

November 21

Acts 3, 4, 5 and 6

Today you read Acts 3 and 4 and had a brief glimpse into the life of the church in Jerusalem in the first weeks and months after Pentecost.

The healing of the crippled beggar is the first recorded miracle of the apostles after Pentecost - though in verse 43 of chapter 2 we were told that many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. Just as Jesus had promised, the apostles had been given, by the Holy Spirit, the power to do miraculous works. The result of this particular miracle, and the preaching that explained and accompanied it, is recorded in what we read: The credentials of the apostles were established - people were listening to their messages, they were believing, and they were giving glory to God.

I want to stop here to think with you for a moment about why God did such mighty miracles through these first century Christians and about why, perhaps, we do not see such things happening in our midst today. Part of the key may be found by thinking about something Peter said in the message that we read in chapter 2. In his great Pentecost sermon Peter had said: *"Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs..."* (Acts 2:22) One of the reasons - perhaps the most important reason - God works miracles is for the purpose of establishing the credentials of His spokesperson.

These miracles are so that people will know that the miracle-worker speaks for God and that the message he brings comes from God. Now, in the Book of Acts, we find the apostles (at least Peter, John, Paul and Philip) performing great miracles, but also one other - Stephen, upon whom the apostles had laid hands. But there is no indication that the ability to work miracles was given by the Holy Spirit to other Christians. This is possibly because it was the apostles who were the spokesmen for God. They were bringing the Word of God - this new revelation from God that was on par with Scriptures of the Old Testament. These miracles were to credit the words that accompanied them - so that people would accept the word of God, which was that Jesus was alive and that he had redeemed them.

Now despite the fact that all kinds of amazing miracles are reported around us, the truth is that not very many truly verifiable miracles have occurred in the church since these times, and most of those that have come, have come from missionaries over seas.

This is one of the reasons. The primary function of a miracle is to accredit the message and the messenger as one who truly speaks for God. Before the completed Bible - which carries its own verifiable credentials - miracles were necessary to identify truth. When the writing of Scripture finished, all the truth that we need for life and godliness was also finished. And so, one of the most important reasons for miracles ceased also.

As a result of these miracles, we see a few things happening here in Acts. One, the church is growing rapidly and, and two, the Jewish leaders are scared and threatened. And because of these things, the apostles are being thrown into jail repeatedly.

Despite this, we see in Acts 3, Peter heals a crippled beggar. And we see the reaction of this beggar is clearly described. He was healed and he went into the temple courts jumping and praising God. And it also says that when all the people saw him, they were filled with wonder and amazement.

A thought that I had was – how often do I praise God for the things he's done in my life? Our reaction to what God has done for us is a primary way that people can see Jesus. And this made me think about my own life – and my own reaction to God answering prayers or just for his continual blessing upon my life.

Acts 2:10 says that the people were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to them. Do we give God the chance to wonder and amaze people through our life? Now, it's likely that nothing this dramatic has happened in our lives, but that doesn't mean people can't be amazed by what God has done.

I often believe the lie that stories from my life aren't that unique or that God couldn't use it. And some of you might believe the same lies – but the truth is this. We all have been blessed immensely – and God has done miracles in our own lives.

DO we praise God like this when he does things? Are we excited when God shows up in our lives? These every day stories that we have are the stories that bring people observing us to Jesus. Even the people that are just around us – the ones we work with. Our families. This passage really made me think about the friends that I have – do they see me praising Jesus?

And the last thing that I observed in today's reading was that Peter is all about Jesus. He takes no credit for anything. He just made this man walk – and he gives all of the glory to Jesus. Even in front of the judges, he claims to have no power but the power that Jesus has through him.

I couldn't help but think of my own life, which is so much less powerful than Peter's, and how I often take the credit! But here, Peter makes this crippled man walk in 3:16, he says "It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him."

So, a quick recap from today's reading. We talked about the significance of healing powers and miracles in this time – and how it was needed to give validity to the words of the apostles. We then talked about the fact that our praise and glory that we give to Jesus – brings others to Him. And finally, we covered that Peter was ALL about Jesus. He didn't take credit – he gave all the glory to his King, whom he knew had the power.