

Text: Acts 3:1-11

Title: “In the Name of Jesus”

Tonight we are sharing in a beautiful experience for any church, the setting apart of men to serve in the office of deacon. Please plan to come at 5:30 this evening in the Great Room for the Deacon Ordination and Commissioning Service. There will be a reception to follow. Also I'm looking forward to our first Evening of Prayer and Praise, two weeks from tonight, November 30, as we gather to cry out to the Lord in preparation for the great opportunity we have to share the Gospel with our city in the month of December.

Open your Bibles to Acts 3. In the first two chapters of Acts we see Jesus ascending to the right hand of the Father to reign there until He will come again. He promised to send His Holy Spirit to empower the church for the unstoppable quest of getting the Gospel to the nations. So on the Day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit came upon the group of about 120 and the Spirit-filled body of Christ was formed. As a result of their witness and the preaching of Peter thousands of people are saved in one day. Acts 2 goes on to explain how the Holy Spirit formed them into a spiritual family that was growing in love for God, for His Word and for one another. And it is really a sweet thing. It would be so easy for them to just do what we often do ... settle in and just enjoy the good life in the church. But they were living in the irrepressible power of the Holy Spirit. And so we read in...

Acts 3:1 - One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon.

In these early days of the church the apostles were the leaders of the church. And here are two of them, Peter and John, going to the temple to pray at one of the set times of prayer for the Jews.

Acts 3:2 - Now a man crippled 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.

ILLUSTRATION – This wasn't an unusual scene in NT times, just like it isn't in our day. We see people on street corners and busy intersections asking for money. They're standing on the median, and your car is stopped right by them. Do you just look straight ahead and avoid making eye contact, or do you roll down your window to give them some spare change? I saw one guy a few weeks ago who had a sign that said, “I won't lie to you. I need beer.”

Because this man was crippled he had no way of earning a living so he was forced to beg for help from others. And this was an ideal location. It was a popular place because of its stunning splendor. This gate into the temple area was called Beautiful because it was just that ... beautiful! Historians tell us it had huge columns that were made of pure brass. So the beggar thinks, “More people, more business.” Second, this was an entrance into the temple where people were going to worship and to give their offerings to seek God's favor. So naturally, the beggar thinks, people will be more inclined to be generous if they think God would be pleased with their generosity.

So it was the apostles' daily routine to go to pray, and it was this man's daily routine to be taken to this place to beg. So...

Acts 3:3 - When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

There was probably nothing extraordinary about them; they just happened to be the next guys to be walking by. Normally people passing would try to avoid making direct eye contact, but...

Acts 3:4 - Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

Peter and John had seen this man perhaps hundreds of times, but this time it's different. The word for "looked" means they gazed intently or looked directly at the man as though they were seeing him with different eyes. You see, they were freshly filled with the Holy Spirit of Jesus and they saw this man through the eyes of Jesus. And it was a divine appointment.

Acts 3:5 - So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Acts 3:6 - Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Now this is huge, and I will come back to this in a moment, but notice that Peter is doing something, not in his own name or in his own resources, but in the name of another ... Jesus Christ. This is what changes everything. This is what turns a routine encounter into a life-changing moment ... someone doing something in the name of Jesus.

Others could help the man with their money, their silver and gold. Peter and John happened not to have any. But what they did have to offer the man was something this world cannot give ... the touch of Jesus to heal him and change his life. And church, that's the power we possess, not in our own name but in the name of Jesus. We have something to offer in the name of Jesus that can change a person's life.

So Peter says, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Acts 3:7 - Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong.

Someone has said that in healing and helping this man, the power that healed him was Christ's power, but the hand that helped was Peter's hand. That's the way God works. In fact, it was something that Peter had seen Jesus do many times. The man needed healing, but he also needed a helping hand.

Acts 3:8 - He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

You would too if you had been unable to walk all your life. Four times in this passage Luke will make reference to the man walking. For the first time in his life this man's body was fully operational. For the first time in his life everything is working the way it's supposed to. And he begins to hop around high-fiving everyone who will let him. But in his soul he knows that God has done this. He's praising God. **Read Acts 3:9-11.**

So here is this handicapped man who, for years had been carried to this same spot, begging in the same way, crying out with the same words and probably getting just enough pennies thrown into his cup that he could survive another day. But on this day all of that changed for him. And here are Peter and John. They had been coming to the same Temple through the same gate for the same routine of prayer, seeing the same guy, hearing the same pitch for years. But on this day, things are different.

What made this day different was the name of Jesus.

Acts 3:6 - Then Peter said ... In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

In biblical times a person’s name wasn’t just a tag by which we distinguish one person from another. The name of a person carried the full weight of that person. It was synonymous with their character. That’s why we are told not to use the name of God in profanity ... because it impugns the very person of God. The Bible says...

Philippians 2:9 - Therefore God exalted (Jesus) to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

And it is by and through that name that people are saved.

Romans 10:13 - for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

In fact, as believers, we are to do everything in the name of the Lord.

Colossians 3:17 - And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

It was in the name of Jesus that Peter told the handicapped man to get up and walk. So what does it mean to do something in the name of Jesus? It means we are...

1. ACTING IN THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS

Peter didn’t have the authority or power, in and of himself, to heal this man. He had to tap into the power of Jesus in order to accomplish this amazing miracle.

ILLUSTRATION – If you get pulled over by a police officer for breaking the law it means that that officer has been given legal authority to stop you. Now suppose, after you get your ticket, you are driving the speed limit and someone roars past you speeding, you don’t have the authority, as much as you would like, to chase them down, pull them over and give them a ticket. You don’t have that authority.

The Bible teaches us that we have been given, in the name of Jesus, the authority to proclaim the Good News and offer the forgiveness of Jesus to others. We have been given the authority to baptize in His name. We have been given authority to pray in His name. And with the name of Jesus comes

the power of Jesus. We cannot bring about change in the lives of others; only Jesus has the power and authority to do that.

But also, to do something in the name of Jesus means we are...

2. ACTING FOR THE PURPOSES OF JESUS

ILLUSTRATION – Suppose you work for an entrepreneur who wants to expand his business in Hawaii. So he pays for your air travel, your hotel room and rental car for you to do business in his name in Hawaii. On top of that your boss gives you the company checkbook for you to purchase property in his name to open the new business. So you get on the plane and fly to Hawaii. But rather than spending the time and money doing your boss' business, fulfilling his purposes, you spend your time on the beach getting a tan. And you spend his money on a vacation home for yourself in Hawaii. Do you think your boss will be pleased with that? No, because you were not acting in his name, for his purposes.

When it says that we do everything in the name of the Lord it means we do everything for His purposes and not our own. So when we read that Jesus said in ...

John 14:13 - And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.

That means that we are praying not to get our purposes and our wishes done, but the purposes and the will of God so He gets the glory. And that leads me to the next thing it means to do everything in the name of the Lord. It means we are ...

3. ACTING FOR THE GLORY OF JESUS

ILLUSTRATION – Ladies, suppose you are at work and you are surprised when a delivery guy from a local florist brings some flowers to you. You look on the card and see that your husband has remembered your anniversary ... it's a miracle. You don't hug the delivery guy and say, "O, you're so sweet to think of me. Thank you!" No the glory goes to your husband who paid for and sent you the flowers.

When we do something in the name of Jesus it means we do it for His glory and not for our own ... to attract attention to Him, not to ourselves. Also, when we do something in the name of Jesus we are...

4. ACTING FOR THE BENEFIT OF JESUS

ILLUSTRATION – Suppose someone wants to bless you and they give you their sky box tickets at AT&T Stadium for you to go watch the Cowboys play. Your friend tells you that the tickets have been left *in your name* at "Will Call" window. Just go, tell them who you are, show some ID and the tickets are yours. They are not for the benefit of others, but for your benefit.

So if everything we do or say is in the name of Jesus it means it is for the benefit of Jesus ... to further His Kingdom and to expand His fame.

But here's the really amazing thing. Don't miss this. When we are doing what we do acting in the authority of Jesus, for the purposes of Jesus, for the glory of Jesus and for the benefit of Jesus, then we can be sure that we are...

5. ACTING IN THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

Remember that little statement by Jesus in...

Matthew 18:20 - For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

When we are living every day and doing everything in the name of Jesus we can count on His presence with us. Isn't that incredible ... knowing that when you are living in this way you have the presence and power and provision of Jesus with you. What a way to live! Because we as believers have the Holy Spirit of Jesus living in us, as we live and love in the name of Jesus the people we encounter are encountering Jesus. That's why the man crippled from birth walked for the first time. He crossed paths with some people who did everything in the name of Jesus.

What if today was different from you? Instead of coming to church like you've done dozens of times, what if today was different? What if you were touched in the name of Jesus and received transformation that you never dreamed possible. Believe in the name of Jesus. What if today was really different for you? Instead of going through your day in your own power and for your own pleasure and purpose and praise, you suddenly began to see yourself for who you are in the name of Jesus. And you began to live every day in the love and power of Jesus, for the purposes of Jesus for the praise of Jesus. What a difference would you make in the world where you live?