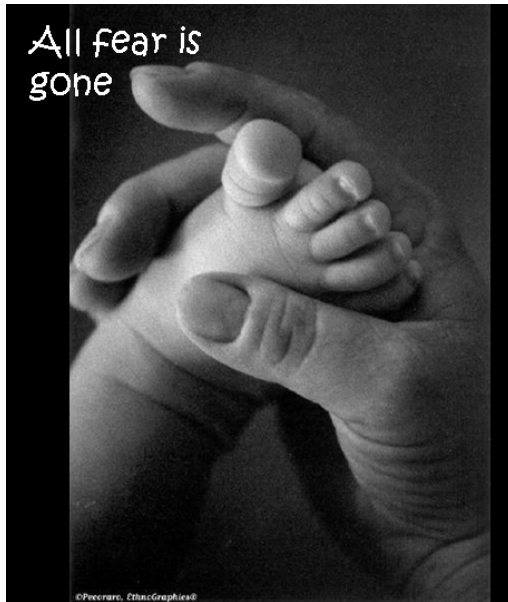


"The Risen Christ Continues to do Miracles"

by Pastor Jeffrey Miskus
Preached on the 3rd Sunday of
Easter

Text: Acts 3:1-21

DATE: March 13, 2011



IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, OUR
CRUCIFIED, RISEN AND ASCENDED
LORD, WHO IS NOT DEAD BUT ALIVE,
WHO IS NOT IN THE TOMB, BUT IS
WITH US HERE, NOW WITH HIS LOVE
AND HIS POWER AS HE LIVES AND
REIGNS AT THE GLORIOUS RIGHT HAND
OF GOD OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.
DEARLY BELOVED CHILDREN OF GOD...

Today are traveling through the Book of Acts. This book covers what happened to the church after Jesus rose from the dead. Chapter 1 of Acts revealed to us that the risen Lord Jesus Christ was still leading, guiding, and directing his church. After Jesus rose from the dead he appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days and spoke to them about the Kingdom of God. Then the disciples watched as Jesus ascended to God's right hand.

Soon after Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon his followers in the form of tongues of fire. Every believer was given the ability to speak about God's works in different languages. Then Peter got up preached a sermon revealing that Jesus' miracles, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension to God's right hand were all part of God's plan to save the world from sin, death, and the devil. 3000 people were converted, baptized and became followers of Jesus. Last week we heard how the church of 3000 was a church that studied the apostle's teachings, shared their love for God and each other, worshipped together at the temple and in their homes, and witnessed to others about their faith in Jesus. We also noted that this is what we need to be doing as a spiritual church. I'm still waiting for those letters and emails by the way. We continue the account today in Acts 1:1-2. "One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer--at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts." Acts 3:1-2. What a perfect place to beg. People going into the temple to pray! If I were begging – that's where I'd want to be.

Remember this scene is not Canada 2009. There is no social safety net in Jerusalem during the year 33 AD. Begging is the only option for many. This man – crippled from birth - is placed at the temple gate by others so that worshippers must walk past him as they go to pray to God. The sense of the passage is that he's been begging there so long he's become part of the doorway.

You can hear them thinking as they walk into the temple... "How am I going to ask God for help if I don't help this fellow who obviously needs my help?"

Two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John are going to the temple to pray and they see this fellow at the gate.

Acts 2: 3-5 tells us what happens, "When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them." When I leave a Toronto Maple Leaf hockey game there are always beggars lining the exits. They're usually holding old Tim Horton's coffee cups – asking for loose change. Thousands of people walk past and what I've noticed (because I've done it too) is that they look away. Peter and John look straight at this beggar. And then they tell him to look at them. They make a purposeful connection – eye to eye – and naturally the man expects to receive some help.

Acts 3: 6-10 "Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him."

Remember what Peter and the apostles had been preaching... Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the dead! Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah. Jesus of Nazareth is God's Son. Jesus of Nazareth paid for the sins of the world when he died on the cross.

Now to back up that message – this incredible, very public miracle. A walking, jumping, God praising cripple has been healed. No one can deny it – the man has been this way from birth and they've had to walk past him to get into the temple for years! Now he's jumping around the temple praising God. There have been no surgeries, no months of physiotherapy, nothing of the sort. A genuine supernatural healing from God has occurred – in the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now the name of Jesus Christ is echoing through the temple courts – with the authority of a miracle of God. Could what these disciples be saying about Jesus be true? How could they be lying about God raising Jesus from the dead – in God's Temple – and then have God do this miracle in Jesus' name?

Acts 3: 11-12, "While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" The first thing that Peter clarifies is that he and John have no power or godliness that made this man walk. Peter says – we are sinful men just like you - and we are humble men – just like you. We don't possess special power or goodness.

Then he starts preaching about who is behind this obvious miracle... Acts 3:13, "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus." Notice that Peter connects Jesus with the God of the Old Testament. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has glorified his servant Jesus by this miracle – demonstrating that Jesus is risen – he is God's Son – he is the Messiah, and he is the Saviour of the world.

Peter continues... Acts 3:13-15 "You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this."

Notice the personal connection that Peter makes again. YOU HANDED HIM OVER TO BE KILLED! YOU DISOWNED HIM... YOU KILLED HIM!

Our witness to people must be personal. We must acknowledge our personal sinfulness and need of a Saviour. Peter makes the people he is speaking to very aware of their sins and acts against God and his Son. They need to see their need of God's Grace. No, this isn't the way that the professional public speakers tell you is most effective. But let's see how effective the sermon is later...

Peter then refers to Jesus as the Holy and Righteous One. The One in a perfect relationship with God – without Sin – pure and good inside and out. The perfect sacrifice to pay for the sins of mankind.

He goes on to say that God demonstrated this by raising him from the dead. Peter then says, "WE ARE WITNESSES OF THIS." We've seen him – touched him – eaten with him – he is risen from the dead.

Not only that but Acts 3:16 Peter continues... "By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see." Faith in the name of Jesus made this happen. There is power in Jesus' name to create faith and give complete healing. And you can all see this – look at the healed cripple standing before you – you are now witnesses!!!

Peter is making important connections for people... Jesus is not dead – he is alive – risen from the dead. Jesus is continuing his work through us – his witnesses. Jesus is not leaving us without proof. This is not some story we made up – Jesus is risen – he's continuing his work. Believe!!!

Now Peter gets personal with the crowd... Acts 3:17-18 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer." This was all part of God's plan from the beginning which he spoke through the prophets and is written down in the Old Testament – the Christ would suffer. Then he gets personal again... Acts 3:19-20, "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who

has been appointed for you--even Jesus. You may be religious – but you're sinners like me – you need to repent – turn to God – and trust in Jesus. Jesus is the Christ – and look at this – we need to see this... "That he may send the Christ who has been appointed for you – even Jesus."

I wonder how many of us, right here in this place, need to hear this today. God sent Jesus to the cross to pay for your sins. Jesus is God's Saviour appointed by God for you. Are you like one of those in the crowd who doesn't really believe that Jesus is risen from the dead? Do you need to hear that good news - take it to heart – repent of your sins and turn to God? Only you know. Peter concludes in this way... "(Jesus) He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets."

For those of us who are believers – we are called to be like Peter and John. We have something to offer this world – something more important than physical healing. Something more important than silver or gold. We have Jesus - We need to be ready and willing to share Jesus.