

Expectations Acts 3:1-26

Introduction

How many of you have ever found yourself expecting one thing but getting something different?

For how many of you was that a positive experience?

That is, for how many of you did you get more than you expected?

Kathy and I went through that experience when we moved from rural Burlington to Delavan

We had been searching for a new home for what seemed like a long time and had been in about 3 dozen different houses

We finally found what we thought was the right house – at least it was a house we could live with

So we made an offer only to have it rejected and we just couldn't come to what we believed were fair terms on the house

To say we were blue would be an understatement

We believed we were following God's direction in making the move and we just couldn't understand why we couldn't find a house

And then a house quietly came on the market and we were informed about it being for sale before it was listed with a realtor

Based on the other houses we had looked at, this house should have been way out of our price range but we went to look anyway

And the house was just what we had been looking for and when they told us the price they wanted it was identical to the maximum amount we had budgeted to spend

We had been expecting one thing but God gave us something far better than we could have ever imagined

God often operates like that

We get our minds set on something we believe to be ideal and he comes along and gives us more than we could have even imagined possible

We will see that truth on a couple of different levels in our passage this morning

Acts chapter 3 begins with the account of a lame beggar's healing which draws a crowd and serves as the catalyst for Peter's second recorded sermon

Both the lame beggar and Peter's audience had expectations that were far too small

And then God stepped in and gave them much more than they expected

I have divided chapter 3 into two major sections:

I. is **The Miracle** and I have further divided it into two sections titled

The Healing of the Lame Beggar and **The Response of the Crowd**

II. is titled **The Sermon** and is divided into

The Miracle Attributed and **The Call to Repentance**

I. The Miracle

Remembering back to last week when we looked at Peter's first sermon at the occasion of Pentecost we saw how it came about as the result of the miracle of foreign languages drawing a curious crowd And we saw how Peter's sermon was centered on Christ as he asserted that Jesus was the Messiah Peter recounted for his audience the death, burial, resurrection and glorification of Jesus He pulled no punches as he boldly put the blame for the crucifixion squarely on his audience And he called for them to turn to Christ in repentance and to be baptized in obedience Thereby making Jesus their Savior and their Lord As a result they were "cut to the heart" and some 3,000 people responded and were saved that day

Please join me in Acts 3 and I will read the first section of our text which consists of **verses 1-11**

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

We really have no idea when this event took place because no clues are given It could have been days after Pentecost or it could have been months – we just don't know The account begins with the word "now" which is something like beginning "once upon a time"

This incident just seems to have happened one afternoon as the apostles went about their normal routine but in light of Luke's careful reporting we would be safe to recognize this event being the next big thing to happen after Pentecost

A. The Healing of the Lame Beggar (1-8)

The scene begins with Peter and John making their way to the temple for the afternoon prayers These prayers took place at 3pm immediately after the afternoon sacrifice

This is referred to as "the ninth hour" in our passage because according to the Jewish clock the day began at 6am which would be "zero hour" and then adding 9 hours to it would bring us to 3pm

What we see here is a lived-out example of **Acts 2:42** where we read of the early church being devoted to "the prayers"

And of **Acts 2:46** where we read that they were devoted to "attending the temple together"

There are those who propose that the apostles continued to go to the temple only seeking to preach But it seems even more likely that they maintained many of the religious rituals that they had been steeped in all their lives

Certainly there was nothing wrong with continuing in the corporate prayers and it would have been more unnatural for them to have abruptly given up doing so

In any event, as the apostles made their way to the temple a lame beggar was also being transported to his usual station there to beg for alms from those entering the temple

What might have appeared to be a chance meeting was in actuality a divine appointment of which neither party was aware

We are told that this man was “lame from birth” – literally “from his mother’s womb”

His inability to walk wasn’t due to an accident or illness he was simply born that way

And in **Acts 4:22** Luke reveals that he is over 40-years old at this time

So here we have a man who is middle-aged and who has a congenital defect that is so severe that he must be carried about from place to place – he has never had any mobility of his own

Professional beggars would have been a common sight at the temple in those days and even though they were a despised class they were able to eke out a living from their begging because the giving of alms was considered a virtue in Judaism and those entering the temple were predisposed to do so

According to **Leviticus 21:17-20** people with defects like lameness were prohibited from entering the temple

Therefore, they lined the steps and walkways leading to the temple in order to be noticed by those going in – all of the gates would have been lined with beggars

And the man in our account had a customary spot in front of what Luke refers to as the Beautiful Gate

Having spent a lifetime begging, the man’s request was likely an automatic, mechanistic cry without much, if any focus on those who were passing by

We see this today as we pass those who are panhandling don’t we?

There is a kind of social contract between beggar and passers-by where we really don’t make eye contact with one another

It’s like everyone recognizes that it is a degrading transaction that requires a lack of personal contact

Anyway, the man in our account notices Peter and John and he launched into his appeal

At best, all he expected was a few coins but this was to be a more different transaction than he could have ever imagined

To begin with it was different in that Peter and John stopped and really looked at him instead of just tossing some money as they passed by

Then Peter commanded him, “Look at us” – a clear violation of the unwritten social contract to ignore each other

I can only imagine that the man thought this was going to be good – these guys wanted recognition for what they were going to give him

Therefore, how Peter started out must have been a disappointment

He said, “I have no silver or gold...” and you can picture the beggar’s face falling

Peter couldn’t give what he didn’t have and he had no money to give but he did have the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit to heal and he gave that instead –

When we started this series in Acts we saw in **Acts 1:1** how Luke stated that in his gospel account he had “dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach”

And we determined that Acts was about how Jesus continued his ministry by the Holy Spirit through the apostles

And here we see that Peter gave the man healing in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth

In other words the man was healed by Jesus through the working of the Holy Spirit in Peter

Peter commanded the lame man to “rise up and walk” which indicates an ongoing action

More like “rise up and be walking” to “continue walking” indicating that this was a permanent healing

Then Peter reached out and helped the man to his feet and it was only then that the man was healed

Healing required faith on the part of Peter who had to act on his belief that he had the power to heal and faith by the lame man that he could actually do what he had never done before

I fear that we have the tendency to read past these miracles in the Bible without truly appreciating them

We know how long it takes for someone who has had some sort of medical incident that causes them to lose their ability to stand and walk to relearn how – it’s a long, painful, frustrating process

I know that I have trouble getting up and moving if I sit or lie down for too long!

But this man who had never stood, never balanced his weight on his feet and legs, who had never taken a single step was instantaneously able to stand, walk, and even leap about!

This required not just a physical healing but also a healing of the mind

There is absolutely no way this should have been possible – and it wasn’t possible except for by the power of the name of Jesus – it was a complete healing by supernatural means

This is a great picture of what happens to a person at the time of their salvation

He wasn’t just given physical soundness and well-being that he had never known

He didn’t have to struggle to his feet and complete the transformation –

There was nothing he had to do except believe and put that belief into action by standing up

He only had to put his complete trust in Peter’s assurance that healing was his and he leaped quickly and confidently to his feet and began to walk about

He was completely healed and given a new way of life in an instant and things would never be the same for him again – he was a new man!

At the moment a person recognizes the truth about their spiritual condition and accepts that salvation is possible in Jesus Christ

All they must do is put their complete trust in him for reconciliation with God and they too become a new person for whom things will never be the same

Having been completely restored, the newly healed man rejoiced as he used his newfound mobility to move about to the glory of God

And he called out praises to God with his voice that until moments ago had been used to beg

He followed the apostles into the temple – remember he had never been allowed inside before – and he began leaping and giving thanks to God

B. The Response of the Crowd (9-11)

Of course this caught the attention of the crowd who saw his miraculous transformation

He was a well-known fixture at the Beautiful Gate as he had likely laid there begging daily for years

In **verse 10** we read that they were “filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him”

They were scratching their heads in bewilderment and beside themselves with astonishment

The crowd obviously recognized that something miraculous had just happened in front of their eyes

Unlike the fake healers of today there was absolutely no way this was a hoax

They knew this man had been a regular fixture at the Beautiful Gate and here he is walking and leaping

And they found it difficult to get their minds around the reality that they were seeing

There was no way the man was going to let go of Peter and John so as they made their way to their customary place on Solomon’s portico he went along with them

Solomon’s Portico was a porch on the east side of the temple just outside the Court of the Gentiles that was commonly used as a place of teaching

It measured about 90 feet by 30 feet and was covered by a roof that was supported by a double row of columns

And the crowd, expecting an explanation of this phenomenon, ran to follow and hear what the apostles might have to say

II. The Sermon

Just as happened at Pentecost, the crowd was drawn by a miraculous sign which piqued their interest Peter recognized the opportunity to present the gospel just as he had at Pentecost and he rose to the occasion

The lame man had expected a few coins and received a changed life through complete healing

The crowd was expecting an explanation of the miracle but Peter gave them much more

Follow along as I read **verses 12-16**:

And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

A. The Miracle Attributed (12-16)

In this portion of the passage we see how Peter properly attributes the miracle to Jesus

He begins by asking, “Why are you looking at us like we did something here?”

He makes it clear that neither he nor John deserve any of the credit for the healing

It’s unfortunate how often, when the Holy Spirit is working and the church is exhibiting power, the focus of the people can turn to the servant and not the Master who is working through the servant

But, there is great and grave danger in misattributing or misappropriating God’s power as many ministers and their congregations have discovered

But Peter hastens to deny that the miracle healing was due to any power or piety on the part of the apostles

He preemptively rejects the adulation of the crowd and gives the credit to Jesus and to the power and authority of his name

In **verse 13** Peter uses terminology that would have been readily recognized by his hearers as he begins by telling them about Jesus

First he tells them that God had glorified Jesus and he uses the same name that God used when he introduced himself to Moses from the burning bush in **Exodus 3:6** and invoking the theme of Jesus as the Suffering Servant from Isaiah

Then just as he had in his first sermon, Peter got right in their faces

He reminded them how they had rejected Jesus and clamored for the murderer Barabbas when turning Jesus over to Pilate for punishment

Peter bluntly told them that they were therefore guilty of killing Jesus – who, with some measure of irony, he calls the Author of Life

And he again painted the stark contrast between their treatment of Jesus and God’s treatment of him

They had killed the Author of life but God had raised him from the dead – a fact to which he and John were eyewitnesses

And he says that it is by Jesus' name that the man before them had been completely healed

What Peter means to reveal here is that Jesus did the healing

Jesus was present in the healing with his power and the healing was the work of Jesus

Jesus was continuing the ministry he began while present on the earth through the church

Then just as Peter gets started in **verse 16**, he interrupts himself with the words "by faith in his name"

Again, this is the faith of Peter who reached out his hand in assurance of the power of Jesus to heal

Along with the faith of the lame man as he leaped to his feet to stand and walk

Notice that the healing only took place when trust and belief were put into action – when faith was exercised

To say "in Jesus' name" is not a magic formula that gets us whatever we want with absolutely no effort on our part – God means for his children to be active

And in the case of the lame man, no benefit would have accrued to him without the exercise of faith

But lest we think of faith as a form of works we need to remember that even our faith is a gift from God as we see in **Ephesians 2:8** and we would have no faith to exercise if God didn't first give it to us

In this case faith was exercised and the power of Jesus was brought to bear and the result was publicly witnessed the miraculous outpouring of perfect health on the beggar who had been lame from his mother's womb

B. The Call to Repentance (17-26)

But miracles are rather weak things

They inspire wonder, amazement, and curiosity but miracles alone do not save anyone

So, having exalted the name of Christ and properly attributing the miracle to him, Peter next issues a call to repentance in **verses 17-26**

"And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

Peter begins his call to repentance by making a rather gracious statement

He says that his audience and the religious leaders denied and killed Jesus out of ignorance

They didn't recognize the Messiah so they weren't guilty of deliberately killing him

However the fact that they acted in ignorance didn't remove their guilt for having done so

They were still guilty of the crime but their ignorance in doing so left the door of hope open to them for atonement

In Numbers 15 we see that the Law made allowance for the atonement of unintentional sins but that there was no provision for “high-handed” or willful sins

So being called ignorant would have brought relief instead of outrage in this case

Then in **verse 18** Peter reveals that even their actions done out of ignorance were a part of God’s plan and that their deeds had fulfilled prophetic Scripture in spite of the awfulness of them

And in **verse 19** Peter revealed that atonement was available through repentance

The individuals in his audience needed to alter their attitude toward Jesus and align their understanding with God’s truth

If they would recognize and accept Jesus as Messiah, their **sins would be blotted out**

All of their sins, even the sin of rejecting and killing the Messiah, would be erased completely from God’s record

That’s the **first benefit** of repentance

The **second benefit** is that God wouldn’t stop with wiping their slate clean but he would also add “**refreshment**” as we see in **verse 20**

In other words, they would experience newness of life that they could not even imagine as they lived for Jesus

And just like the man who was no longer lame they too would find themselves leaping and praising God

And then the **third benefit** is that **Jesus will return and gather them to himself** in due time

Jesus is currently sitting at the right hand of the Father awaiting the time of final consummation and the day will come when the Father will send the Son once more and all will be restored

Then, as he did in his first sermon, Peter supports his contentions with Scripture

In verses 22-24 he looks to the Moses and Samuel as prophets who spoke of Jesus

Verses 22-23 come directly from Deuteronomy 18:15, 19

In that passage, Moses is speaking of the Messiah who would come as a kind of “second Moses”

And in **verse 24** the mention of Samuel reminds us that it was Samuel who anointed David as king and spoke to him of the establishment of his kingdom forever – promises that were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus

Then in verses 25-26 Peter tells his audience that they, as Jews, are heirs of the promises made by God and that those promises had found their fulfillment before their very eyes

While they had not recognized or believed Jesus while he was on the earth they could still do so now God didn’t want to see them forfeit their covenant promises so he was giving them a second chance

In **verse 25** Peter quotes Genesis 2:18 directly

“And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed”

It seems unlikely that Peter understood the full implication of those words at this time

His understanding of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s redemptive plan seems to have been as a result of the vision he received while on Simon the tanner’s roof which we’ll see later on

But he is clearly making the point that atonement and salvation are available to his countrymen through their repentance and that they can still have a place in God’s plan to bless the families of the earth

Conclusion

The lame man was going about his business of begging as usual
And when he saw Peter and John coming he anticipated a blessing but his expectations were too small
He was expecting far less than was possible and far less than he received

The Jewish people were going about their lives and were faithful to attending the prayers
And they were expecting the Messiah to come
But they too were expecting the wrong thing and were looking for a political Messiah who would
release them from the tyranny of Rome
They weren't expecting a serving, suffering Messiah who would release them from the penalty of their
sins
And they failed to recognize the Messiah when he came because their expectations were wrong

Unfortunately, the world hasn't changed
Many people are living their lives expecting the wrong things
Ask anyone you meet if they want to go to heaven and if they expect God to welcome them in –
and the vast majority will answer in the affirmative

But they expect to get there on their own terms and their expectations are wrong
As Peter told his audience there on Solomon's Porch the only way to heaven is through repentance
Salvation requires an acknowledgement of who Jesus is and a surrender to his Lordship

Even in the church I fear that we often live expecting too little from God
We forget that the same power that worked through Peter is available to us
We forget that our job is to continue the ministry that Jesus began during his time on earth
And we settle for far too little leaving the real blessings unclaimed as we fail to exercise faith that we
can actually realize the same sorts of victories that the early church enjoyed

The fact that the lame beggar was healed physically, as impressive as that was, was too small of a thing
to expect

The apostles weren't satisfied with the ability to just go around healing people – they knew more was
possible and more was expected

The real healing took place after the miracle drew the crowd and Peter preached his message to them
As we will see next week many who heard Peter that day believed and were saved

And that should be our mission today because that is the mission of Jesus
We have the same power to proclaim the excellencies of Christ to the world, to make disciples from
the world, and to fulfill the mission we have been given
We just need to adjust our expectations and move forward trusting that the Holy Spirit will guide and
empower us as we act as God's servants

Next week we will look at the results of Peter's second sermon and how the fledgling church reacted in
as we study Acts 4:1-31

Let's pray.