

Acts 3:1-10 (NRSV)
Text Analysis Study Sheet

This is the first miraculous healing retold in Acts. It's manifestly a sign and symbol. It's a concrete example of the sign and wonders as evidence of the messiahship of Jesus: "And I will show portents in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and smoky mist." Acts 2:19 & "Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles." Acts 2:43; It confirms the attachment of the disciples to the Temple. They're not starting a new religion, but firmly situated within Judaism. The episode takes place in the holiest place of Judaism eliciting at the same time great interest of the people (Acts 3:11) and the opposition of the established religious authorities "(Acts 4:17-18; Acts 5:28, & 40-41).

A MAN LAME FROM BIRTH: the man is lame/crippled/maimed since his mother's womb (the literal reading of the text). This contrasts dramatically with his later liberated departure as walking and leaping while praising God. (v. 9).

ask for alms from those entering the temple: crippled the man is unable to be part of the priesthood (Leviticus 21:18 :: or no one who has a blemish shall draw near [to the Temple], one who is blind or lame, or one who has a mutilated face or a limb too long,") and socially marginalized, banned from entering the Temple (2 Samuel 5:8 :: "The blind and the lame shall not come into the house."). Later we learn he was 40 years old (see Acts 4:22) which is quite old for that time. He has thus lived a long life of isolation, abandonment and disempowerment.

It was common Jewish piety to give alms to beggars as testified to in Matthew 6:2-4 and the Jewish writing Pirkei Avot [saying of our Ancestors] 1:2 "The world stands on three things: Torah, the service of G-d, and deeds of kindness [giving of alms]."

WHEN HE SAW | LOOK AT US. :: the miracles happens first through *looks*; In v3 the verb describes an automatic, unconscious action of looking. V. 4 implies that the apostles ask the man to act, to direct his attention, to focus his sight.

Peter said :: the speaking of Peter moves the story from looks to transformation. He speaks of negative things (not having...) and positive (walk!). From 2: 44-45 "All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell

¹ One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. ² And

A MAN LAME FROM BIRTH was being carried in. People would lay him daily **at the gate of the temple** called the Beautiful Gate so that he could **ask for alms from those entering the temple**. ³ **WHEN HE SAW** Peter and John about

to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. ⁴ Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "**LOOK AT US.**"

⁵ And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶ But **Peter said**, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus

Christ of Nazareth, stand up and *walk*." ⁷ And he took him by the right hand and **raised him up**; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

⁸ Jumping up, he stood and began to *walk*, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. ⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God,

¹⁰ and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and **they were filled with wonder and amazement** at what had happened to him.

QUESTIONS FOR GOING DEEPER:

THINKING THEOLOGICALLY:

- The text again challenges the notion of infirmity as directly related to sin that was prevalent in Jewish culture then. Do we still observe (even unconsciously) a connection between sickness or being “cursed” and an imagined lack of faithfulness or faith?
- Healing is associated with resurrection through the intentional word choice of the author. Have you experienced it like that? A curious aspect of resurrection or deliverance or healing, is that it can also have negative impact on life. Think of the former cripple. He used to beg for a living. Now what will he do? Who will help him now that he is no longer a dependent because of a disability expecting a handout?
- The text indirectly asks the question about healing and faith. Why is this man healed, but others are not? If we faith-fully pray for healing and deliverance in the name of Jesus and don’t receive that gift what does that say about our faith? Our relationships? Our prayer? The power of God? The supposed generous love of God?
- Are disciples today capable, in the name of Jesus, of such words and actions? If not, why not? If so, how does that play out?; who has that authority?

READING LECTIO DIVINA STYLE:

- What word, phrase or image in the text grabs your attention?
- How does that touch or interact with your life today?
- Or imagine yourself in the text. Who are you? The beggar? A disciple? Part of the crowd? An on-looker? How do you respond to the raising up of the unnamed man?
- How do you need God to raise you up from what cripples you in life?
- What invitation to act, speak, do or be do you hear through the Holy Spirit in the text?

.... their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. “ It would be likely quite surprising for someone to talk of gold with a poor beggar asking for a handout from ordinary people coming to pray at the Temple.

in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth :: It’s not a power that Peter has over Jesus, but the power of Jesus actualized through relationship to him. Jesus gave this power to the twelve he commissioned in Luke 9:1-6 “Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases”; as well as to the seventy sent out in Luke 10:1-16.

r.a.i.s.e.d h.i.m u.p. :: verse 7 moves from looks and words to actions. To raise up is the Greek word “*egeiro*” which means both a physical lifting and raising, and is also used in the NT to mean raise from the dead/resurrect. It’s also used in Acts 3:5 “and you killed the Author of life, whom God **r.a.i.s.e.d** from the dead. To this we are witnesses.” and 4:10 “let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God **r.a.i.s.e.d** from the dead” The text associates the man with death, as if his healing is a deliverance from death to new life, darkness to light. He raising is dramatic: he is raised up, jumps up, stands and walks energetically – all while praising Adonai.

they were filled with wonder and amazement :: as the man becomes stable, the crowd is destabilized, shocked, amazed at the power of God. They don’t know what to think (in comparison to the former cripple) and in response “run together to Peter and John ...utterly astonished” (Acts 3:11) asking for clarification. Traditionally in Jewish culture of the time, cripples and the sick were thought to be so as a result of their sin, or sin of a family member (see the story in John 9:1-41).