

It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

- A good time to hang out on the temple steps and beg for coins from those going up to prayers. You know those religious folk, they are always good for a little bit of something.
- 3 o'clock, as usual, there by the Beautiful Gate

Peter and John go up, stop and noticing him tell him to look at them. The writer says they “fixed their eyes on one another” Right here, it starts to become **unusual**. “I don't have gold or silver to give you.” But with those fixed eyes that could not be ignored, Peter continues, “I'll give you what I do have...in the name of Jesus, get up and walk.”

All of a sudden, nothing was **as usual** at 3 o'clock in the afternoon on the temple steps

- The lame man, who had been carried there by his friends, stood,
- walked (on stairs)
- danced,
- shouted praises to God and
- clung to Peter and John.

And all those pious praying people going up the steps

- stopped
- wondered, and
- stared at Peter and John and the formerly lame man

For this amazing new church, it became an occasion for proclamation. **For storytelling.** For connecting this incident to God's great actions of promise and liberation

- Abraham
- Isaac
- Jacob

Key words that lead to remembrance of whole cycles of divine action in the life of the chosen people....and at 3 o'clock in the afternoon Peter's proclamation linked them to Jesus, God's own son

- A new and powerful story of all that divine power given to Jesus, power that Jesus, by his death and resurrection had given to the believers. Here on the steps by the Beautiful Gate they were living into the promise of God's presence and faithfulness, acting to liberate a crippled child of God for new life and possibilities!

3 o'clock in the afternoon was a time for proclamation. For truth telling. "You," said Peter, "gave him over to the

authorities to be killed. But God raised him from the dead”

- You can stare and wonder.
- You can repent of the way you allowed yourselves to be manipulated. You can repent of the violence and destruction that you caused.
- You were ignorant, but now you know.
- Repent.
- Change your ways and your attitudes.
- Move down the stairs and out of the Beautiful Gate that leads to prayer and worship, **so that** this Beautiful Gate becomes a truly magnificent entryway to neighborly service, and care for all.
- It’s 3 o’clock in the afternoon and this man’s perfect health is God’s gift before your eyes. He is free of the physical bonds that kept him from fully living into the promises of God.

So here we are. It is 3 o’clock in the afternoon somewhere.

and we are called as church to stare into the eyes of all who are hurting and bless them with the power of God,

and we are called to tell the truth to those whose actions cause hurt and pain, and bless them with the promise of forgiveness

The power of God is given to the church to call the world to account

- to call out sin and destructive behavior,
- to name the systems that perpetuate discrimination and inequality,
- to recognize our own selves as participants in the oppression of others
- to unveil fear

And the power of God is given to the church to forgive sin and heal

- to tell the truth of God's unconditional love for all
- to bind the wounds of those who are hurt and maimed by hatred
- to straighten the crooked limbs that cannot carry the weight of life
- to dance, and to walk,
- to run and to play,
- to sing praise and
- to cling to one another in new community.

It is 3 o'clock in the afternoon everywhere. The resurrection makes it all new. It's not things as usual. It is not too late, not too early. It's just on time. Thanks be to God who raised Jesus from the dead!