

## **Sent to Rescue Acts 3:11-16**

A little context.

Peter and John go to the temple to take part in the 3 o'clock prayer service.

So, we see these Jewish followers of Jesus spending time worshipping and praying in two settings, really three.

- Homes: Most significant things happened in homes - devoting to the teaching of scripture, fellowship, communion and sharing meals together, and prayer all happened in homes.
- Jewish Temple - Prayer and sharing Christ with fellow Jews happened in the Jewish temple
- Other outdoor settings like Solomon's Porch

### **Good model for the church today.**

- Homes
- Sacred spaces like temples and churches
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Good Spaces like coffee shops and pubs

Here they are on their way to the Jewish temple and they meet a crippled man outside the temple.

Peter and John look at him, ask him to look at them, they discern God is at work and they say the classic line "Silver and gold have I none but what I have I give to you."

They could have given money, they were practicing generosity and sharing within the family of Jesus Followers, but here they give him what he really needs. Wholeness in Christ – spirit soul body.

Your bibles might have translated this word healing, or healed, but it is more holistic than just a physical healing.

This man was rescued. Not just physically but more importantly he was rescued spiritually.

So, the guy is standing there, holding onto Peter, legs must have been pretty wobbly after being lame for so long, and the onlookers are amazed!

They are looking at Peter & John thinking they did it.

### **And this is Peter's response.**

#### **Read ACTS 3:11-16**

Got to love Peter's response.

Why are you so surprised?

Peter isn't surprised. John isn't surprised.

They had been eyewitnesses of Jesus healing all throughout the last 3 years of Jesus' ministry in and around Galilee.

And in fact, many of the people there would have also seen Jesus' healings. It would have all been fresh on their minds.

And why stare at us as though we made him walk by our own power or godliness?

They knew it had nothing to do with their power, or their godliness. They were very much aware of their own weakness.

They knew what they had witnessed was God's power in and through their lives. Their obedient faithful lives, yes, but they

knew it wasn't their power or godliness that did it. Nor was it on the merit of their power or godliness.

Then Peter takes the opportunity to tell them who was to blame for this healing.

*"For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the God of our ancestors – who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this."*

**Why would Peter refer to God in this way?**

**What's he up to?**

Well, this way of referring to God is a quote. It comes from **Exodus 3:6**

Anyone know what this is referring to?

It's the Call of God on Moses' life. It's the story where Moses stumbles upon the burning bush and God says to him.

"Moses, Moses! Take off your sandals for the ground you are standing on is holy ground."

And then Yahweh makes it clear who it is that is taking to Moses.

*"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."*

We may not understand the reference and what it is pointing to, but these hearers would have.

So, what's the point?

Everyone hearing Peter would have got it. Would have linked it to God's call on Moses' life to go rescue His people out of the tyranny of the Egyptians.

You want to know who rescued the Egyptians? Who rescued this man, and who wants to rescue each of you? It's the same God who Called Moses. God of Abraham. God of Isaac, Jacob.

It's Jesus.

He's saying that this God is a rescuing God, this God who Called Moses to go rescue his people from the tyranny of the Egyptians, is the same God who rescued this man from his sin, from his brokenness through the person of Jesus.

Peter is taking the opportunity to point everyone to Jesus. Bring glory to Him.

No burning bush to get your attention, but this healing is just as spectacular. Grabbing our attention.

Telling us that the creator God, the God of Abraham, God of Jacob is living and active and keeping His promises again.

God is a rescuing God, and a sending God.

**Exodus 3:7** says, "Then the Lord said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their task masters. I know their sufferings and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.'"

Scripture tells us that God saw their affliction and heard their cries...

He saw and heard, and out of a desire to rescue, he sent his servant Moses.

The Jewish listener would have understood what Peter was saying. What he was pointing to.

Moses work as deliverer is pointing to Jesus the ultimate deliverer, the one who would deliver us not out of the tyranny of the Egyptians, but out from the tyranny of sin.

**1 John 4:9** says, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”

God saw humanities affliction and have heard our cries because of our task master sin, so he sent His one and only Son to rescue us.

God sent Moses  
God sent Jesus  
And now sent Peter & John as Jesus’ representatives  
His rescuers

**Exodus 3** paints the picture of Moses as Rescuer, His representative, through this divine Call through his burning bush experience, to go to Egypt, go back to where you are a wanted man, go back into the spiritual quagmire of Egyptian spirituality and godlessness, face down the stubbornness of Pharaoh, face criticism from his own people, and set my people free out of slavery to the Egyptians.

**Acts 3** paints the picture of Jesus as the ultimate Rescuer, to leave the safe confines of heaven and to go to earth, become human, take the form of a servant, get handed over,

rejected by his own people, and die a criminal’s death on the cross.

**Fulfilling God’s ultimate rescue plan for all humanity.**

And here we see God’s Call on the lives of Peter and John to be His representatives as well, as His divine rescuers.

... to rescue this man from sin and restore him to wholeness.

Something He wanted to do for everyone present there that day.

**Something He is still in the business of doing today.**

**This week during my quiet time I was in Isaiah.**

Isa. 59:1 says “Listen! The Lord’s arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear your call.”

The whole theme of Isaiah is that God sees the oppression and the injustice and is about to do something about it!

He is grieved that his people have turned a blind eye a deaf ear to the oppressed, so he says that “my arm is not too weak, my ear is not deaf.”

**Then this caught my eye.**

**It says in verse 15-17**

“The LORD looked and was displeased  
to find there was no justice.

<sup>16</sup> He was amazed to see that no one intervened  
to help the oppressed.

So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm,

and his justice sustained him. He put on righteousness as his body armour and placed the helmet of salvation on his head. He clothed Himself with a robe of vengeance and wrapped himself in a cloak of divine passion.”

Totally caught my eye. I had never seen this before.

Where else do we see this same image?

Paul’s words in Ephesians 6 where we, God’s children are told to put on the armour of God.

<sup>13</sup> Therefore, put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness. <sup>15</sup> For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. <sup>17</sup> Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

Now I know where Paul got this image. He was thinking about Isaiah.

And God putting on the armour.

The image is of God going into battle, he’s about to risk his very life in order to save his people.

I am not talking about God needing armour to protect Himself, nor am I talking about God needing armour to fight on a physical plane.

No, here we see a God who is leading the charge.

The fact that He is fitted with these pieces of armour tells us a bit of his character, and work He is about to accomplish.

Breast plate of righteousness means he’s a God is going to do right, make right the injustices, the wrongs, He is a God who will do the right thing at great cost of Himself.

Helmet of Salvation is that he is a God who saves. A God who delivers. Who rescues?

I have always read the armour as primarily defensive.

Satan is a lion, seeking to devour, comes to steal kill and destroy, so I better armour up.

All defensive. My need for protection.

I also saw each piece as reminders of my identity.

**All pretty self focussed.**

**But here, for the first time I see God put on the armour of God.**

**And it’s offensive.**

It’s this picture of God charging in, going into spiritual battle on our behalf.

No wonder Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 in his first sermon.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,  
for the LORD has anointed me

to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to comfort the broken-hearted  
and to proclaim that captives will be released  
and prisoners will be freed.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>2</sup> He has sent me to tell those who mourn  
that the time of the LORD's favor has come,<sup>[b]</sup>  
and with it, the day of God's anger against their enemies."

**This is who God is.**

**He's a rescuing God. We see it in the life of Moses, we see it in the person of Jesus, we see it in and through Moses and James and Peter...**

**God is a rescuing God.  
Inviting you and I to armour up, and charge into battle.**

**Story: College**

I have been reminiscing with my brothers this week about my college days.

Lots of fun stories, pranks we played, football games we played.

But one story rose to the surface for me.

It was mid-winter, and my roommate Mike and I were up late finishing up some assignments, and suddenly I heard this faint cry. It caught my attention.

At first, I tried to ignore it, but it just kept happening. When we cracked the window, we realized that it was coming from the school ground across the highway. And it was a cry of desperation. You couldn't ignore it.

I tried but eventually I got up and said to Michael, I got to go out there. I got to see what is going on. Sounds like he needs help.

We battled back and forth whether this was something I should do, and the potential cost, but eventually I had to follow what I believed to be urging of the Spirit.

As wisdom had it, Mike joined me and we both went outside in the blustery Regina winter, in the dark of night, to try to rescue this troubled soul.

Eventually we found this young man standing on the railway tracks, wanting to take his own life. As we approached him, we began to talk to him, listen to his story, and eventually we were able to talk him off those tracks and share a warm tea in his home.

That evening that young man trusted Jesus as his Saviour, and he too, like this crippled man was made whole. We eventually saw him come clean and sober, be restored with his family... he too was made whole.

We didn't know it back then, but we too, like God, were armoured up with the breastplate of righteousness, and the helmet of salvation.

Like Peter and John, Jesus was using us to bring good news to the poor, comfort the broken hearted, proclaim that captives will be released, and prisoners be freed.

Like Jesus, with Jesus at the helm, we ventured into the night to rescue this man from his task masters of sin and bondage.

**What does this say to us?**

1. Perhaps you have been crying out to God you need to know God has heard your cries. God has seen your struggle. With yourself, your past, your present, your struggle with sin. He desires to rescue you. To bring you good news. To comfort your broken heart. To bring you release.

How do you access Christ's work?

Give Him the reigns.  
Surrender your heart and will to Him.  
His way.

He can make you whole.

2. If you are a follower of Jesus, your whole mandate is to be on Jesus' Search and Rescue Team.

Through an honest reading of the NT, we see that Jesus' church was never meant to be a weekly worship experience, but a unified, commissioned, and sent people living synergistically in the world under the authority of Christ." Jeff Christopherson

Especially through this season of COVID I believe God is calling us as individual followers and the church as a whole to take courageous steps toward the mind and mission of Jesus as Rescuer.

You might ask, how can the church be a missional force, rescuing souls, during a pandemic?

For one, we can pray. I don't know if you have ever seen prayer as offensive, but it is.

It is going into battle on behalf of others, pulling down strongholds on behalf of others, praying the enemy's strategies will be brought to confusion, all in prayer.

But whatever it looks like it will mean we put away self - interested minds and reach for the mind and mission of Jesus.

**I think this pandemic has taught us lots of things, but one of the things is that it has reminded us that the church is much more than what happens on a Sunday morning.**

**It's a reminder that the church has left the building.**

**It has** clarified to us is that God has always been on a rescue mission, and his church finds her purpose as she wholeheartedly engages in that divine commission.

*I like how Jeff Christopherson puts it in the Exchange "Outside of the mission of Christ, the church has no purpose, no passion, and no power."*

My prayer is that we won't see this period of COVID as a waste of time, where we idly wait, but that we can prayerfully wait on God in such a way that we can emerge on the other side all the clearer on God's Call on our lives and the mission he has laid out for us.

But whatever it might look like, it will reflect God as Rescuer.

- Think about how God has rescued you / thank him
- Think about who God used you to rescue – pray for them
- Who in your life currently needs rescuing
- And how might you partner with Jesus in that work?