

LOOK AT ME

Studies In The Book of Acts

TEXTS

Acts 3:1-10

OUR CURRENT CULTURE

Last week celebrated the Central States Synod's twentieth anniversary as the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America merged to form the ELCA. Years ago, one of the main reasons people joined a faith community was it represented stability grounded in tradition. However, the last twenty years has seen a massive cultural change. This change prompted the Central States Synod Bishop to say, "Our culture is pulling away from us." In other words, our current culture does not accept spirituality as a priority. In order to attract new members, and keep current members attending, Christian communities are now in a constant state of change. If we want to play the numbers game, it would seem those faith communities who offer the most programs and the most options in worship are the ones who are going to survive. This might be a good strategy for survival, but is it Biblical? Let's turn to the book of Acts as we continue our Pentecost journey.

UP TO THE TEMPLE

Peter and John lived in a time of great geo-political and cultural change. The greatness of the Roman Empire was beginning to crumble. So, the future was uncertain. There were problems in the Jewish faith tradition. For many, the old traditional ways of doing things no longer held any meaning. The traditions often times brought people into captivity instead of setting them free. Still, those traditions were very powerful. One of those traditions was coming to the temple for prayer. This is where our story begins. The disciples have received the power of the spirit. Before they received this power, the temple was the absolute last place they would be. Now, their faith is energized with courage and confidence.

A MAN LAME FROM BIRTH

The temple was occupied a central place in Jewish community. However, the culture was pulling away from the Jewish traditions in that the immediate area surrounding the temple has become something of a shopping mall. Remember the story of Jesus entering the temple and physically driving out people who had turned the temple into a place of business. So, the temple was a high traffic area. Due to this fact, some people brought a man who was lame from birth, to the gate of the temple where he could beg for alms or money. Isn't it interesting that this story does not indicate that anyone thought to pray for God to heal this man?

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The next thing that happens is very strange. The man sees Peter and John coming into the temple. He asks them for alms just as he asked everyone who passed by that way for alms. When people were not quick to respond, the man turned his attention to others who might be receptive to his plea. This is what probably happened to Peter and John because Peter and John looked at the man and said Peter said, "Look at us!" Why did Peter say this? In order to be healed, the man needed to change his focus away from alms that gave no healing. Instead, the man needed to be focused towards the healing power of God's spirit that was in Peter and John. We know this is the case because Peter says, "We have no silver or gold to give you."

STAND UP AND WALK

Peter continues by saying, "What I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk," The man stands up and walks. There was no religious ceremony; no emphasis on tradition, there was only two commands, "Look at us!" "Stand up and walk!" In these words, Peter gives us an understanding of how we are healed and how we can heal others.

HEALED BY GOD'S SPIRIT

Let's go back to the words of the Bishop, "Our culture is pulling away from us." Maybe one of the ways our culture pulls away from us is leading us in a search for alms instead of healing. To be spiritually healed, we must look to God. That is, we must focus on God's spirit by regular prayer and meditation, by worship and being involved in the life of the church. The next step in healing is to stand up and walk. What this means is not accepting the limits and boundaries of who the world tells us we are, and what the world tells us we can do. The final step in healing is guiding others to look to God, and stand up and walk in the Gospel light. Amen.