

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church  
"Healing and Restoration"

Scripture: Acts 3:1-10

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May 4, 2020

Songs/Hymns: Oh for a thousand tongues to sing 374 tune Azmon 730, The Lord's my shepherd (Townend),

Today's Bible reading focuses on a miracle.

Curiosity compelled me to take a look at ALL the miracles of Jesus  
That are recorded in the Gospels

One list I found noted a total of 37 separate miracles.<sup>i</sup>

Of those 37 miracles,

3 are simple demonstrations of power over nature:

Walking on water, collecting a coin from a fish's mouth,  
Withering a fig tree.

Another 4 of those 37 miracles

Have to do with abundance or safety:

Turning water into wine,  
Feeding the 5,000 and the 4,000,  
and calming a storm.

But the remaining 30 miracles

All deal with life and its fulness:

Evil spirits are driven out, withered hands are restored,  
Eyes are opened, and the dead are raised.

What are the main signs of Jesus' power and authority?

Healing and restoration.

So contrast these ways of Jesus  
with the ways that we  
demonstrate OUR authority and power.

Like Jesus we sometimes assert our clout  
through acts that are lifegiving.  
We donate our time or our financial resources  
to organizations that bless our neighbors.

Unlike Jesus, we often assert our influence  
In ways that that abuse and cripple:

We raise our voices and assert our physical presence.  
We slander our enemies and gossip about our neighbors.  
We hire lawyers to intimidate and threaten.

These are the ways of individuals.  
And these are the ways of our nations.  
Want to show others who is in control?  
Test a few missiles  
or parade your latest military hardware.

Power and authority are often exhibited in ways  
That threaten and destroy.  
But when it comes to Jesus,  
his exercise of power and authority  
Is almost always connected to life.

As we resume our study of the book of Acts  
We have skipped over Pentecost  
(we will come back when we celebrate Pentecost,  
40 days after Easter).

All to say that those disciples who had been waiting  
For the gift that Jesus promised,  
have already received the Holy Spirit.

The church has celebrated its birthday  
And the now-empowered disciples are boldly  
Sharing the Good News of their crucified savior  
Who has come back to life.

In today's reading Peter and John  
Are going to the temple for an afternoon prayer service.  
At the temple gate they encounter a crippled beggar.

As Luke narrates the story:  
"When [the beggar] saw Peter and John  
about to enter the Temple,  
he asked for a handout.

[No doubt he was well-accustomed to his disability.  
A few coins were the most he believed  
he could hope for.]

Peter, with John at his side,  
looked him straight in the eye and said,  
"Look here."

[That beggar] looked up, expecting to get something from them.

[Peter told him], “I don’t have a nickel to my name,  
but what I do have, I give you:

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!”

[Then Peter] grabbed him by the right hand and pulled him up.

In an instant his feet and ankles became firm.

He jumped to his feet and walked.

The man went into the Temple with them,

walking back and forth, dancing and praising God.”<sup>ii</sup>

Everyone who saw this was amazed at what had happened.

They instantly recognized that this was a miracle.

The crippled man was a fixture at the gate.

This miracle provides Peter with the opportunity  
to preach his second sermon (in Acts).

In the passage that follows

he retells the story about Jesus:

Jesus’ death and resurrection.

And he makes clear that this healing

Is the ongoing work of Jesus:

“It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him  
that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”<sup>iii</sup>

Once again Jesus is associated with healing and restoration.

Jesus ministry continues through his church.

Of course, healing isn't the only way  
To gather a crowd and get some attention.  
Mending lame legs isn't the only option  
To demonstrate power and authority.

If Jesus' power could get a man upright;  
A man who hadn't used his leg muscles for decades  
[and most of us know how hard it is to get  
Our functioning legs going in the morning]...

If Jesus' power can get a lame man  
Dancing in the Temple,  
Well then Jesus power could also have been used  
To make the disciples robes start shining and sparkling  
Or even cause the beggar to have a sudden stroke.

Either way people would be paying attention.

But as with the case of Jesus' ministry before his ascension,  
Jesus' work through the church  
is concerned with healing and restoration.

Does this mean that healing happens everywhere?  
Does this mean that miraculous healing happens all the time?  
No.

While we aren't told how many years  
This man had been begging at the Temple  
It is noted that his condition was congenital,

It is also clear that he was an old fixture at the gate.

Undoubtedly that man had suffered  
Much over many years.

It is even possible that the man had even encountered Jesus,  
During Jesus' earlier ministry.

Yes, the temple had many gates,  
But Jesus had frequented the Temple  
And his disciples were using that gate  
Where the man was parked each day.

This healing doesn't tell us that miracles happen everywhere  
and all the time.

What this healing tells us is that  
"in places where death seems to get the upper hand  
The promise of resurrection persists."<sup>iv</sup>

What this healing tells us is that  
"God continues to enlist others  
In give [that] life which is God's final purpose".<sup>v</sup>

Preacher William Willimon notes:

"Here is a community which does not simply offer suffering people  
kind words of empathy.

This community possesses the same power  
so manifest in the ministry of Jesus."<sup>vi</sup>

And so it seems that contemporary Christian communities  
Should be connected with healing and restoration  
Whether this work is deemed miraculous or not.

Many Christian communities are.  
I see this in our prayer ministry at St. Andrew's.

A couple months ago after the service  
We gathered for prayer and for anointing with oil.

To be clear there were no instantaneous miraculous healings  
At that meeting.

But since then at least a couple of the health issues  
that people brought forward have been significantly addressed.  
That's right, there have been healings.  
Thanks be to God.

At the same time our online prayer group  
Has grown and has begun to flourish.

This was something forced upon us  
by the physical distancing of COVID.  
We needed a place to share our concerns.  
And so, I opened up a private group  
Attached to our church's page.

It started with me inviting people I knew were on Facebook

People have since invited their own friends  
And the group has grown to include people outside the church,  
With concerns we address stretching across the world.

If you'd like to take part in it, just request an invite on our page  
Or send me an email...

We are receiving new requests each day,  
And there have been notable answers to prayer.  
Thanks be to God.  
God's power is at work.

Sometimes our seniors confide in me  
That they are discouraged that they can't take a more  
Active role at the church.

I try to remind them that prayer is something available for everyone,  
Maybe evermore so for them.

What we all should know  
Is that this sort of activity isn't 'booby' prize,  
This isn't the leftovers.

This is where God's action is.  
This is where God's healing power is at work.

As our own statement of faith, *Living Faith* reminds us:  
"Life in Christ is formed in a believing community,  
and expressed in daily living.



We are to bring Christ's healing presence  
to the world for which he died,  
his peace to its pain and anguish.”<sup>vii</sup>

May this continue to be so at St. Andrew’s.  
Amen and amen.

<sup>i</sup> “37 Miracles of Jesus in Chronological Order” <http://blog.adw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/37-Miracles-of-Jesus-in-Chronological-Order.pdf> from the Community in Mission blog of the Archdiocese of Washington

<sup>ii</sup> Acts 3:3-8 MSG

<sup>iii</sup> Acts 3:16 NIV

<sup>iv</sup> “NL Podcast 409: Peter Heals in Jerusalem” I Love to Tell the Story Podcast on [workingpreacher.org](http://workingpreacher.org) April 26, 2020  
[https://www.workingpreacher.org/narrative\\_podcast.aspx?podcast\\_id=1255](https://www.workingpreacher.org/narrative_podcast.aspx?podcast_id=1255)

<sup>v</sup> Ibid

<sup>vi</sup> William Willimon *Acts 44*

<sup>vii</sup> *Living Faith* The Presbyterian Church in Canada 8.1.2