

Title: When All You Have Is Jesus
Text: Acts 3:1-10
Theme: Jesus is enough
Series: Acts
Prop Stmtnt: When all you have is Jesus, Jesus is all you need.

Read text:

I was standing near the platform in the sanctuary of the Grace Church in Kirov-Chepetsk, Russia. It was a Sunday night and I had just finished preaching. The congregation was talking in groups, some were making their way out into the sub-zero January night to go home. There was a commotion up the aisle on my left. Members of the congregation gathered in a group and began to pray. A young lady had collapsed. She was having a seizure, it appeared to be epileptic. There was no 911 to call, no ambulance to summon, and good hospital care was not really an option. Sending someone out to get help only works if there is help to get. On this frigid night, we did all that we could. We gathered around and prayed.

The history of the people of God is marked over and over by being in situations where there is no means of rescue, except God. Being in a place like that is terrifying, and yet, when you see God move in an unmistakable way, it is amazing. Like Abraham at the altar with Isaac, Joseph in an Egyptian prison, the Israelites at the Red Sea, you can't go back, you can't go around, and the ferry service wasn't operational. Like Gideon before hundreds of thousands of Midianites, David standing before Goliath, Hezekiah, Isaiah and the Jews in Jerusalem listening to the hoards of the Assyrian forces getting ready to unleash their fury against the city. Only God could save them. These were amazing rescues, but they all pointed to a greater rescue. This account is also a rescue, but it points back as we will see.

Peter and John went to the Temple as they apparently did many days at 3 p.m. which was the time of the evening sacrifice. There was a morning and evening sacrifice every day at the Temple. The evening (3 p.m.) sacrifice was associated with a time of prayer which we learn back as far as Daniel. Since it was a popular time for the Jews to pray, it was strategic for a man who begged for a living to be in a place where he would get some pity and some money from the compassionate ones who coming to pray as well. How do you react to needy people?

I. **Needy people are part of life in this broken world.** (v.3)

The man was over 40 years of age. We find this out in the next chapter. He may have been coming to the Temple to beg for 30+ years. He was a fixture at the Temple. We find out that he was a well-known beggar. His need was legit. He was lame. He could not support his weight at all. He had to be carried. He had been this way since birth. Friends or family members carried him to his place where he was expected to do what he could do – beg.

Did you ever notice how people with obvious needs reveal the unobvious needs in others? How do you respond to people with deep needs that are probably not going to go away anytime soon? We know from the gospels that beggars were a regular part of 1st century life in Israel. They are a regular part of life in this broken world and how you and I think about them and respond to them

says more about us, in a way, than it does them. The poor, the blind, the sick, the lame, the broken were the different types of people that Jesus regularly gave attention and affection to. He healed some who were grateful and some who weren't and Peter and John saw most of it.

There is evidence to suggest that the disabled could expect to be treated with a measure of contempt, even ridicule. We see this in John 9. People with infirmities were considered to be cursed by God. Some people think, "People like this shouldn't be seen in public." That is actually a popular view in eastern Europe. For decades, communism was ashamed of any people with disabilities and people sent their disabled children away to horrendous orphanages to stay so that no one had to deal with them or even see them. It was as if these people did not even exist. Guess who visited the children in those orphanages? The Christians! Our society is so confusing on this. Women who are pregnant with a child that is suspected of being less than 100% perfect are often pressured into considering killing the unborn child. And yet, we have wonderful schools, programs, even events like the Special Olympics for people with disabilities. It is confusing. Both in Exodus 22 and Deuteronomy 10, Israel is reminded that they used to be slaves. Therefore, they need to be compassionate on those who are in desperate circumstances because they used to be in desperate circumstances and they were rescued by God, not because they pulled themselves up by their own bootstraps. I admire people who plan to be generous to the needy. Whether it is putting some extra dollar bills in your pocket to be ready to give them away, looking around at the Coney Island to pay for someone else's meal, or having an actual account that you use for unexpected needs that others encounter, it is right, it is good, it is Christ-like to be prepared to care for those who have needs.

The truth is, this man is a picture of every single one of us. Sin breaks us. Sin renders us so broken that we cannot fix ourselves. This man, sitting at one of the gates that led to the temple was not prepared for what was about to happen. The man asked Peter and John for some money, like he did to most everybody who passed that way. Those who actually noticed him and took the time to look at him were obviously more likely to give him something. Isn't that the first rule of begging? Get people to look at you. If you are the one who is being asked, then eye contact is awkward isn't it? If you do not even look at the person, but act like they aren't there, what are you saying? You don't exist? Look, I know that every person who begs is not legitimate and I have stories. But, every person who begs is a person. And here, the opposite thing happens. Peter is the one who fixes his eyes on the beggar. He sees him as a person. He sees him as a real person with a real need. But, it seems as if the beggar isn't looking at Peter or John any more, he's moved on. But, if there are a lot of people, then you need to ask a lot of people. So, after asking Peter and John, he is probably about to look and see who else he can ask, when Peter says, "Look at us!" That's different!

II. Needy people need Jesus. (3.6)

- Do you really believe that is true for others?

Needy people usually do not know what they need. This man thought he needed money. He was asking for money. Peter said, I don't have any money. But, I've got something better. Peter believed this. He believed that this man needed Jesus, more than this man needed money. I don't

have what you think you need, but I do have what you really need and what I have I am willing to share, because there is enough to go around!

Now, Peter is an apostle, and the apostles were given authority to be able to perform signs and miracles, although that does not seem to be a superpower that they could just use anytime they pleased, like Spiderman, or something. In a few chapters, we read of the execution of James, the brother of John. He was an apostle and he did not get himself out of jail, and neither did the other guys get him out. Peter got out of jail miraculously, but he didn't do it. So, while the apostles did some miracles, I don't get the sense that they went around all day, zapping things, and healing everybody. I do not know how Peter knew that he was supposed to do this for this guy, but he did. And while we are not apostles and we do not have authority to heal diseases, we do know that the ultimate need that people have is not to walk, to be healed, or to have money, but to know Jesus. This man was a needy person. He was just like every single one of us. He had a problem that he could not fix, he needed Jesus. And Peter brought the message of Jesus to him. Peter told him, you need Jesus. When Peter said, "*in the name of Jesus Christ (Messiah) of Nazareth, rise up and walk*" Peter was not saying this like a magical incantation. Peter was saying that by the authority of Jesus (not my authority), but by the authority of Jesus, rise up and walk!" Peter commanded the man to get up!

Stop the movie right here. This had every potential of being disastrous. What if the guy doesn't stand up? What if he stands up and it doesn't work? Did Peter have any tinge of doubt about how this was going to turn out? Peter had some experience with overpromising and under delivering. The truth is, if we expect other people to believe us, we need to believe ourselves, don't we?

Kellie Benge has a brother named Rick who was one of my best friends growing up. Rick is a pastor in Florida. When we were about 17, we had been asked to preach at the summer camp we both were working at. The building where we gathered for chapel had a metal roof and when it came time for Rick to preach, it was raining so hard, that the noise was deafening. There was no way those kids were going to be able to hear hardly at all. So, Rick prayed, out loud and asked God to just stop the rain now. Whoa! What if it doesn't stop? Because it probably isn't going to stop. Now, it's not like he told God to make it stop. He just asked. But even that, in front of all of these kids is going out on a limb. And I appreciated Rick doing that. And it stopped. And in this case, it was not a slow fade, it was shut off instantly. No one moved, or hardly breathed. The only thing we could hear was the drip, drip, drip of the water still coming off the roof.

Do not miss my point. I am not suggesting that God has given us the authority to alter weather or to heal people when we want. The Lord knows I prayed really hard for the rain to stop on the day of my daughter's wedding and before that day was over, I was googling blueprints for Noah's Ark. The more I prayed, the harder it rained. What I am trying point out is that Peter and John were all in. In order to ask this man to put it all on the line and believe Jesus, they had to – and they did.

George Whitefield was an itinerate preacher from England who preached in America in the 1700's. Whitefield and Benjamin Franklin became close friends, although Franklin never embraced the gospel. One day, someone saw Franklin at one of Whitefield's open air meetings listening to the fiery evangelist and said to him, "I didn't know you believed this." Franklin said,

“I don’t. But he does.” Is that what your co-workers think of you? Is that what your friends know about you. I may not believe in Jesus, but she sure does and it shows.

Are you willing to lay it on the line and throw your entire trust upon God? That is what we witness with Peter and John. That is what your world needs to see in you and me. Do you see yourself as the lame man, in need of Jesus? Do you see those around you as the lame man, in need of Jesus? Are you willing to say, “Look at me. Listen to me. You need to trust Jesus.” And then, Peter reaches out with his right hand and grabs the man and raises him up, in that moment, the man’s legs are healed and he does what he has never done before. He doesn’t just stand up, he leaps up! And then without any physical therapy, leg-strengthening exercises or even essential oils and going vegan, the guy starts walking and Peter and John continue on their way into the temple area to pray and this guy is literally walking, and jumping and praising God and he just keeps doing it! Well, of course he just keeps doing it! Wouldn’t you? If your life had just been hijacked by the power of Jesus, if you really knew what you were saved from, and what your life was like, and you spent years knowing how broken you were, how there was no hope for you and what a problem you were for so many, and you wondered what was going to happen to you, could you ever marry and have kids, would your friends or family ever abandon you, ...and now, in one moment, all of that was changed, you’d be a little jacked up too, even if it was a prayer meeting.

Needy people need Jesus. Do you really believe that is true for others? You will not really believe that that is true for others, until you really believe that that is true for you.

III. **When Jesus is all you have, Jesus is all you need.** (3.6-8)

Now, this will become very clear next week, but do not miss this important point. This story is NOT about how you can get your own little miracle from God. God provided healing for this man in that moment because his healing would make much of Jesus. God is always going to do that which is going to make much of Jesus. The healing provided the platform for Peter to preach and make much of Jesus. That is the point. Even this lame man needed the gospel more than he needed his legs healed. If he died as a believer, but lame, he is eternally happy and healed. If he died as a non-believer, but his legs were healed, he is eternally condemned and damned.

Some people take these accounts and try to turn them into promises that they were not intended to give. I talked with a parent who was devastated by the death of his child. The child had been diagnosed with cancer and this man was led to believe that since Jesus healed people in the gospels, that if he believed enough, and if his son believed enough that his son would be healed too. When the healing never came, then he was angry at Jesus. I was angry at those who used accounts like this to say something that it was not intended to say. Just like this lame beggar and just like Peter and John, when Jesus is all you have, Jesus is all you need.

Implications:

- For the church

Tonight is our 4th quarter Member's meeting. There are reports for you to read, and verbal reports that will be given. What you will hear is that while our giving did not meet our budget, it did cover our expenses. You will also hear that we are making good progress on paying off our remaining indebtedness on our building loan. And because of that, we might be tempted to think that while things could always be better, they are, all in all, not too bad. But, honestly, here's our dilemma. We are all tempted to think that if the offerings are good, then the church is doing well, and if the offerings are not good, then the church is not doing well. So, I think that this is a really good time for us to get this point. Peter and John had no money on them. Perhaps they had already given away what they had to another beggar. All they had was Jesus. But, Jesus was all that they needed.

The story is told that Thomas Aquinas visited Pope Innocent II and found the pope at a large table that had a significant amount of coinage on it. The Pope said to Thomas that the church can no longer say silver and gold have I none. Thomas then responded, "but neither can she say, rise up and walk." I don't say that to take a jab at the pope or the RC organization. I tell you that because that is how we are all tempted to think. We are tempted to think that if we had a little more money, then things would be good. Not, if we think that money is our Savior.

Peter and John were broke. But, instead of schmoozing the well-to-do at the Temple, what did they do? They gave their attention to a beggar who at that moment probably had more money than they did. Peter and John were not concerned with their lack of funds; they were concerned with this man's need.

- For the unbeliever (which may be some of you who presume that you are a believer)

Do you see yourself in this story? You are the lame beggar? Your soul is lame. Your very person is broken by sin. You need forgiveness. If you do not have forgiveness you will be judged for your sin. You need a Savior because you cannot save yourself. You cannot cause yourself to be healed and to be whole. And like the beggar, you do not have anything to buy your healing with. All that you bring to the story is your desperate condition and your hopeless need. Do you see that this is what your sin has done to you? You need Jesus. You need to turn from your sin and trust in Jesus. You need to give him the keys to your life. Following Christ is not asking Jesus to take the wheel because you just hit an icy patch (apologies to Carrie Underwood). Following Jesus means, you get on his bus. This need (lame) points to a deeper need (sin) and therefore, this healing points to a greater healing. Only Jesus can rescue you because Jesus refused to be rescued from the cross. He wasn't saved so he could save you.

- For the believer

This does not mean that we have the power to heal. Even Peter recognized that (3.21). While the apostles did signs and wonders, they were only signs and wonders that in that moment made much of Jesus. Peter died by crucifixion. He wasn't enjoying his best life now moment in that event. But, his death made much of Jesus. Beloved, your tenacious, unwavering, unflappable hope through the storms, makes much of Jesus. Your faithful witness to your family and friends and to us says to your world, "Look at us! Follow me while I follow Jesus. He is worth it. He is worth it. Don't quit. We're not too far from home.