

High impact Christianity – Such as I have

Last Sunday Joel Holm spoke into the life of the church and some very interesting points were raised. The most challenging aspect of his message was probably the most simple – to “follow Christ.” When Jesus said to His disciples, “follow Me.” they didn’t hesitate. They stepped out in faith and immediately became active in God’s kingdom. Once you’ve heard the Lord’s voice, you too must step out in faith and **follow him**.

However, there was another important issue mentioned during the services, and I could hear clearly what God was saying to Cornerstone. We have been given an incredible and unique “gift” from God and this gift must now be deposited in the community. **Such as we have** we must give – both as individuals and as a family.

Turn with me to **Acts 3** and let’s read **verses 1-7**...

*Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being 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 of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fixing his eyes upon him with John, said, “Look at us.” And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, “Silver and gold have I none; but **such as I have** I give to 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.*

As Peter and John approached the temple, they saw men carrying a crippled beggar to his customary spot at the gate called Beautiful. The helpless condition of this man, who was lame since birth, is in marked contrast to the beautiful architecture of the temple. It reminds me of the poverty and ignorance which abounds in the very shadow of most great cathedrals; and of the complete helplessness of the religious system to help those who are physically or spiritually crippled.

Note, in most spiritual matters, we do live by *signs*. **Acts 14:3** says, “So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous **signs** and **wonders**.” We are often given a “sign” to spur us on toward accomplishing God’s plan and purpose on this earth. Luke’s vivid account of the healing of a crippled beggar at the gate called Beautiful, serves as such a sign. The contrast between the beauty of the temple (God’s house) and the helpless condition of the cripple is a direct parallel between the church and people out there. Like the crippled man, modern society is helpless – unable to meet its own needs (whether physical, spiritual, mental or emotional). Therefore, the beauty of God’s house, which is represented by His glory, must be taken out and given to anyone who will receive it. We should take the same approach Peter took with the beggar, **“Such as I have – I give to you.”**

You see, according to Jewish custom, Peter and John came to the temple to pray and worship at the time of the evening sacrifice. And as they arrived, a man with no use of his limbs was being carried to his usual begging place. The depth of his need was apparent to everyone who visited the temple. These were ordinary everyday circumstances – the apostles practicing their devotion to God, and a lame man applying the only trade he knows. But because Peter and John were prepared to “give what they had,” something extraordinary occurred. Are you prepared to give what you have? The world out there will remain in a

crippled spiritual state, doing only what it knows to do, until you step out and change the ordinary through the extraordinary.

Like the lame man there is a community out there full of people who have given up any hope of being restored. They have reconciled themselves to living a life of hand-outs - waiting for scraps from other people. And I'm not referring to physical and material needs only, because I know many people who've been there. When you are emotionally crippled and spiritually destitute, you will take anything that's handed to you. Unfortunately, what you really need can only be delivered through God's people, and there aren't enough of us out there to really make a difference. But that can change dramatically!

Back to our story... Instead of seeing this man as a helpless beggar, Peter chooses to see him as one in whom the mighty power of God might be demonstrated. If you are led by the Spirit, you too will fix your eyes on those whom God intends to bless miraculously!

Peter fixes his eyes on the man, just as Paul will do later when a miracle is about to occur (Acts 13:9; 14:9), and commands the same concentration in return. Peter wanted his undivided attention – “*Look at us.*” You will be truly amazed at what response you will get when you look someone in the eye knowing that God wants to supernaturally meet their need.

Still expecting nothing more than financial help, the cripple reciprocates and pays closer attention to what Peter is about to do. At first Peter disappoints him by declaring his lack of money. Most impoverished people become so accustomed to their lack that they don't really expect to be delivered. Rather, they expect to get just enough to see them through another day. The beggar had heard something quite disappointing, yet this served to heighten the value of the great gift he was about to receive – complete restoration. So don't expect people out there to be as spiritual as you are. Just hand over the gift God has for them.

As far as any financial support was concerned, Peter had nothing to give. But what was not present in his hand was present in his spirit. And it was *in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth* that it had to be given. Note, a name is an expression of a person's very essence. The power of the person is present and available “in the name.” In the case of Jesus, the invocation of His name is a direct link between earth and the power of heaven. It is not a magic formula but a simple recognition that if any salvation blessings are to come, they must arrive in and through the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By the authority invested in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Peter commanded the lame man to rise and walk. Jesus had also commissioned his disciples this way (in Luke 24:47) and the disciples preached and ministered boldly (Acts 2:38; 3:16; 4:10, 12, 30), with signs and wonders following. When you give what you have been given, in the name of Jesus Christ, you too will see signs and wonders. It's entirely up to you!

Peter commanded the man to walk (literally stating, “be walking”) – grabbing him by the right hand and raising him up. The power was Christ's but the hand was Peter's. This is exactly how the church must act. Here we are reminded once again that in the spiritual life, there is a curious mingling of the divine and the human. Peter helps the man to his feet; then God performs the miracle.

You must do what you can do; then God will do what you cannot do! Such as you have **you give**, and then such as you don't have **God will give**. What a great partnership this is!