

FRIDAY 10 June 2022 "A Miracle!!" (Acts 3:6-11)

Hello my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

Did I leave you hanging yesterday? So... come on, let's go back to a remarkable scene just outside the gate Beautiful, in the city of Jerusalem, about 2000 years ago. Lots of people are going in and out through this gate so watch where you stand, you might get walked on! Jerusalem is a busy city, and this great Temple is the most active, most prominent place in Jerusalem, and the highest point in the city. To say that the Temple mount looms over and dominates Jerusalem in the first century would be very accurate!

Peter and John, disciple/apostles of Jesus, have come up to the temple for afternoon prayers, today. They've stopped in front of a beggar sitting on the ground near the gate, and he has asked them for a handout. Peter and John have both reached into their pockets and found nothing. While you can't see it with your normal human eyes, something miraculous is happening. *The Holy Spirit of God has come upon Peter with an unusual anointing and is guiding Peter in what to say and do in this moment*, just as Jesus had promised would happen.

The record says: ***"Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have, I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!' Taking the beggar by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk! Then he went with Peter and John into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God!"*** (Acts 3:6-8)

Can you believe what is happening here? You've seen crippled beggars sitting on the ground before, haven't you? *But have you ever seen a man, crippled since birth, stand up and walk in response to another person's simple yet courageous invitation?* Of course, as Peter and John are talking with the beggar, lots of other people are walking by paying them no attention at all. Some generous people put a few coins in the cripple's bowl and say compassionate things to the beggar, as they pass by, going into the temple area to pray. For many, it helps them feel good as they get ready to talk with God in the Temple area. But this time is different, very different from anything anyone has ever experienced... this time Peter makes a statement that seems ridiculous. We all understand the excuse ***"Silver or gold I do not have..."***. Truth is, if we are honest, we have all probably said something like that to a beggar. But what Peter said next, I doubt any of us have ever said: ***"...but what I have I give to you, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!"***

So, what is happening here my friends? Has Peter lost his mind? Is he hallucinating? Is he mocking the beggar? No! *Peter is doing what Jesus had taught His disciples to do.* Often Jesus had said that He only did what His Father instructed Him to do.

In the upper room the evening before His crucifixion (John 14-16), Jesus spent considerable time explaining to His friends that the Holy Spirit of God would be sent to each of them, to live with them and in them. (John 14:16,17) Why? *Because Jesus knew they would need the same leading, guiding, and empowering work of the Holy Spirit in them that He had enjoyed, and that had enabled Him to do all He did while living here on earth in His human body.*

Do you remember Jesus had described the intimate, totally reliant relationship He wanted His disciples to have with Him by using the picture of a vine and branches? (John 15) Jesus had said to them **"Apart from Me you can do nothing."** (John 15:5) *Jesus repeatedly had said that He and His Father were so closely connected that His life and work here was only what the Father wanted for and from Him.* Did you get that? But then they had watched the resurrected Jesus elevate into the sky and leave them! They were apart from each other, so what could possibly unite them in an even closer relationship than they'd had when Jesus was physically with them? They were confused, as you or I would have been!

For 10 days they wrestled with these types of deep questions as they discussed together what they remembered of Jesus' teachings during those many months that they'd been with Him. *Then suddenly the Holy Spirit came, just as Jesus had promised, and now they were living each day with a very strong sense of the Presence of God with them, actually guiding their thinking, and their emotions.* Here, as Peter held out his hand waiting for the beggar to respond to His invitation, Peter was living what Jesus had promised: **"Very truly I tell you' Jesus had said 'whoever believes in Me will do the works I have been doing, and you will do even greater works, because I'm going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father... I will send you the Counselor and He will guide you into all truth. He will speak to you what He hears from the Father. He will glorify Me because it is from Me that He will receive what He will make known to you."** (John 14:12,13; 16:13,14)

We know that Peter was brash and bold and probably a bit overconfident in almost any situation. But here, looking intently at this crippled beggar, Peter had just said to him **"Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk!"** (Acts 3:6) Now with Peter's outstretched hand in front of the beggar, what do you think this man, crippled from birth, is thinking? You saw in verse 2 this crippled man was brought that day to this same place where he had been brought every day to sit and beg. Now that tells me this cripple had been sitting in this place when Jesus often walked by going into the Temple over the past few years. Do you wonder why Jesus never did for this cripple what Peter is doing today? *Could it be Jesus did NOT heal the beggar so that this very powerful miracle could take place and a great spiritual momentum could be reignited this day with Peter and John?* Now think about that my friends, as you struggle trying to understand why it appears to you that God sometimes does not answer your prayers as soon as you'd like or in the way you'd like?

Now remember the book of Acts is written by Luke the Physician! Since he was not an eyewitness to this miracle, I imagine he questioned Peter and John and this cripple in great detail, to be sure he recorded it accurately. Luke records: **"...instantly the cripples' feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God. When all the people saw him... they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the Temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to him!"** (Acts 3:8-10) A 'spiritual momentum swing' was taking place here, remember we talked about that yesterday? Suddenly the focus among those hundreds of people in the Temple courts area was not on the sacrifices at the big Altar, nor the beauty of the Temple itself, nor even any of the priests or Pharisees who might have been there that day in their royal robes.

The focus at that moment was entirely upon a miracle that was happening right in front of their eyes. A man cripple from birth, whom they all knew and had seen sitting in his spot at the gate, was now dancing and jumping and shouting with joy! No one could deny what they were seeing, but also no one could explain it! That's why Luke says **"...they were filled with wonder and amazement..."**. So I have an important question: **when was the last time YOU or I were filled with wonder and amazement at something God did?**

I think we need to pause right here. *How do you explain what happened to this crippled man? What caused his sudden healing, the reversal of his paralysis?* For what purpose do you think God led Peter to do and say what he did with this beggar? Luke reports: **"While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them..."** (Acts 3:11) Watch out you don't get trampled by the crush of people. But what now should Peter say to explain what has just happened?

As we pause here, watching this indescribable scene, here are a few closing questions I urge us all to ponder. *Perhaps spend some time talking with Jesus asking Him to help you understand His perspective on this remarkable scene:*

1. Does Jesus want such miracles to happen in our day, wherever you live?
2. Does Jesus want you and me to be involved in such miracles in our day?
3. What will be required for such miracles to happen and for you and me to be involved?
4. If these types of things are NOT happening where you and I live, why not? What does it mean?

I wonder what you'll hear from God as you pray about these questions and consider what difference it would make in your part of the world if TODAY something like this miracle happened and YOU and I were part of it?

Today's Scripture is Acts 3:6-11.