

Acts 3:11-26

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Preacher: Sean Jenkin

[0 : 00] That's a really powerful word, isn't it?

You give and you take away. God's choice. That can be hard, can't it? Hard to receive, hard to accept.

God gives and God takes away. We're touching on that a little bit more in a moment as we continue our preaching series through Acts.

And if you weren't here when Andrew started the meeting, this is a new format we're trialling for a few weeks whereby we spend a short time of worship, then spend some time in God's word and then come back into time of worship a little later on.

Okay, so if we could put up... Thank you, Sandy. So, as I said, we're continuing looking through the book of Acts and the whole idea of being devoted to God, devoted to others and devoted to mission.

[1 : 11] And this morning we're going to be looking at a very weighty topic, if you like. The sovereignty of God. And continuing through Acts chapter 3, Andrew kicked us off last week with the first 10 verses and then we're going to be looking at verses 11 to 16.

If you don't know me, my name's Sean. I'm part of the leadership team here. So, what I want to do is actually recap a little bit what was said last week or at least the passage from last week because it then leads in to what we're looking at today.

So, we're looking at a miracle in the first few verses of Acts chapter 3. In fact, I think it's the first significant miracle actually after Pentecost where a lame man, a man lame from birth, is healed. And we're going to look in a minute on the outcome of that healing. But we've got three characters really in the first section here.

We've got the lame man, obviously. Now, he is mentioned later on in Acts chapter 4 as being a 40-year-old man. He's been lame from birth.

[2 : 42] And it suggests here that he is a regular fixture in the temple. He is bought daily by presumably family or friends.

We don't know whom. But he is carried there so that he can beg. He can't work. There's no national health system of any sorts. So, he has to beg.

So, there he is, this fixture in the temple. Everybody knows him. And then we have Peter and John, two of Jesus' disciples, two of his closest disciples, closest friends.

They've recently been filled with the Holy Spirit. They are the two of the key leaders in the early church. And they are going to the temple to pray.

And it would appear that that is, again, their regular event now. The early church was spending time going, not only praying in houses and gathering together, but they would go up to the temple to spend time praying together, potentially on their own as well.

[3 : 50] But that's where Peter and John were heading. So, picture the scene.

We've got a lame man. Everybody knows him. He's about 40 plus. And he's a beggar. We've got Peter and John, who are regularly going to the temple.

Now, it's interesting because... Because he's so well known, this lame man, it's clear that Jesus would have known him as well.

Because Jesus went up to the temple regularly as well. And so we get to an interesting point here, whereby... Because, see, I've often thought...

You know, Jesus lived... You know, he was 33-ish, maybe when he died, three years of ministry. I'm thinking, well, the whole of Israel was probably all healed. You know, Jesus went around healing people, especially those who were right in front of him.

[4 : 55] But clearly, he didn't. He didn't heal everybody. And so we come to this place where there is a known lame man that Jesus has obviously walked past on a number of occasions because Jesus was in the temple on a number of occasions, preaching and casting out the money changes, all those kind of things.

And you could suggest that maybe this lame man wasn't there maybe a day or two of those visits. But actually, yeah, that's where he went to work. Jesus knew him. Okay.

So Peter and John, again, have been up on many occasions. And then suddenly, suddenly, this miracle occurs.

Peter and John, they look at the man and they proclaim in Jesus' name the healing. They stand him up. And this man, as you can imagine, is over the moon.

It says he's dancing and praising God. He's still grasping hold of Peter and John, not because I think he needed to steady himself. He was just like, this is amazing.

[6 : 05] And they are in the temple and they're causing a scene. People start to notice and are filled with wonder and amazement. And so we have this prominent first miracle in a very significant place, the most significant place in the whole of Israel, in the temple courts, of a man that is known by so many people.

And this happens. Okay. So we kick on then into our passage today. I'm going to read through these verses.

Starting verse 11. While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.

So this was kind of the outer perimeter of the temple, a large area where people would often meet. When Peter saw this, he said to them, fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you?

Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness, we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant, Jesus.

[7 : 36] You handed him over to be killed and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the holy and righteous one.

So that is the Messiah, the one they'd all been waiting for. You disowned the holy and righteous one and asked that a murderer be released to you. You, it's not putting it bluntly here, is it?

You killed the author of life, but God. But God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this by faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.

It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. So we have the notable miracle and Peter is there to witness of the gospel of Jesus, of what Jesus has done.

And we have a large crowd gathering who are eager to understand and receive the truth. Great way to start off miracles, isn't it?

[8 : 49] After Pentecost. So this morning we're going to look briefly at three points. And the first is this. God is sovereign.

What do I mean by that? What is, what does it mean God is sovereign? Well I suggest that some of the things that this means is that God is all powerful, so he has all the power.

He knows all things, so he's all knowing. He has all authority. He is perfect. He is love and a whole lot more.

But those are just touching on the point of what God being sovereign is. So let's take a step back. As I've mentioned earlier, the lame man was a permanent fixture.

He was known by everyone. But Jesus, for some reason, has not healed him. He's healed many.

[9 : 56] It's not like he couldn't heal lame people. He had. But he doesn't in this case. And likewise, Peter and John have probably been up to the temple for a number of days since Pentecost.

And yet, on this day, we see this healing or we read about this healing occurring. So this basically brings us to God's sovereignty.

You see, if God knows everything, he has the big picture. and it is his choice and it his timing and if he wants to, he will heal.

Now, we see the small picture and we want immediate healing, which is fair enough, really. You know, nobody likes to suffer or see others suffering.

But we only see the little picture. God sees it all. That's what it means that God is sovereign. It can be very hard, can't it?

[11 : 12] Whether it's us or a loved one who's sick or maybe even dying, knowing that God could heal but doesn't.

that God doesn't appear to intervene in the toughest moments of our lives, can test our faith and trust in him.

And I'm sure many of you may well know people who had a faith and have walked away because they felt God didn't care or didn't work in a certain way.

we ask the question, why doesn't, why does a God of love not step in every time? But if we acknowledge that he is a God of love, then we have to conclude that his decisions are perfect and therefore we need to trust him.

So back to our passage. that Jesus hadn't healed this man must be down to God's timing. The fact that he was healed meant God intended to all along but not before this point.

[12 : 33] And God allowed him to continue suffering until Peter and John went to pray on this particular day. and it may even have been three years since Jesus had first met him when he started his ministry, went up to the temple.

We can only surmise why now, why God chose to do it this way but I want my next two points I think will add, you know, help us I think in this although it never clarifies it completely.

Firstly, God is glorified. In John, the book of John chapter 9, Jesus meets a blind man and his disciples ask, who sinned?

This man or his parents? And this was a belief at the time that being sick was to do with having sinned whether it was yourself or your parents.

So the disciples are saying, well, who was it? This man or his parents that he's blind? Jesus replied this, neither. But that the works of God might be displayed in him.

[13 : 56] Whoa, that's hard isn't it? He was born blind so that the works of God could be displayed in him. a man suffers so God's power can be revealed and God gets the glory.

Whoa, that's hard. That's really hard. And yet that's what we read. And so back to our passage, when the crowd come running, Peter points the gathering crowd to Jesus.

He says, not me. I couldn't do it. It's Jesus. Peter gives God the glory. He redirects to God, to Jesus.

So, in any interaction, when God is moving, he is looking to be glorified. And that moves us on to my third point, which is this.

God's kingdom grows. So, at this point, Jesus has now died, he is risen, and he is ascended.

[15 : 11] The Holy Spirit has been poured out, and the church is born. So, we now have 3,000 plus have already been added.

That was at Pentecost. Many more may have been added already, but we have a church that's growing. God's kingdom is here now and established the relationship with God has been restored through Christ.

We have a man lame from birth healed, and Peter presents the gospel in the most public place in Israel, where the crowd are amazed, and Peter says, it is Jesus, and faith in him alone, that this man has been healed.

so the kingdom grows. Again, we can only surmise, but maybe this is part of God's timing for the healing of this man.

So, when we are seeking God for his intervention, we should consider, he is sovereign. He gets involved when he chooses, because he sees the big picture.

[16 : 29] He is the one to get all the glory, and he is looking to expand his kingdom, that the church would grow, that more would be added in relationship to him, that the kingdom of darkness is driven back, people are saved, and people are strengthened in their faith.

That is what happens when God moves. And so, I'm going to just start to wrap this all up now.

Finally, if we are praying for God to act, we need to consider these things. We need to consider when we should be praying.

God's We should be asking the question, does what I'm praying for, whether it's healing, or a miracle, or just God to move in some way, is what we are praying God's will?

Is it on his heart, or does it go against what he's doing, or even what he wants? Jesus presumably didn't pray for our lame man, as it wasn't God's will for that time.

[17 : 58] Some things we might pray for may not be his will for now. It may be God saying, not now, just as in the case of this lame man, it wasn't then, but it was later on.

God might say, actually, no, not yet. Or it may even be, no, never. Paul talked about praying to get rid of the thorn in his side, and God said, no, I'm not doing it.

Put up with it, as it were. But that's the way it came across. It was a never. Don't bother praying anymore. But sometimes we just need to persist in prayer, knowing that it is God's heart, we just keep coming back, trusting that because he is sovereign, it will be in his timing.

But also, in order to find out what is God's heart, we need to be spending time with him, reading his word, spending time worshipping, gathering with other Christians, even listening to sermons, so that we start to draw near, to understand, to, who is this God who has saved us?

what is his heart for us? So that we lose the little view that we have and start to get the bigger view that he has. All things to help us know God's heart.

[19 : 26] Our priority should be seeking the Holy Spirit because he is the one that will guide all our prayers. sin gets in the way.

Do we deal with it regularly? Are we repentant before him knowing that through Jesus all our sin washed away?

But we deal with it regularly because it gets in the way. Our sin affects our relationship with him. It can make us spiritually deaf, unable to hear the leading of the Holy Spirit.

It could even prevent us putting God first. Would he get the glory?

Would what we are praying for glorify him? do we seek to direct people's gaze to him just as Peter did? Peter said it's not me, it's Jesus.

[20 : 38] Faith in him. And are we willing to give testimony of all he has done? Again, just what Peter did, stood up in front of the crowd and directed people to Jesus.

And so to wrap up. He is sovereign, all-powerful, all-knowing. We are not.

Trust him. We are called to trust him, to keep praying. But he alone chooses when and if and how to act and get involved.

that is his prerogative because he is sovereign. We may not always like it, but he sees the big picture and always does what is right.

I'm going to finish there. I'm going to invite the band back up. I'm just going to pray and then hand over to Ben. Lord, you are such a good, good father.

[21 : 56] You have good things for us, but we don't always realise that they are good. Sometimes we struggle in understanding that you are seeing the big picture and we only get the small one.

Help us to trust you, Lord, to keep pressing in, to keep praying, but to know that you have good gifts, good things for us, and that you can be trusted.

Amen. Just before we come back to worship God, I just want to say, I think that's such an important word for us to hear as a church.

We balance the sovereignty of God with our surrender to him. And what we're going to do now is we're going to come and we're going to continue to worship him. We're going to allow his spirit to speak to us in all sorts of different ways.

We're going to enjoy and delight ourselves in him. If you're stirring with things you feel God's put on your heart for this morning to share, do come and find me. I know there's a few people already who are going to do that in a bit.

[23 : 02] But just to begin with, let's stand.

We're going to come and express our worship and devotion to God.