

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶ Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (Acts 3:1-10 NIV 2011)

Give What Jesus Gives You

“I just wish I could do more for you...” we think after a friend shares how things just aren’t going well in life. “I wish there was more that I could do...” we say as we hear or watch the news and see the persecution of the Christians around the world who suffer for their confession of faith. We say that as we watch hurricanes decimate cities leaving so many lives in upheaval. We say that as we watch families displaced and countries torn apart with war. “I wish there was more I could do...” we feel that ourselves as the pains keep stabbing you, as the sickness wreaks havoc on your body, as you deal with your own personal questions and doubts.

“I wish there was more I could do.” I wonder how many people thought that as they see that 40 year old man sit there at the temple begging for money. I wonder how many times he overheard them or they said it and he said, “I know; I get it...” After all, this was the only life he knew. Since his first breath in this world, from his mother’s womb, this man had been lame and crippled. As his friends walked and ran together, he laid there limited in what he could do. As he watched them climb, jump, grow in independence, he was reliant on other people to get from one place to the next. It was hard enough as a young kid. But then as he got older the reality starts sinking that this is what life is going to be like. I don’t think handicap accessibility was thought of very much when it came to the world at that time. He wasn’t going to be able to learn his father’s trade to provide for himself. No, the only “job” he would be able to work was begging at the temple gate called Beautiful. Lord willing people would be moved by God’s goodness to them and

they would spare him a few coins. That's all he could do. So every day someone would come, assure him that they are happy to help against his many apologies, and set him down. And when the day was done someone would carry him home, he'd go to bed, and the next day would be the same thing, "I wish there was more I could do." I'm sure that prayer was often on his lips. I'm sure there were days when he simply accepted this is God's will and he trusted God's goodness. At the same time I'm sure his prayer time and again was that God would take this suffering from him.

Then he sees them again. These guys came to the temple the same time every day during the hour of prayer. That in itself wasn't that shocking; it was a popular time to go to the temple. What was more shocking was how they looked at him. It wasn't one of those passing glances where you can tell they were trying not to be caught looking. No, these guys stared intently at him. They locked their eyes on him. It especially was hard to ignore when the man named Peter said, "Look at us!" So he did wondering what these guys had to offer.

I wonder how he initially felt when Peter starts by saying, "Silver and gold I do not have." I can imagine at that point the man who could not walk felt his hopes walking out on him. Crushing disappointment. Frustration, perhaps? Was he thinking, "Why were even talking to me then? Thanks for noticing me; I guess at least that shows you care. But that's not what I need right now." But then Peter continues, "But what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Here's Jesus' gift, receive it.

This is what you have too. It's not necessarily the power to work those types of miracles. You do have Jesus Christ to freely give as he gave himself for you. But for one reason or another at times we seem to wish we could give you more. Like Peter and John, we want to pick up those who are crippled with their bodies falling apart or crippled with loneliness, depression, anxieties, addictions, their mind betraying them in one way or another. Like Jesus who cares for the deaf, blind, and mute we want to help those who see so many terrible things, hear so much bad news, and inside they are crying out for help. But what?

We hear the world that says that if God truly was loving and caring, why would he let such things happen? Why would he let a baby be born without full use of their body or mind? Why doesn't he do something about the unrest, stop all the hurricanes, put an end to wars, make this COVID disappear? In other words: Jesus isn't enough. He should be doing more! And do we say, "I wish he would too..."

You see the struggle and difficulty. You hear about the diagnosis from the doctor's office, the doing the best to just get by, the bad things just keep happening no matter how hard they try. You see the couple who put on the good face but you know deep down they are struggling to keep it together. You see the sickness, but you have no idea what you can do to help them. You know how you put on the brave face but down deep you are one thing away from imploding as you feel the expectations and responsibilities cave in around you. You feel that pain that just won't go away no matter how many times you've prayed. (Don't worry, you trust that God could take this away if he wanted to...) You feel that desire to sin creeping back in again; didn't you just deal with it yesterday? You feel so powerless. You aren't in control. Some days you accept the fact—this is life. It's what God has allowed, therefore, you can't change it no matter how much you want to or even try. Other days, "I wish I could do more."

What are we supposed to do? The answer isn't thinking about all those people who have it worse than you. Maybe; but they aren't dealing with what you are today. This isn't a competition of who has it worse. The answer isn't counting your blessings and being happy with what you have. Yes, be thankful for those things, but that doesn't make the suffering go away either. The answer isn't pretending that nothing is bothering you, nothing fazes you, telling yourself to just deal with it. The answer isn't some cute little phrase that you heard about storms of life and calm coming afterwards either.

The thing is, no one wants to see you suffer or struggle, least of all God. But, if you are looking for the magical cure from me, I'm sorry to disappoint you. Silver and gold I do not have. I cannot work miracles. Worldly speaking I do not have a whole lot that I can offer you. But what I do have I give: In the name of Jesus Christ, walk out of the darkness of hopelessness. Get up out of that pit of despair. Shut out the other noise in your life. The same Jesus who gets in the guy's personal space sticking fingers into ears and touching his tongue gets into your personal space to save you. You who were lost in sin and blind, he is the light of the world who gives us sight. You whose ears were filled up with the buzzing of the lies and empty promises of this world, Jesus' voice rings out through His Word. He who does all things well went to the cross for you. There his precious blood pays the price to set you free from bondage to sin. Though you struggle against it every day, sin does not control you. Jesus sets you free. At the foot of the cross his blood pours off to clear your eyes so that you might see clearly, the Lamb of God has taken away your sins. As he cries out, "It is finished." We hear, "There is now no

condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus. God is for us!” The author of life was killed on that cross, but God raised him from the dead. Your flesh-and-blood Savior lives and he comes down into your personal space. Reaching out through time and space Jesus marks you with his cross and gently touches your head as the waters of baptism claim you as a child of God. He reaches out through time and space, getting into your personal space, to touch your hand as you take his body to eat and touch your lips as you take his blood to drink—they are given for you. In this world of death and dying, we have a living Savior who gives you life with him today and promised life for eternity.

When you wish you could do more, turn away from yourself. First look to the one who saves. Do not put your trust in princes, government leaders, the wealthy and powerful to save. Put your trust in the one who remains faithful forever. He has not forgotten or abandoned you. Jesus went through all of that work of living, dying, and rising for you, do you really think he would be so absentminded to forget about you? No, the Lord watches and keeps us. He uses these struggles and difficulties to teach us that in our weakness his power is made perfect. Our hope is in the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

I wish I could do more. I mean that. We often think that. You mean it too. But don't forget about what you can do. Be like Peter who extends a hand to help a guy out. Jesus doesn't ask us to go work miracles. He doesn't ask you to go do more. He does put life in our dead hands and legs to go and serve, to pick someone up who is down, to hug someone who needs to feel loved, to help out where you can with the gifts God has given you. He does provide for us so that we can in turn provide for others including with our offerings. And if you can't do that, he does give you hands to fold in prayer as you take someone's needs to God's throne of grace who handles it all for our good. He does give you lips to praise him and when the opportunities arise to share Jesus' love, to freely forgive, to invite them to come with you to God's house. He does make you a new creation so that like the once-crippled man who is jumping and leaping in the temple courts, show by your way of life the Good News of Jesus so that they too might see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Jesus has given himself and his love freely to you. Give what Jesus gives you. Amen.