

## A Healing?

3 5 09

Almighty God,  
whose Son Jesus Christ is the resurrection and the life:  
raise us, who trust in him  
from the death of sin to the life of righteousness,  
that we may seek those things which are above  
where he reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit  
one God, now and forever.

My text this morning may be found

in today's passage from Acts, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?'  
(4 v4)

Each Lent, it has become the practice in St Bartholomew's to have a Lenten Bible Study. Our study is preceded by our Thursday service of Holy Communion and is followed by a 'Bring and Share' lunch. As such, it can be a positive part of Lent something extra to do balancing nicely the discipline of giving something up. Next year's study plans to explore some of the parables of Jesus. This year, we looked at Miracles, one of which, the healing of the paralysed man by Peter and John outside the Beautiful Gate of the Temple in Jerusalem, is the reason for this morning's text, 'By what power or by what name did you do this?'

Miracles involving healing were part of Jesus' ministry. In a spare moment, you might like to jot down how many of his healing miracles you can recall off the top of your head. What is interesting here is that this healing in Acts is the first by the Apostles in Jesus' name. Peter and John are on their way to the Temple to pray. Approaching one of the entrances, unsurprisingly there is a beggar on the ground. The man has been lame from birth. Now over forty years old, he can't walk therefore he can't work so he scratches a living by begging money from people going into the Temple. A good pitch, I imagine, because people going into a place of worship to encounter God are more likely to give to the poor, conscious of the commands to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. So this professional beggar must have thought he was about to receive charity when he had eye-contact with Peter and John who pause on their way in to pray. But Peter's words must have dashed the man's expectation when he said 'Silver and gold have I none . . .'

No money then to be had from this man with a Galilean accent. But before disappointment has chance to register, Peter tells him, 'but such as I have I give unto thee: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk' (3 v6 – AV). The effect is electrifying. Peter stretches out his right hand and pulls him to his feet. Immediately, the man's ankles and feet are strengthened and he is not only able to stand on his own, unsupported, but can walk and jump. It is truly astonishing: the man is overjoyed at his freedom, for the first time in his life, to move around unaided. Clinging to Peter, he follows them into the Temple, praising God for the miracle and causing such a stir that a crowd gathers around them in Solomon's porch to find out what all the fuss is about. They must be surprised to see that the lame beggar, who was a familiar fixture at the Temple gate, is able now to walk.

Peter and John have come to pray but here is the perfect opportunity to witness to the truth of the risen Lord Jesus so just as he did on that first Pentecost morning, Peter does now. He tells the crowd why the man has been healed. It is not he or John who are responsible for the miracle but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whom they, the people, had handed over to Pilate to crucify. The crowd would be aware of the recent execution and now the finger of blame is being pointed at them! But Peter gives them a possible way out. What was done was done in ignorance and now there is the opportunity to make things right: first by being sorry for what has been done, by repenting, then by turning back to God to receive his forgiveness. It is in the name of Jesus Christ that the miracle has been performed and by believing in Jesus as the Messiah whom God has raised from the dead that they will be saved.

And the result? They are arrested and thrown overnight into prison. Too late however to stop many people believing as a result of what they had seen and what they had heard. So to today's passage. Brought before the Jewish authorities, Peter and John are asked the question which forms my text: 'By what power or by what name did you do this? So Peter has a second chance to tell his audience as it is. He tells those in authority that the miracle was done in the name of Jesus Christ whom they had crucified. Not what they want to hear. But how best to respond? The problem is the miracle is authentic and public so for the present, they let Peter and John off with a caution not to speak again in public. But it is a problem that won't go away and is in fact only just beginning.

What I find interesting about Acts 3 and 4 from which this story comes is the two contrasting reactions between the crowd and their leaders. Both are surprised and interested in what has happened and want to know why. Peter tells them both. Some of the crowd are convinced by the truth of what Peter says and for them it is a life-changing moment. For those in authority, they hear with growing disbelief, this challenge to their understanding of religious reality and they become more entrenched in their prejudice and opposition to Jesus of Nazareth and to all he represents.

And what of us? What difference does it make to us, this Easter claim, that Jesus is the Son of God who was destined by his Father to die for our sins so that we, like Jesus before us, may be raised from the dead and enjoy eternal life thereafter? What difference does it make to us?

I have spoken in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,  
Amen.

*Preached at the Eucharist*

*St Bartholomew's Dinard*

*3<sup>rd</sup> May, 2009*

H: Sermon 20: Healing

