

## **The Power to Walk Differently**

**1 Peter 4:1-11, Acts 3:1-11**

**Rev. Heather Carlson, St. John's Presbyterian, Medicine Hat, AB**

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There is an old chorus some of us may have learned as children:

*Peter and John went to pray, they met a lame man on the way  
He asked for alms and held out his palms, and this is what Peter did say.*

*Silver and gold have I none,  
But such as I have give I thee;  
In the Name of Jesus Christ  
Of Nazareth, Rise up and walk.*

I remember as a kid, really identifying with Peter and John - I didn't have silver or gold either, yet because of Jesus, I was a part of a people healing the world. Jesus at work through his people.

Hanging around Jesus' people for over 50 years has given me a front row seat to Jesus healing. Hearts becoming tender again after hardship had made them callous. Children diagnosed with insurmountable challenges, defying medical prognosis. Recovery from addiction and illness. Courage, patience, and hope beyond human capacity. And other God-incidences.

Peter and John's story still strikes a cord. Certainly there are times when we are called to give or receive money in the service of God, but silver and gold are not the measure of whether we have something worthwhile to offer. The kingdom of God is not reserved for only the wealthy, the polished, or the powerful. The gospel says that because of Jesus Christ, we are never empty-handed. We are part of God's people healing the world.

That lame man at the temple gate was hoping for coins - probably just enough to survive another day, but God intended something greater than survival - God was working on restoration. From sidelined to headlined. From despair to delight. From the object of pity, to the source of amazement.

*He went walking, and leaping, and praising God,  
Walking, and leaping, and praising God.  
In the Name of Jesus Christ  
Of Nazareth, Rise up and walk.*

After being healed, the man does not merely walk. He goes "walking and leaping and praising God." Walking would have been miracle enough. Walking would have proven healing. But leaping and praising? That is joy overflowing. That is exuberance. That is the response of someone who has discovered not only that his legs work, but that his whole life has been mended. I think it illustrates that the gospel does not merely help us limp along. Christ's power makes us walk, or even leap, in a whole new way.

There are many ways people are lame. Able to function outwardly, but inwardly there has been fear, bitterness, shame, exhaustion, or grief. And then Christ comes—not always instantly, not always dramatically—but truly. And over time, the discovery is made that we are not only surviving. We are learning again to rejoice. Walking. Leaping. Praising God.

In many ways, that is what Peter describes in our reading from First Peter. Peter says: "You have already spent enough time doing what the Gentiles like to do..."

In other words: the way you walk has changed. Once you walked one path; now you walk another. Peter is speaking about conversion, about sanctification, about the reshaping of an entire life through union with Christ. The Christian life is not simply believing different ideas. It is learning to walk differently.

From Gentile to faithful. From brokenness toward healing. From weakness toward strengthening. Paths of forgiveness once unimaginable. Paths of patience once unsustainable. Paths of grief that previously would have been crushing. Paths of obedience once resisted.

Not because we are naturally strong. Not because we finally got ourselves together. But because Jesus Christ still says to wounded people, "Rise up and walk." The power of Christ changes how we move through the world.

And then Peter turns our attention to one of the clearest marks of this changed walk: "Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins."

That verse tested me this week. I was irritated with someone and, if I am honest, I felt entirely justified in my irritation. Perhaps you know that feeling. The case seemed airtight. The evidence was strong. I had a list ready if anyone asked. And yet the Spirit kept pressing this verse upon my heart: "Love covers a multitude of sins."

I wasn't called to criticism, correction, superiority, irritation, or meddling, but love. That does not mean ignoring sin or pretending wrong does not matter. But it does mean that love becomes the governing posture of the Christian life. Because that is how Christ has loved us.

Called to lay down my justifications and pray to love them.

Jesus did not wait for us to become perfectly lovable before extending mercy. Christ came to us while we were broken. Christ loved us while we were sinners. Christ covered our multitude of sins with His own love, mercy and sacrifice.

And now Peter says: live toward one another out of that same grace. Be the living stones of the church - a fellowship of people learning to walk in the way of Jesus.

Peter continues: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received." Also translated, "God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another."

Every Christian has received grace to share. The Holy Spirit has something to give through everyone.

Encouragement. Mercy. Hospitality. Prayer. Wisdom. Presence. Compassion. Faithfulness. The gifts we offer often are not flashy.

A listening ear.

A meal.

A prayer beside a hospital bed.

Patience with someone difficult.

Kindness when irritation would be easier.

These are acts of resurrection power. The healed man in Acts clung to Peter and John in amazement. But Peter quickly redirected attention away from himself and toward Christ.

And that remains the calling of the church. Not: "Look at us." But: "Look at Jesus."

The One who heals. The One who restores. The One who teaches us to walk differently. The One who takes broken sinners and makes them people who can leap with joy.

So today, perhaps Christ is speaking again to some weary or wounded place within us. Or maybe the Holy Spirit has laid someone upon our heart who needs the good news of Jesus Christ's resurrection presence and power to "Rise up and walk."

Walk in faith. Walk in forgiveness. Walk in holiness. Walk in love.

And perhaps, by the grace of God, we may even find ourselves doing more than walking. Walking, and leaping, and praising God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.