found his life forever changed

Through the power found in the name of Jesus.

Once an outsider and outcast

He became an insider and a member of God's family

This is the inclusive nature of the gospel of Jesus

Romans 10:12-13 NRSV

¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is such a compelling message.

As we read Scripture

Seek understanding through the preached word

And pray prayers that are lifted up

We open ourselves to the presence of God

God's Holy Presence convicts and transforms.

There are moments in each of our lives

That point us upward to the presence of God

Forward to the coming of God's kingdom

Inward to our own need for healing

And downward

Giving us a spirit of humility

That allows for God's Spirit to work within us.

Maybe it has already happened for you.

And if not, it may happen today.

I offer you an opportunity to respond
To give your life to Jesus
And experience the joy that awaits you

As Peter said in this morning's lesson
Silver and gold have I none
But what I have I give you

The gift of the love that Jesus has for you
Is yours for the taking

Receive what God offers you
A merciful and grace-filled new and eternal life

It begins by believing in the
Upward, forward, inward, and downward direction
Of healing and wholeness

Anyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And so, if the Spirit leads you
During the singing of our last hymn

I invite you to come forward and share with me
How the Spirit is moving in your heart.