

## Where To Find Real Refreshment: Acts Pt.4 [3.1-26]

Sermon of 2021-06-13

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[slide 1, run video].

Begging is the practice of imploring others to grant a favour, often a gift of money, with little or no expectation of giving in return.

[slide 2] Beggars may be found in public places such as transport routes, urban parks, and near busy markets.

According to a study in the journal of the Canadian Medical Association, (70%) [of beggars] stated that they would prefer a job, citing a desire for a 'steady income' or 'getting off the street'.

However, many felt they could not handle conventional jobs because of mental illness, physical disability, or lack of skills.

You can see people begging in many parts of the world today, including Jerusalem. Often people will sit or stand in the same spot, everyday, begging from passers-by.

[slide 3] That brings us to our story today as we continue in our series on the book of Acts, this week focusing on c.3. Let's pray.

Certainly, the people who went into the Temple to pray day after day and week after week wouldn't have been surprised to see this man, who was crippled from birth, begging.

He's been a fixture here for over 40 years. For arguments sake we'll call him Ben. [slide 4]

Presumably, based on v.2 of Ac. 3, friends or relatives would drop Ben off on the steps leading up to what was known as the Beautiful Gate where he would sit and beg for money.

[slide 5, blank] Temple gates were useful locations for begging since they were frequented by large numbers of people, especially with the approaching hour of prayer.

Then, sometime later in the day, Ben's friends would pick him up and carry him back to his home. This is how he eked out a living. Remember, there was no disability assistance in these days.

Back in 2.46 we learned that these new followers of Jesus, along with the apostles, continued to meet in the Temple courts every day to pray.

So, in v.1 it doesn't surprise us to learn that one afternoon at about 3:00 p.m., Peter and John are about to enter the temple courts to attend one of the prayer services.

On their way in, v.3, Ben asks them for money. His request to Peter and John was no different than what he asked everyone else, every hour of every day.

Most people entering the Temple would just ignore him and walk on by without making any eye contact. [slide 6] But in v.4, Peter, and John look intently at Ben; they stare straight at him.

And not only did Peter and John stare straight at Ben, but, still in v.4, they told him to look intently at them too. And he did, v.5, expecting some money.

Peter responds in v.6 saying, "Silver or gold [which were used for minted coins in that day] I do not have." Talk about disappointment.

Money is what Ben needs because he can't work and he's got to eat and pay his taxes.

If Peter's not going to give him money, what is he going to give him, advice from Dr. Phil? A lot of good that will do him!

"Silver or gold I do not have," says Peter, "but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

[slide 7] Instead of giving this crippled beggar a *handout*, Peter gives him a *hand up*. Look at v.7.

"Taking him by the hand [something Peter had seen Jesus do] instantly [or immediately] the man's feet and ankles became strong."

[slide 8] So strong, in fact, that he stood up on his feet – something he had never done before in his life!

Peter makes it quite clear in v.6 that the healing is in the name of Jesus of Nazareth – defining which Jesus he was referring to as the name was a common one.

[slide 9, blank] It is the power of Jesus' name that counts here, as it does throughout Acts.

The idea of names having power may sound strange to us, but we can get the idea when we think of some important, high profile person –

whether it be a business tycoon like Kevin O'Leary or a leading politician like John Horgan or a sports celebrity like Bo Horvat say,

"Just tell them I sent you and they'll let you in" [to the Shark Tank, the Premier's office, or the Canuck's dressing room].

So, names do carry power. And the whole point of this story is that the name of Jesus carries power.

Not magical, waving a wand kind of power, but a power that comes from acting on Jesus' behalf, as his representative, to do what Jesus would do.

Ben is so excited he's not content just to walk, as amazing as that is. So thrilled is he, v.8, "he follows [Peter and John] into the temple courts,"

where he was forbidden from entering being a cripple, and is "walking and leaping, and praising God."

Needless to say, Ben's walking and leaping and praising God attracts a lot of attention. Look at v.9.

"When all the people saw him walking and praising God, **[slide 10]** they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful

**[show with laser pointer]**, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."

And, v.11, all the people "came running to them [to Peter and John] **[slide 11]** in the place called Solomon's Colonnade or Portico **[use laser pointer]**,"

so named because its masonry was pre-Herodian and so people assumed that it originated from the time of Solomon.

**[slide 12]** Located on the Eastern side of the Temple complex this covered area provided shade and shelter from the elements and was used for activities such as public speaking.

**[slide 13, blank]** This is one of those jaw-dropping moments in life. They can't believe what they're seeing!

They all knew there was nothing fraudulent about Ben's lameness. This was no scam. No, this was a sign; a sign that the kingdom of God had come on earth as it is in heaven.

This is the kingdom age, the messianic era, which Isaiah had prophesied long ago as we read of in Isa. 35.6. "Then will the lame leap like a deer."

If the spiritual significance of the miracle escaped the crowd, as no doubt it did, [slide 14] Peter seized the moment to make it plain to them.

And he began to tell the people about Jesus – the one they handed over to be crucified but whom God resurrected from the dead, and in whom we find wholeness / salvation.

Just as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost had been the text for Peter’s first sermon, so the healing of crippled Ben became the text for his second sermon.

And the main point of his message is, as he declares in v.16, “By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.”

He repeats the point for emphasis in the rest of the verse. “It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”

[slide 15, blank] There must be faith, faith in the one who speaks his name and faith in the one who hears his name.

But it is the name of Jesus – the one crucified and shamed on the cross, yet raised bodily from death and exalted by God - that makes people whole or complete.

That’s what we find in v.16 where Luke uses an unusual word, ὀλοκληρία, [hol-ok-lay-ree'-ah], used only here in the entire NT,

which refers to a condition of complete wholeness and is connected with salvation.

That is what is offered through the gospel message which proclaims the powerful name of Jesus.

Faith in Jesus and in the power of his name is the way to complete wholeness, to salvation, today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, just as it was in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

And so Peter goes on to say, in effect, “You’ve seen the change in this man’s life. Now let me tell you how your life can change too.

And he calls on people to repent, v.19. The Gk. verb Luke uses for repent means to feel remorse for your sin and to turn to God for forgiveness.

This word repentance applies not only to non-believers, as it does in Peter’s case, but it also applies to believers.

For no matter how much change or transformation into Christlikeness we may experience along our X’n journey, we never outgrow our need for repentance as part of the Way of Salvation.

As Randy Maddox points out, “Repentance revitalizes our continuing responsible growth in Christlikeness.”

When we do repent, God blots out our sins and times of refreshing come from him.

Think of times of refreshing as being like receiving a cool drink on a hot, hot day.

[**slice 16**] When Deb and I were walking through Elim [Ay-leem’], located in the Sinai desert, it was 45 °C in what little shade there was under the palm trees.

After spending just a short time in that heat we couldn’t wait to get back on the bus to get a drink of water. It was so refreshing.

Like receiving a drink of cool water on a hot, hot day, so are the times of refreshing Peter speaks about here in v.19.

[**slide 17**] Here is the Coles translation of this verse and the verse that follows.

<sup>19</sup>“Repent, then, and turn to God for the wiping away of your sins, <sup>20</sup>*so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord*, and that he may send him who was foretold to you, the Messiah, Jesus...”

[slide 18, blank] To understand more of what these “times of refreshing” are, we need to look at what Peter says in the next verse, v.21.

“He [Jesus] must remain in heaven until the time comes for the restoration [or renewal] of all things by God.”

What Peter is saying here is, there is a time to come when God will restore or renew all things.

There is a time to come when God will bring all things in heaven and on earth together in Christ - Eph. 1.10;

when through Christ, he will reconcile all things to himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven - Col. 1.20;

when he will make a new heaven and new earth, in which his justice will dwell - Rev. 21.1 and 2 Pt. 3.13;

when he will overcome every power, which destroys and corrupts his good creation, so that eventually God will be all in all - 1 Cor. 15.28;

when the whole creation will be set free from its bondage to decay, to share the glorious freedom of God’s children - Rms. 8.21.

That’s why Jesus now remains in heaven, for heaven is the place where God’s purposes for the future, which we’ve just described,

are stored up like the pieces of a stage set waiting in the wings until they are needed for the final great act in the drama of God’s redemption.

When Jesus does return, heaven and earth will come together as one in a restoration or renewal of all creation.

[slide 19] And though that future day will be more wonderful than we can ever imagine, it can be anticipated *now* with ‘times of refreshing’,

which come when we turn to God who wipes away our sins so that we can experience the presence of the Lord in our life now,

in anticipation of the full and final refreshment or renewal, that we can expect when God completes his work, and all creation is refreshed and renewed when Jesus returns.

Now if that doesn't put a quiver in your liver nothing will!

In case anyone thinks Peter is just making up all this talk of times of refreshing, he insists this is happening in direct fulfillment of what the prophets said.

And in v.22ff he lists off the names of some of the giants of the faith –

from Moses, the greatest prophet of them all; to Samuel, who anointed the first kings of Israel; to Abraham, through whose family all families on earth are to be blessed.

All that the patriarchs and prophets had spoken of regarding these marvelous blessings of God is now available through the Messiah, Jesus, when we repent.

What do you think God wants you to repent of? What does God want you to repent of in order that you might experience the blessing repentance brings –

namely “times of refreshing” and renewal from the Lord in your life *now* in anticipation of that final refreshment, that final renewal of all things we can expect when Jesus returns?

Listen to what the Holy Spirit saying to you as we sing, “Showers of Blessing.” [Tune – Out of my Darkness - piano play through once / **no CS.** 4<sup>th</sup> verse, repeat last line. 314 / 410 P]

Read as a prayer Ps. 51.1-13]