

THURSDAY 09 June 2022 "Spiritual momentum" (Acts 3:1-4)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

The word '**momentum**' is very significant in the arena of sports or politics or business or even military conflict. *You probably know what it looks and feels like to be part of a 'momentum swing', don't you?* It occurs when something happens to change the momentum of a movement from one direction to another.

In business a momentum swing can be great news if it's an upturn in business or terrible news when a downturn happens. In sports it can happen with a 'time out' or substitution of players or a goal or a homerun or a touchdown. *But what does it look like when there is 'spiritual momentum'?* Have you ever been part of a 'great awakening' or a 'revival' or something that has caused a dramatic 'spiritual momentum swing' in your part of the world?

The past few days we've been in Jerusalem about 2000 years ago, around the time of the Pentecost Festival. *A major event took place when the Holy Spirit of God came in great power...* a loud wind, tongues of fire which descended on the followers of Jesus, and then the Holy Spirit empowering them to speak in languages they did not know, but pilgrims from around the world, who had come for Pentecost, recognized those languages as their dialects! (Acts 2:1-12) Then from accusations of being drunk, Peter's anointed message stirred so deeply in people that they repented of their sin, acknowledged that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, and trusted Him to be their Savior! 3000 of them were baptized in the pools in Jerusalem and the Holy Spirit came upon them as well. The record says: **"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."** (Acts 2:47) *These few words describe a 'spiritual momentum swing' as DAILY people were drawn to the resurrected and ascended Jesus by what they saw and heard in those new followers of Jesus... the evidence of the Holy Spirit of God!*

Jesus had said **"I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not prevail..."** (Matt. 16:18) Now for a moment let's roll the clock of time back for the city of Jerusalem and consider some other times when a great event had taken place in this city which resulted in a powerful work of God, a 'spiritual momentum'? Perhaps 60 days before Acts 2:47, Jesus had been crucified on a hill outside this city, and then three days later He rose from the dead! *That remarkable event caused a 'spiritual momentum swing', for those who had tried so hard to silence Jesus suddenly found themselves humbled by His great resurrection power!*

The week before Jesus' resurrection, He had come riding on a donkey over the hill called Mount of Olives and a spontaneous uproar from the crowd rose up hailing Jesus as their king and calling Him to save them! That was a 'spiritual momentum swing'!

If we go back further, to about 445bc a great 'spiritual momentum swing' had taken place when Nehemiah and the people of Jerusalem completed building their great wall all around the circumference of their city in only 52 days! (Nehemiah 6) *That great feat was accomplished because almost everyone put their hands to the work and Nehemiah refused to be discouraged by those opposed to this great project!*

Go back further to 700bc when King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah went up to the Temple to meet with God regarding the Assyrian army which had surrounded Jerusalem and was determined to destroy the city and the Temple and take all the people captive. Assyria had already devastated the northern kingdom of Israel about 25 years before, so the people of Jerusalem knew they were no match for this great army. All they could do was pray and ask God for His help. 2 Chronicles 32 and 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37 all give us the historical account of a great 'spiritual momentum swing', as God sent an angel to defeat the Assyrian army, and what few was left of them withdrew and Jerusalem was spared! *A great spiritual revival followed in Jerusalem which impacted the people of that city for many years to come!*

Oh, there are many other similar 'spiritual momentum swings' in God's history of Jerusalem, but that gives us a glimpse of what God has done in that unique City for His great glory through the centuries! Even today, in 2022, God continues to work mightily in and through followers of Jesus in Jerusalem.

I can't tell you how much time there is between Acts 2:47 and Acts 3:1 which opens with: **"One day Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of afternoon prayer - at 3pm. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the Temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the Temple courts. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money."** (Acts 3:1-3)

Now if you live in or have visited any large city anywhere in the world, it shouldn't be hard for us to put ourselves in this event. Beggars sit near cathedrals or large churches of every denomination in every city. Outside Catholic cathedrals, Protestant churches, Muslim mosques, and Hindu temples the scene is all the same. Why? *Because beggars assume people, going into a place of prayer and worship, will be generous.* It begs the question, why don't beggars sit outside courtrooms or office buildings or hospitals or schools or Universities or especially Government buildings?

You'll remember Peter and John are not from Jerusalem, they are fishermen from Galilee. They are friends and disciples of Jesus. They had come to Jerusalem at Jesus' request several days before His ascension and they stayed in Jerusalem after His ascension at His urging.

He had told them to wait for the powerful coming of the Holy Spirit. *It would be a huge "spiritual momentum swing" for their discouragement at Jesus' departure would be replaced with something they'd never experienced or seen before...* a great awakening in Jerusalem, as 3000 people were drawn to Jesus through what they saw and heard as Peter explained who Jesus was, and the significance of His death and resurrection. Evidently Peter and John remained in Jerusalem for some time after that powerful Pentecost Festival, WHY? They continued to teach those hungry to learn of Jesus; lead those just hearing about Jesus to place their trust in Him for salvation; and baptize those who experienced being "born again"!

It was a remarkable few weeks and yet the 'momentum' was quieting down as most of those pilgrims who'd come from far away for Pentecost were now leaving Jerusalem to return home. But that day, as Peter and John went up to the Temple to pray and continue teaching new believers in Jesus, *what they didn't know is that God was about to do something that would re-ignite the spiritual momentum in Jerusalem, in a huge way!* Luke's record says: **"Peter looked straight at the beggar, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So, the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them."** (Acts 2:3,4)

How many hundreds of times had this beggar lifted his little clay bowl expecting to hear a few coins dropped in as people walked by. He'd say thank you and they'd say, "may God bless you". People say things like that as they walk into a place of prayer and worship, right? Maybe you have. But this time was different for the beggar. *What he didn't know is that his life was about to change!* I don't think Peter knew it either. I suspect Peter and John were busy talking as they hiked up the steps toward the gate Beautiful, and they weren't thinking about the beggar... but suddenly the Holy Spirit reached into this moment and stopped Peter and John in their tracks, right in front of the beggar. Peter reached into his pocket... nothing. John reached into his pockets... empty. Now what? *Suddenly the Holy Spirit did what Jesus had promised He would do... He guided Peter in exactly what to say and do, and He empowered Peter to be part of a life changing defining moment, a 'spiritual momentum swing' moment for the entire city of Jerusalem!*

Let's pause right here. Oh yes, I'll join you right back here tomorrow and we'll experience that 'spiritual momentum swing' miracle together. For today, may I simply ask if you are hungry for a spiritual momentum swing in your life, your family, your church, your city? Do you suppose Jesus would like to see a spiritual awakening happen in your city even more than you would? Why don't you spend a few moments with Jesus right now asking Him what He'd like to do in your city to create a great 'spiritual momentum swing', and how He'd like to include you in it? Would He find you ready, as He found Peter and John and a beggar ready?

Today's Scripture is Acts 3:1-4.