

## What Do You Expect?©

**Acts 3:1-11**

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**Dr. Sharlyn Gates**

<sup>1-5</sup>*One day at three o'clock in the afternoon, Peter and John were on their way into the Temple for prayer meeting. At the same time there was a man crippled from birth being carried up. Every day he was set down at the Temple gate, the one named Beautiful, to beg from those going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter the Temple, he asked for a handout. Peter, with John at his side, looked him straight in the eye and said, "Look here." He looked up, expecting to get something from them.*

<sup>6-8</sup>*Peter said, "I don't have a nickel to my name, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" He grabbed him by the right hand and pulled him up. In an instant his feet and ankles became firm. He jumped to his feet and walked.*

<sup>8-10</sup>*The man went into the Temple with them, walking back and forth, dancing and praising God. Everybody there saw him walking around and praising God. They recognized him as the one who sat begging at the Temple's Gate Beautiful and rubbed their eyes, astonished, scarcely believing what they were seeing.*

<sup>11</sup>*The man threw his arms around Peter and John, ecstatic. All the people ran up to where they were at Solomon's Porch to see it for themselves. (The Message)*

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When I read this story of the lame man who was taken each day to the gate just outside the temple in Jerusalem – called the Beautiful Gate – I always think of a similar sight that I saw in Puebla, Mexico in the year 2001. I had traveled there for the Upper Room and my host took me to see some of the sights in the city– one being the beautiful Puebla Cathedral. Construction was started in 1575 and completed in 1690. It has 14 different lateral chapels with many artistic artifacts. It has all the gold and glitter that you see in a basilica – it takes your breath away with its magnificence.

Of course, in Puebla, as in Mexico City, the contrast to this magnificent beauty is that there are beggars everywhere. The poverty is overwhelming.

One image that has stuck in my mind all these years is the old woman who was blind and maimed – her feet deformed. She sat on the steps of the main entrance of the cathedral begging for money. I couldn't help but wonder about her life. Had she been like that since birth? Had she been a beggar all her life? Was that all she knew?

I read this passage, I think of her and wonder if anyone ever said to her, as Peter and John did with this man outside the temple – "In the name of Jesus, get up and walk!" I wonder if they tried and were not successful. Or, is she so familiar with her lifestyle that

she would not know what to do if she were suddenly healed? Do you ever wonder about these things?

These disciples, with their newfound power from the Holy Spirit – and their sure belief in the risen Lord Jesus, bravely and adamantly went about laying on hands, praying for and healing people.

We are told by Luke that Peter looked intently at this man – looked him the eye – and told him to get up. It seems that Peter was determined to not let himself be distracted by the crowd around him who were curiously watching, or, he was trying to keep the lame man from being distracted.

Either way, this man who had been carried to the outer gates of the temple each and every day, got way more than he expected on that particular day. He was used to getting alms – to getting some monetary offering of help as devout Jewish people went into the temple for their prayer time.

Peter is passing by with John and the man calls out to him, asking for a little money. But Peter, having come from this new community of believers who put all their possessions together to help one another, told this man, “I don’t have any money to offer you. But what I do offer you, I offer it in the name of Jesus. Get up and walk!”

He grabbed hold of the man’s hand, pulled him up off his mat and that man started walking, and leaping and praising God!

It’s such a wonderful story, isn’t it? So my question is can we – the Church of Jesus Christ who is empowered by the Holy Spirit – still do it today? If so, why don’t we? If not, then --- what does that mean?

We do hear of people being healed, don’t we? We know of people who claim to be faith healers, yet we are sometimes skeptical of them. We’ve seen and heard of too many television frauds who were out to get money instead of having a genuine compassion for others.

I have laid my hands on people and prayed, and I know that many of you have too. In fact, we’ve done it together since I’ve been here. And I think we can honestly say that God has answered and healed. Perhaps not in the mighty, miraculous way we read about here in the third chapter of Acts. Perhaps it is a slower healing. Maybe it comes through surgery, through the skills of a doctor.

But the thing that stands out the most is the transformation that happens – and not just within the person who is being prayed for. Those who are doing the praying are also transformed.

When we join together in faith, praying for one another and believing in the name of the one who has called us to be his ambassadors, we grow stronger in our faith. We see small results and we are filled with joy. We see little seeds beginning to grow – seeds of faith – and we know our own faith is growing in trust.

The truth is, we know that sometimes our prayers for healing are answered the way we hoped – people get well and live long, healthy lives. But we also know that that isn't always the way it goes.

We know that being a believer and praying with deep faith does not mean we will never suffer. Jesus said, "the rain falls on the just and the unjust – the good and those not so good." Jesus also taught us to pray, "not my will, but your will be done."

We pray for healing and we trust that God's will is best and that God can make all things work for good – even things that seem so devastating.

The truth is – God's power is constantly at work through the Holy Spirit. It's really about transformation, isn't it? We can see transformation even in death because we know our risen Lord has given life eternal – a healing that is complete and perfect.

We might only be looking as far as the initial hope of a healing for a specific problem, but God maybe doing a bigger thing. If we are able to look past our narrow expectation and expand it to a wider, more holistic view – we will be amazed at the power that is touching and transforming lives way beyond our own world.

What do you expect? The disciples expected the Spirit to help them be witnesses to others about Jesus. But did they expect such power? The power to heal? To preach with deep conviction?

The lame man expected money and he got healed. The devout people of Israel expected to go to their daily ritual of prayer and giving an offering and they got a miracle that led to a sermon inviting them to repent and believe in the power of Jesus Christ.

The lame man who was once an outsider, now was able to run into the temple to praise God – he was now transformed from being on the outside (looked at as a sinner, due to his condition) to the inside circle of God's people; and those who considered themselves the insiders, simply because of their heritage, were now being challenged about their very identity.

Healing may not always happen as we expect. Things in the church today may not always go as we expect – and it may not always look or be as we've always known it or done it either. But perhaps God has a bigger vision – one that extends way past our expectations and our narrow vision to touch people's lives in ways we cannot even imagine.

We are the faithful who put ourselves in God's hands to use us as He will and work through us in the name of Jesus Christ with the power of the Holy Spirit.

What do you expect? I invite you to expect more! Expect more in your own personal life – with Christ as your model and Savior. Expect more as a member of Christ's church, as a believer, a disciple who has been given spiritual gifts to use for the building up of the church.

With the power of Holy Spirit anything can happen. And it probably will!

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