

#74
June 16, 2019
Acts 3:1-16
Pay Attention

³ Peter and John were going up to the temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, the established prayer time. ² Meanwhile, a man crippled since birth was being carried in. Every day, people would place him at the temple gate known as the Beautiful Gate so he could ask for money from those entering the temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he began to ask them for a gift. ⁴ Peter and John stared at him. Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So the man gazed at them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Peter said, "I don't have any money, but I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk!" ⁷ Then he grasped the man's right hand and raised him up. At once his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ Jumping up, he began to walk around. He entered the temple with them, walking, leaping, and praising God. ⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God. ¹⁰ They recognized him as the same one who used to sit at the temple's Beautiful Gate asking for money. They were filled with amazement and surprise at what had happened to him.

¹¹ While the healed man clung to Peter and John, all the people rushed toward them at Solomon's Porch, completely amazed. ¹² Seeing this, Peter addressed the people: "You Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why are you staring at us as if we made him walk by our own power or piety? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of our ancestors—has glorified his servant Jesus. This is the one you handed over and denied in Pilate's presence, even though he had already decided to release him. ¹⁴ You rejected the holy and righteous one, and asked that a murderer be released to you instead. ¹⁵ You killed the author of life, the very one whom God raised from the dead. We are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ His name itself has made this man strong. That is, because of faith in Jesus' name, God has strengthened this man whom you see and know. The faith that comes through Jesus gave him complete health right before your eyes.

We celebrated Pentecost last Sunday. We continue to celebrate God's Spirit with us and in us. God's Spirit is alive and at work in every believer who will continue to trust and obey to Him.

On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon to every believer. The Holy Spirit gave power to speak in different languages. People from all over the, then known, world



heard the gospel in their own language.

Peter stood up and preached. Jesus, who had been crucified, dead and buried, is now alive. Jesus is the Messiah, God's Son. The followers of Jesus had, and still have, power and courage to boldly proclaim the Good News to everybody.

In chapter 3 we read about Peter and John. They were going to the temple at three o'clock. It is, of course, not the first nor the last time they went to the temple. I bet they had seen this crippled man many times, but this time was different for the man and for Peter and John.

The man was crippled from birth. I would assume that people had been carrying him to these Beautiful Gates for decades so he could beg for some money from those entering the temple. We can easily imagine and see the situation. We can have many discussions about how and why we respond to people who beg for money in our day. We can have many different discussions why we give or do not give money.

"When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he began to ask them for a gift.
⁴ Peter and John stared at him".

Peter and John did not just take a glimpse. Peter and John fixed their eyes on the crippled beggar. They paid attention.

I learned the hard way how important it is to pay attention. It has been almost two years since we have moved to US. Thanks to your consistent love, I think we are adjusting all well. I am still overcoming some of the cultural differences.

For example, baseball: I know and I realize how important it is to you. I am trying. All three of our kids are playing baseball this summer. Many parents take it even more seriously than the kids who are playing. Most of the time I send Andrew to support our children because I am still baffled.



Andrew was with them at the ball field. Oh, did I tell you that these games can be very long? Andrew needed to come home to go to bed. I came as a good mom in the middle of Emma's game. Wesley and Ella had already finished their game. The three of us stood watching Emma play. I see Emma stand and ready to bat. The hair was just like Emma's. The player had the same tall stature like Emma. The helmet was different and I thought to myself, "What a crazy girl. We bought her a nice new helmet and she is wearing somebody else's."

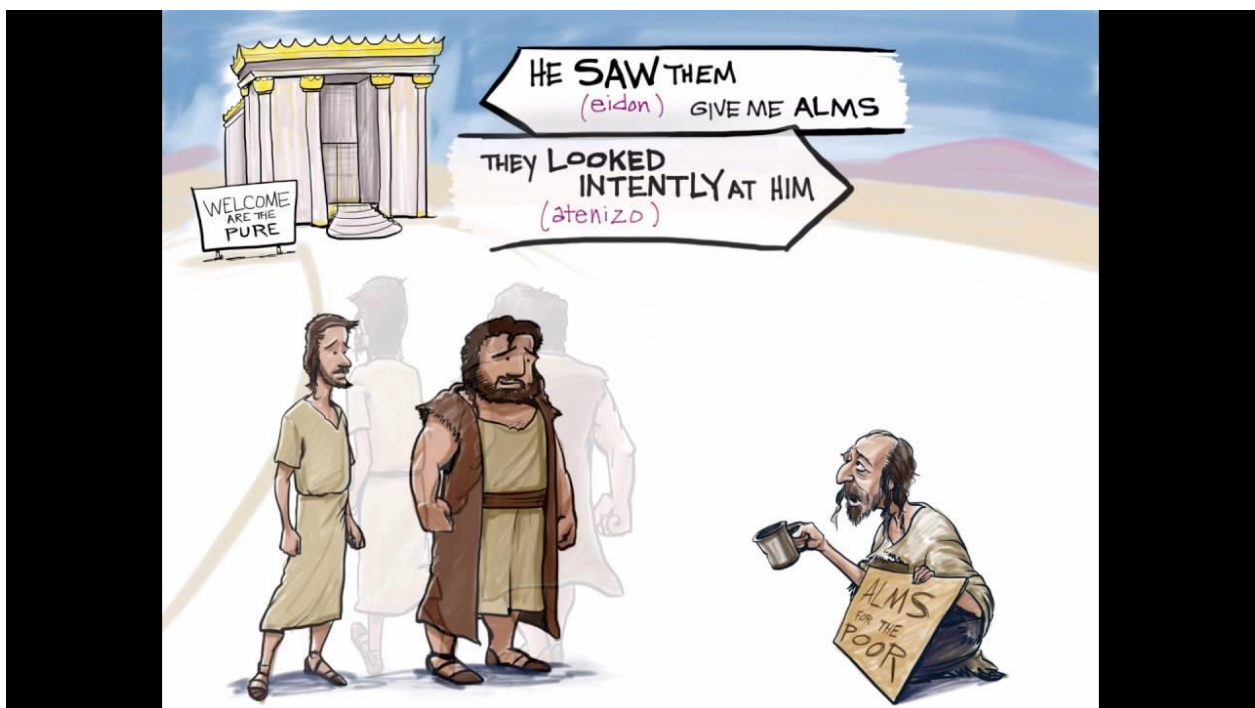
"Emma" hit the ball. I, trying my best to be a supportive mother, cheered. "Go Emma, go." Like this would be not enough, I got my camera and started to film, screaming even louder: "That's my girl, go Emma!" I was so proud of "Emma". The player took the helmet off and I discovered that it was not Emma. It was not even a girl.

I can't remember when I was ever so embarrassed. I very quickly told Ella and Wesley we needed to go. I was hoping nobody would say anything to me.

If only I had just paid better attention. If only I had looked more carefully. How could that happen to me? I, the mother, did not recognize my own child.

I had made a quick presumption and failed to look beyond the outward appearance

Why would you look at the beggar's eyes? They looked deep and long enough not to see just one of "those" people but to see a child of God. They could see a unique



person with his own story.

When is the last time you looked into the eyes of the one who is asking for money? I remember mine very well. About a week ago at one of the intersections in Greenwood a man was standing, as usual, with a sign.

What goes through your mind? "I hope the light is not red so I will not be close to that man." "I will pretend I do not see him." "What good logical excuse can I make for not giving?"

This man did not look at the eyes of the car drivers. His head was down. There was something different about him. I stopped and asked his name. He gave not only

first name but his last name. He was super grateful for the little money I gave him. He told me a little bit about himself. His eyes were hopeful. He had filled out the application to work at Famous Dave's and hoped he would get to work tomorrow. I told I will pray for him and his family. I did. I am glad I met him. Somehow it felt good in my soul to meet him. Something is not the same when we have enough love to look into somebody's eyes -- not afraid to see.

It is easy to judge when we talk about those people -- those groups. It is a different story when we start paying attention to each person and see a much-loved child of God.



Peter and John stared into the beggar's eyes. Peter commanded, "Look at us!". Look at the person's eyes you would like to avoid. "So the man gazed at them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ Peter said, "I don't have any money, but I will give you what I do have". In chapter 2 we read: ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need" So that was true. Peter and John did not have money because money had stopped being the most important thing for them. There was a new power, a new kind of life, which they had discovered.

Two points to consider. One: Peter offered what he had. He said, “I do not have money, but I will give what I have.” What do you have? And are you willing to give what you have? What do you have that is a gift from God that you are willing to give?

Second: this man, did not ask to be healed. Peter even did not ask: Would you like to be healed? The lame beggar asked for money never imagining that healing was even a possibility.

Maybe that is why Peter looked at his eyes and asked him to look at his own eyes. You can see a lot when you let yourself be vulnerable.

Could it be that what we want or seek is not really what we need? Money would have helped him a little bit to meet the needs of the body for that day, but what he got healed his body and his soul.

“In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, rise up and walk!” In the name of Jesus Christ. The name of Jesus has the power. It was nothing that Peter had or was able to do. It was the Holy Spirit who was in Peter and was able to heal in the name of Jesus.

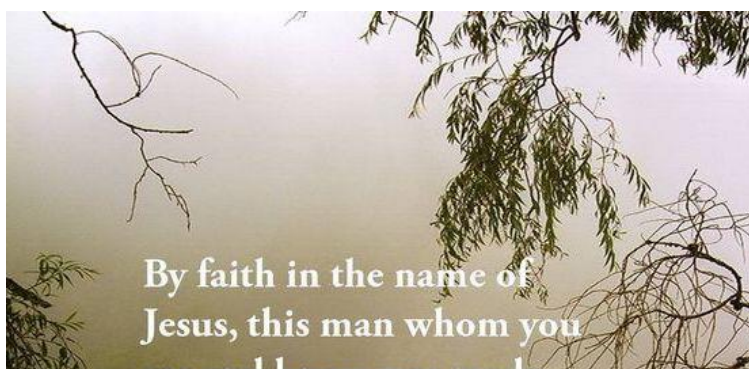
Jesus healed many people. This time, though, it is not Jesus who did the healing. It is Peter, who has received the Holy Spirit and heals in the name of Jesus.

By the power of the Holy Spirit Peter was able to pay attention, looked in the eyes of beggar and was moved to give what he had.

“Then he grasped the man’s right hand and raised him up. At once his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ Jumping up, he began to walk around. He entered the temple with them, walking, leaping, and praising God”.

The man praised God. It was clear that it was God’s work which was done in the name of His Son, Jesus.

That healing opened an opportunity to preach. People were amazed. It caught their attention. It was a way to proclaim the gospel. It was not the end of the miracle. The healed man was the beginning of God’s plan. People listened. More important than healing the body is hearing and believing in Jesus who heals our souls and leads us into new life. The Word of God and faith in Jesus is what saves us and gives us new life. Like the beggar we live in a broken world and our bodies are broken as well.



In verse 16 Peter said: “His name itself has made this man strong. That is, because of faith in Jesus’ name, God has strengthened this man whom you see and know. The faith that comes through Jesus gave him complete health right before your eyes.”

The faith that comes through Jesus. I think there is a big difference between “in Jesus” and “through Jesus.”

As much as I believe in Jesus, my faith is not enough. I always can pray: I believe, help my unbelief. So many believers blame themselves and others for not having enough faith to be healed. I think none of us have enough faith. We believe and we struggle in truly believing, but Peter said: the faith that comes through Jesus.

It is the Spirit of God who brings healing and brings glory to the name of Jesus. I do not know why somebody is healed and somebody is not, but I trust in Jesus. He sees, knows and understand beyond any human limits. God’s loves us. He loves you. His presence and His love is enough for us to trust. This life is not forever and we know it is very short. What is most important is that we will set our minds – pay attention -- and give our hearts to what will last forever.

Today we can celebrate that Madison has paid attention. Madison has responded to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Madison has taken a closer look and has found her life transformed and is giving her life to Christ.

Madison, chose to trust and be baptized in the name of Jesus. Madison is beginning a journey of faith.

May we all renew our commitment to pay attention and look into the eyes of Jesus.