

You will have power; use it!

Message for Sunday, March 15, 2015
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Acts 3:1-16

Children's Message:

Before the service begins, ask for volunteers from the congregation, including the children. Give them “disabilities”: bind feet to make one lame; put arm in a sling; blindfold some; tell some they cannot speak; put earplugs in some. Go beyond the physical: tell some they are full of fear – afraid to get near anyone; some are full of anger – mad at everyone. Leave them that way for the first part of the service.

When Children’s Time comes, invite them forward with the others. “Heal” them by removing their disabilities “in the name of Jesus Christ.” Ask them how it was: holding a hymnbook, walking forward, reading, being around others.

What did it feel like, to be healed?

To whom do you give thanks for healing—to Bruce, or to Jesus?

Does this mean that if you’re healthy, you don’t need Jesus? That is, is healing all Jesus is good for?

Message “You will have power; use it!”

1) Power promised; Power received; Power put into practice

I like the story of the proud, arrogant lion, who wanted to remind other animals how great and powerful he was. He went to the gazelle and roared, “Who is the king of the jungle?” Trembling, the gazelle answered, “Why, you are, mighty lion.” He went next to the giraffe and roared, “Who is the king of the jungle?” Fearful, the giraffe answered, “Why, you are, mighty lion.” Then he went to the elephant and roared, “Who is the king of the jungle?” The elephant reached out and grabbed the lion with his trunk, slammed the lion to the ground several times, and flung him at last into a large boulder. As the lion lay there he said to the elephant, “Just because you don’t know the answer, you don’t have to take it personally.”

Power is one of the most sought after prizes in life. But when people get it, often the results are not positive. Power can corrupt people. People may use their power to abuse or humiliate others. In the process, they find that they become people that no one likes, miserable people corrupted from the inside out. Power has a decidedly negative side. But it can have a positive impact as well.

As we’ve read in the last few weeks, Jesus promised the disciples that they would receive power when they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They received that power on

the Day of Pentecost. But power for what? Did they receive the power of God simply so they could feel good about themselves? No! They received the power of God in order to live God’s way, to love others, to tell others the good news about Jesus Christ. One person put it this way, “We must never be content to sing ‘Standing On the Promises’ while all we’re doing is sitting on the premises”! Pentecost is to enable us to reach out and touch others.

Today we read Acts 3, and we see the power of God healing a person. We see people who have been touched by the power of God reaching out and touching others.

2) A Human Tragedy

Acts 3:1–2, New International Version:

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.

This is the sad story of a man who was crippled from the time he was born. What a heartbreak that must have been for his parents! Some of you can identify with that family.

This lame man sat and begged at the gate called “Beautiful.” The entire Temple was majestic to look at. This gate must have been particularly lovely to see. Yet, sitting under its magnificent beauty was a suffering human being.

How many of our friends or neighbours or co-workers appear outwardly to be doing OK, yet inwardly they are struggling? They are over-extended financially. They don’t know what to do with their children. Their marriages are falling apart. Their job is hanging by a thread. They’ve lost all self-esteem. They’re guilty and depressed and don’t know where to turn. Behind every door there is human need. Every person has a story to tell. We’ve all been hurt, we’ve all been used, we’ve all failed, and we all need healing. We all need the power and presence of God in our lives.

3) A Heavenly Touch

This man needed Jesus in his life. But how was he to get that? He didn’t know anything about Jesus. He couldn’t get to church, and I’m not sure he would have gone if he could. Why should he go? What was there for him?

This is the attitude of many people today. They hurt, but they hurt alone. And the church is the last place they want to go. Many of them view the church as a judgmental society of self-righteous hypocrites. But even if they have a good view of the church, there’s not

much to motivate them to drag their tired bones out of bed on a Sunday morning in order to come alone to one of its services. If they are ever going to hear the Good News, we must go out to them, instead of wait for them to come in.

Acts 3:3–6, New International Version:

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.

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.”

One of the wonderful things about this story is that none of this was rehearsed. There was no agenda. It just happened naturally. Telling someone else about Jesus was the most natural thing in the world for Peter and John. Jesus had touched their lives, and now they wanted to share that with others:

What the man wanted was money. What he needed was healing. Peter told him they didn’t have what he wanted, but they had what he needed. He wanted them to fill his wallet, but God wanted to fill his heart.

If we are going to touch people with God’s presence, we must be present where they are, reaching out to them, helping them where they need it.

Notice that Peter could only give this man what he had. He said, “**But what I have I give you.**” Peter could not give him any money because he didn’t have any. He could only give what he had. The same is true with us. If we do not have a living relationship with Jesus Christ, we will never be able to share that relationship with others. You can give only what you have.

The apostles didn’t have money, but they had the power of God. What we need most of all is not money or possessions or a nice building, but power. Power to touch people’s lives with the presence of the living God; power to reach out to people and give them hope and healing, friendship and fellowship.

If money is all that people need to get their lives together, the government could save the world. People need the touch of Jesus in their lives. And if you haven’t been filled with his presence, you won’t have anything to give to others who need him.

4) A Healing Transformation

When a human tragedy meets the heavenly touch of Jesus, the result is a healing transformation. The lame man was not only healed of his lameness; his life was transformed. Joy flooded his soul.

Acts 3:7–8, New International Version:

Taking him by the right hand, Peter 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.

What did this mean to him? It meant now that he could walk. He could work. He could live a full life. But it meant far more than that. It meant that somebody cared. It meant that God loved him. How could he help but rejoice and be excited?

We should also be joyful and excited about what Jesus is doing in our lives. Vance Havner, a pithy preacher, once said, “Some dear souls think themselves dignified when, really, they are petrified.”

Summary and Next Steps:

- The Holy Spirit fills us, giving us power to go and tell others about Jesus Christ, to touch others with his love.
- All around us there are people who are hurting and who need hope; people who need Jesus.
- Be natural; be yourself. When you tell someone else about Jesus, just share what he had done for you. Ask them if they would like that, too.
- You can’t give something to someone else, though, if you’re not filled yourself. Have you committed your life to Jesus Christ? Did you do it again this morning?
- Smile! Have fun! If you’ve got Jesus inside you, you’ve got joy inside you. Let it out! Shine for others to see.
- Homework: Read Acts 4 in preparation for next Sunday