

## Willing Vessels

Acts 3:1-10

### **Acts 3:1-10 (NKJV)**

*Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, "Look at us." So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*

God has called you to be a vessel to facilitate someone else's blessing/miracle/salvation.

Christianity begins with grace, and then grace follows us throughout our Christian experience. The Fields are white and the laborers are few!

Here is a story that I believe shows how in our journey we can make someone else's situation better simply by a letting God work through us.

A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He held up a sign, which said: "I am blind, please help." There were only a few coins in the hat. A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some new words. He put the sign back so that everyone who walked by would see the new words. Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy.

That afternoon the man who had changed the sign came to see how things were going. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, "Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?" The man said, "I only wrote the truth. I said what you said but in a different way." I wrote, "Today is a beautiful day but I cannot see it."

Both signs told people that the boy was blind. But the first sign simply said the boy was blind. The second sign reminded people that they were blessed that they were not blind.

We see in our text Peter and John going to the temple at the regular time of prayer. Peter and John are found together often in scripture.

- Luke 5 says they were partners in the fishing business.
- Luke 22: together they prepared the Last Supper in the upper room.

- John 20: running together to the empty tomb on that 1st Easter morning.
- Acts 8: ministering together to the Samaritans.

However, they were quite different from one another...Peter was outgoing and gregarious, always having something to say...never hesitated to give his opinion! But, John was contemplative and reflective...tender, referring to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved!

Some evidence in scripture seems to indicate these 2 didn't always get along. Their personalities were so different that they often had friction in the function.

But now that Jesus has ascended and left these men with His Holy Spirit, they come together...and here they enter the temple together...not competing for greatness, not focusing on each other's faults, but striving to work together for God's glory, forbearing "tolerating, patience" with one another. Giving benefit of the doubt trying to build the Lord's church thru unity and teamwork.

It's truly amazing how people come together when they are filled with the Holy Spirit!

You show me a church where people don't get along and I'll show you a church void of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The same holds true with the bonds of marriage and the harmony in a home. You can rest assured in all cases it will be because of an absence of the Holy Spirit.

God commands us to be in Unity as a living body made up of many members functioning as ONE!

**Psalm 133:1 (NKJV)**

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

**Galatians 5:14-15 (NKJV)**

*For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*

What is God's will for all mankind? That "None should perish" and all come to repentance!

But Pastor who is My neighbor/brother?

**1. This man in (v.2) Born crippled/congenital birth defect...**

Acts 4 says he was over 40 years of age and had never walked a day in his life.

Imagine, his parents knew something was wrong, he'd always be different...other kids would play in the streets, yet he could only watch. They had to carry him as a toddler/boy/teenager/man! He couldn't work/rehab/have a wheelchair...all he could do was to beg for a living.

Now he's in his 40s, his parents are dead or unable to help, no other family to care for him, so every day he'd lay by gate where people had to pass by, and he would beg. "Alms for a poor man?" [hoping for a few coins just to get by]

Those of us today that have the blessings of good health, food in our pantry and a place to lay our heads at night under an air conditioned or heated home, are often only one blessing or paycheck away from the same fate as some of our less fortunate neighbors. People God loves just as much as he does you and I.

**John 3:16 (NKJV)**

*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*

Secular Psychology says man is born neutral at worst, and at best, with a spark of divinity! That's not Biblical! Scripture clearly tells us we are all born Sinners and are only Saved by Grace.

Read the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16 and get a vivid view of how God feels about the poor.

The beggars desire was only to be fed by crumbs which fell from the table of the rich man.

Or what about the diet and attire of John the Baptist.

**Mark 1:6 (NKJV)**

*Now John was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.*

Jesus said born of a woman there was none greater than John.

What about even Jesus himself when he stated;

**Matthew 8:20 (NKJV)**

*And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."*

What about the woman caught in adultery?

**John 8:4 (NKJV)**

*...they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act."*

What about the women at the well that had 5 husbands and the one she was now with wasn't even included in that number!

Or what about the Maniac of Gadara in Mark 5? (man who came by the church Friday)

Let's talk honestly here for a moment...These types of people would not be welcome in most modern-day Churches. They don't look good enough, they don't act good enough and they certainly can't give enough.

Yet Churches ask God for souls to be saved, drug addicts and prostitutes to be delivered. But Lord just do it how we are comfortable, save the hard cases for someone else's watch. Just send us the easy folk.

Let us never forget;

**Hebrews 13:1-3 (NKJV)**

*Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels. Remember the prisoners as if chained with them—those who are mistreated—since you yourselves are in the body also.*

**Luke 14:11-24 (NKJV)**

*For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

*Then He also said to him who invited Him, “When you give a dinner or a supper, do not ask your friends, your brothers, your relatives, nor rich neighbors, lest they also invite you back, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.”*

*Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, he said to Him, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!”*

*Then He said to him, “A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, ‘Come, for all things are now ready.’ But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.’ Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.’ And the servant said, ‘Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.’ Then the master said to the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.’ ”*

Historians tell us this Gate in Acts where the beggar lay was the eastern gate, it was made of Corinthian brass, overlaid with gold and silver. When the sun would rise over the Eastern Mountains, this entrance to the temple was dazzlingly brilliant! And worth a fortune...but laying at it is this man who is marred, disfigured, distorted, outcast.

This gate represents wealth; this man represents need. Loveliness and lameness in the same picture. Does this sound like most modern Churches? And we wonder why we are powerless?

Make no mistake, Man can make some things beautiful. However, man cannot make himself beautiful...only God can do that!

Oh, you can do some things to the outside...this beggar could have cut his hair, shaved, dressed up...but he still would have been lame. The same goes with us cleaning up our lives and going to church...without the Lord coming inside to cleanse and forgive and save, we are still spiritually lame.

We've seen the beggar...now let's see the

## 2. The miracle (v. 3-8)

This miracle could not be reasonably denied

(v. 11) Every day they the Church people would walk right past him, He was a nuisance, He was a problem for the ministry that was causing good people to find another path. Daily they resented him even being there...and now this man's running, now he's leaping, he's praising God...And the Church people in the temple couldn't argue with that!

Peter or John could have given him some money, but he still would have been the same!  
Peter gave him something much better, a new beginning!  
They Chose to Give to what the Church was trying to Avoid!

### **Ephesians 4:7-8 (NKJV)**

*But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men."*

What are you doing with your gifts from Christ? How are you reflecting God's Great Love toward all mankind?

The Call and Commission has been given unto us all. To go and, attend to (v.13) the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: *"And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just."*

Jesus also gave us an illustration of not just who a neighbor really is but how to attend to them.

### **Luke 10:25-37 (NKJV)**

*And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"*

*He said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?"*

*So he answered and said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind," and "your neighbor as yourself."*

*And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live."*

*But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"*

*Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.' So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?"*

*And he said, "He who showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."*

Remember the Rich man had to lift his eyes in Hell but the beggar was comforted in Abrahams presence.

It is not a question of how many friends I have but rather to whom was I a true friend.

This beggar was not in this condition by choice, He had no other place to turn to. But thanks be unto God this story didn't end with him dead at the gate.

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