

**Service - 04-18-21**  
**Ps 4:1-5; Acts 3:12-19; 1 Jn 3:1-7; Lu 24:36b-48**  
**Third Sunday in Easter**

The Apostle Peter's sermon is strong stuff. He begins by asking, "...why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" He is talking to his fellow Hebrews in Jerusalem. Peter tells them they "handed over and rejected Jesus." Peter proclaims that Jesus is "the Holy and Righteous One – the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead." (Acts 3:13-15) I believe he is amazed that these people who have gathered because of shocking and miraculous news, do not understand how the lame man was healed. He's saying in effect, "You weren't paying attention to how God glorified Jesus when He raised Him from death. How can you not know God's resurrection power in Jesus Christ?"

You and I are also in danger of holding the gospel at arm's length – sitting passively as the water of Life gushes from the fountain – sleeping in the blazing light of God's presence. We are in danger if we minimize the impact of this first miracle that came about by Christ's resurrection power after His ascension back to heaven. This healing took place after Pentecost (Acts 2).

Now, with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Peter is not going to let the glory of God shine on without waking people up to its wonder. People rush to see something wondrous – and so often miss the source of the wonder. They need to be told!

People are drawn to divine power: when WW II ended – when humans first walked on the moon – when the soaking rains finally came to end the great drought of the 1930s people danced and celebrated the good news. Who remembered to thank God for these great blessings?

On the other hand, when President Kennedy was assassinated – or after the tragic events of 9/11 -- people crowded into places of worship seeking comfort and reassurance. Our nation was ready to call out to God. (*cf* Tom Long in *Feasting on the Word*) These former events are joy-filled. These second set of events are ominous and frightening. Why do we humans forget to thank God for all the blessings He gives us --- but run to Him when things go wrong? When do we let go and trust His power all the time?

The healing of the man born lame was a big deal in Jerusalem. All those who worshiped at the temple had seen him begging outside the gate called Beautiful. Many had probably dropped a few pennies in his bowl. So, they look at this man "walking and leaping and praising God," and they clamber to get close and see the phenomenon and to ooh and aah – then look expectantly to Peter and John. They marvel at a man healed – but some don't connect the divine reality with the manifestation of healing in his arms and legs. This event is powerful – like the earth-shaking events I mentioned earlier. Peter and John are walking in the light of Christ – awake and alive to His resurrection power. The unbelieving people are left behind in their unbelief. They would be ready to hear these disciples claim the glory for themselves. By worldly thinking, the disciples could set up a little business of giving spiritual advice and guidance.

Peter preached a sermon back on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit first empowered them. He preaches right here because the people don't understand what is happening. Healing from God calls for expression of faith in the Risen Lord. Peter tells them plainly, "...***His name itself*** has made this man strong, whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you." (Acts 3:16) The disciples (and that means you and me) live by faith in the resurrected Lord.

The church continued to grow in numbers and in faith. This healing miracle before us today attracted many to see what all the excitement was about. More and more people believed and joined the disciples and the Jesus-followers. These new believers need the teaching and preaching of the disciples in order to continue to trust in God's resurrection power – and to continue living their life by that faith. We need this as much as they did. We are different from these 1<sup>st</sup> c. people – but the need to walk by faith, not by sight continues – and will continue as long as this world exists.

*(Continued on next page.)*

The Apostle John of Patmos is writing this letter (1 Jn) to all the churches. He writes to us just as surely as he wrote to the Jesus-followers of the Ancient Middle East, or Asia or Europe. In any culture or society, there grows a group – a congregation – a flock – a church. We are empowered by our Resurrected Lord not to continue in the worldly way of seeing, and hearing and being.

We are the ones bound to Jesus Christ by the covenant cut in His own flesh. Jesus gave Himself freely out of His great love for us:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us! That we should be called the children of God.” We have been given what we never could obtain for ourselves. And we form a community in Christ that has no ethnic, language or national boundaries. We live by the power of God.

Unlike the unbelieving crowd, or the disapproving church leaders, you will know in your spirit when you are in the midst of a miracle – or when a miracle has happened. You will not be duped by the counterfeit or the fake. Just as Jesus is telling the disciples in our gospel reading for today: He went on to open their understanding of the Word of God, showing them how to read their Bibles with faith. He said, “You can see now how it is written that the Messiah suffers, rises from the dead on the third day, and then a total life-change through the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed in his name to all nations—starting from here, from Jerusalem! You’re the first to hear and see it. You’re the witnesses. What comes next is very important: I am sending what my Father promised to you, so stay here in the city until he arrives, until you’re equipped with power from on high.” (Lu 24:45-49 MSG)

Power from on high is the Holy Spirit. God has made good on the promise. Put your faith in our Resurrected Lord. He has given us the Holy Spirit to guide us through every testing – every challenge. Live in the power of resurrection, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.