

[Acts 5](#)

1

Leaders Note

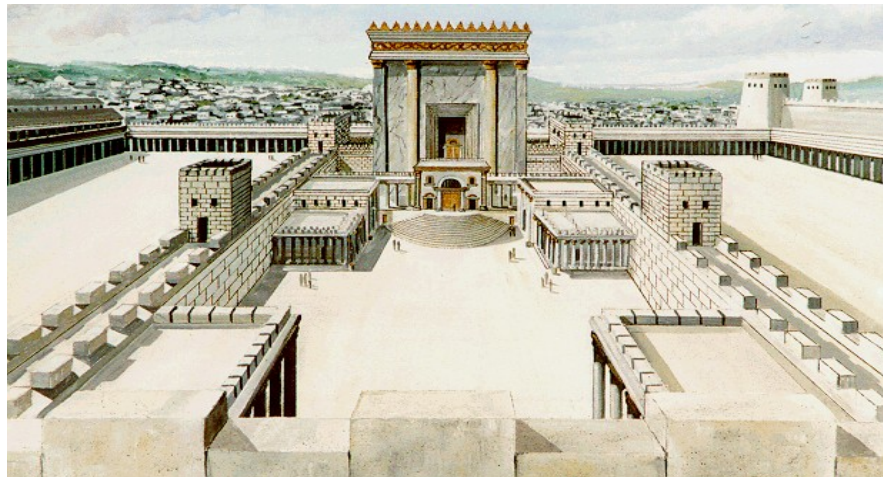
Acts 3: 1-26 – The Kingdom Breaks In!

Thought

“Many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the hands of the apostles.” So Luke tells us in Acts 2:43. This chapter narrates one of them. But it’s more than a curiosity piece or an exhibit A in the signs department. It’s a seemingly innocent, spontaneous event that leads to a whole string of events that culminates in yet another fresh empowering of the entire fledgling “Jesus community” in Acts 4:31. And not only does the miracle itself serve as something of a “primer” for kingdom living and “doing the stuff” — Peter’s speech on the occasion of this healing serves as a useful template too. His message has explanation, accusation, exposition, conciliation, appeal, promise and warning. Note also the frequent use of the second person pronoun “you.” Peter brings the message home with a rich texture of colours, or, if you prefer, a wide range of notes. And then we also find here a wonderful guide for evangelism. The reality of the kingdom is demonstrated in a team effort (Peter and John), glory is deflected from the evangelists, and a complete message is shared in the context of Spirit-led, holistic and healing ministry.

Context

The Temple in Jerusalem: A millennium before Jesus appeared on the scene, Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem after his father King David made painstaking preparations. It stood for 500 years before the Babylonians destroyed it in 586 BC. The returning community of Israel built a second temple some 70 years later. When Herod the Great came to power just prior to the days of Jesus, he announced he would completely remake the temple — a work that commenced in 19 BC and was finished just a few years before it’s destruction in AD 70 by the Romans. In all, from the outer court of the Gentiles, nine gates led to the inner court.



At the time of prayer: A standing custom of prayer among devout Jews was prayer three times a day — at the time of morning and evening sacrifice (3rd and 9th hour respectively, or 9 AM and 3PM) and at sunset (typically regarded as 6 PM)

Why does this surprise you? You've got to love Peter's wonderful downplaying of this miracle. It's as if he shrugged his shoulders and said, "What's the big deal?"

By faith in the name of Jesus: Two concepts are important to grasp here. First, the Hebrew word for faith is *emunah* and it means a whole lot more than mental assent. It is heart trust — true, convicted belief that changes how you see and do life. Second, someone's name is more than their label — it's the embodiment of all they are. Jesus' name isn't part of a magical formula; it's the reality of who he is.

Repent and be converted: "Be converted" sounds like Peter is calling on them to change religions, like from Judaism to Christianity. But "be converted" is literally "return." Peter's call wasn't to leave their faith and roots, but to really embrace them in Jesus.

The theologian, Thomas Aquinas once called on Pope Innocent II, or so it's said, when the latter was counting out a large sum of money. The Pope remarked, "You see, Thomas, the church can no longer say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" Aquinas replied, "True, holy father, but neither can she now say, 'Rise and walk.'"



Learning Session

Introduce today's passage by filling your group in on some of the contextual information above. After this get everyone to read the passage to themselves quietly (it's a long one, but you can do it aloud if you wish). Once everyone is finished read the quote about the interaction between Thomas Aquinas and Pope Innocent II. Ask the group whether they think this is an accurate assessment of the church? Can the church say, "Rise up and walk" today? How? Let a couple of folk share and then split into discussion groups to address the following questions:

- When is the last time you saw a divine moment of healing like this? How would you respond to the idea that God doesn't heal like this today?
- If you had been Peter, what do you think you would have done with this lame man?
- Do you have any crippled areas in your life — physically, emotionally, morally or spiritually — that you would like God to heal?

Bring everyone back together for a time of feedback on the questions. Stress that God still moves in Power today. In addition, stress that He wants to use us. It is not easy because it requires surrender. When we are surrendered, we are better placed to do things the way he wants us to do them. It is also important to mention that God releases His Power as and when He sees fit, we need to be okay with that. More often that not we aren't. Also stress that, although we should desire to see His Power in our lives, the thing that we should be chasing after is intimacy and love with Him, because that is where it all begins and ends, that is what life is all about and all good things come out of that.

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