

A Reason to Celebrate - Acts 3:1-10

Introduction: We love celebrations, don't we? Celebrations are an important part of our lives. In our personal celebrations, (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) we throw parties, take pictures, give flowers and gifts, we eat special cake and break out the best china.

In our national celebrations we take time off from work, have picnics, barbecues, have parades, and shoot fireworks. These celebrations give us a break from our routines, but more importantly, they remind us of our past and remind us to be thankful for our present and future.

Have you ever thought of our worship on Sundays as a celebration? It is because worship reminds us of the PAST – *what God has done*. It centers us on the PRESENT– *what God is doing now*. And it also gives us hope for the FUTURE – *what God will do*.

Today, we're going to look at a biblical example of celebration worship and then we'll see reasons why we ought to celebrate by worshipping God. First, let's turn to Acts 3 where we'll see:

1. A Representation of Celebration (Acts 3:1-26).

In vs. 1-2, we see Peter and John going up together to the temple. The tense of "*were going up*" suggests that they went to the temple often. On this afternoon, they were going to pray.

There at the temple was a man who was "*crippled from birth*." He had never walked in his life. **Acts. 4:22 (NIV)** tells us he was "*over forty years old*." So we can see that by this time, there was no reason for him to hope to ever be able to walk.

When I think of this man, I can't help but think of a man who used to shop at the grocery store where I worked. I never knew his name, but I was amazed by him. He didn't have any legs at all. But he drove his car right up to the front of the store, opened his door, threw out his little mechanic's dolly on the pavement, slid out of the car seat, and plopped himself right down on that dolly. Then he proceeded to paddle himself up the ramp and into the store. He never asked for any help, in fact, when we would offer help; he'd politely refuse, and go on his way. He'd carry this pole with him with a set of home-made pinchers on the end of it to grab things off the upper shelves. He was an amazingly independent guy.

But this man wasn't like that. This was long before wheelchairs or and handicapped vans. This man had to be carried everywhere he went and thankfully he had someone who cared enough about him to do that. With their help he was put at the temple gate every day to beg for help.

Now, he was begging for alms – or gifts that were given to the poor. To the Jews, giving of alms was seen as an opportunity to win favor with God. So when people went to pray at the temple it was a good time for a handicapped person to ask for alms. And for this man, he had a good post at the gate called "*Beautiful*." The Beautiful Gate separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Women. Beggars favored three spots: near the houses of the rich (like Lazarus), near main highways or city gates (like Blind Bartimaeus) or at the temple gates. The temple was probably the best

site because it was a heavy traffic area and the worshipers were likely to try to impress God with their generosity.

Now this man, seeing these two about to go in, called out to them and asked for alms. Beggars were not shy. They didn't just look pitiful, they tried to sound pitiful. They depended on their ability to attract attention so they could survive.

The Bible says Peter "*looked straight at him,*" and asked the man to look at him. He probably said this because usually these lame beggars hardly ever looked up, they only saw people's knees. But Peter wanted his attention, and the man gave it to him because He was "*expecting to get something from them.*" (5)

But Peter said, "*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give to you: In the name (the authority) of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, (rise up and) walk.*" Now I can just imagine what this man thought when he heard Peter say that he didn't have any money. He must have thought, "*Here's another hypocrite. Here's another fake worshipper. He's already giving reasons why he cannot give.*" But little did this man know that he was encountering two genuine apostolic representatives of Jesus.

Vs. 7 says Peter helped the beggar up, commanded him to walk, and immediately God's power flowed through Peter to the man's legs and joints. There was no waiting. Instantaneously "*his feet and ankle bones received strength.*"

And as strength came in to his joints he jumped up and walked. Though he had never been able to before, now he could balance

himself and walk. What joy! He expected a handout, but what he got was a healing! He expected some coins, but what he got was a cure! He expected some money, but what he got was a miracle!

The Bible says, this man "*went with them into the temple courts walking, and jumping and praising God.*" I mean, his joy wouldn't just allow him to walk. No, he jumped and danced about all the while giving the praise to the Lord.

You know how kids are when they go to an amusement park, they don't walk. They skip, jump, run and drag their parents to the gate! This man probably drug Peter and John into the temple!

Speaking of "*jumping and praising and worshipping,*" do you know the difference between worship and praise? Praise is what we do - we celebrate! Worship is how we feel. Praise is singing of the song; worship is making melody in our hearts to God. Praise is lifting our hands; worship is lifting our hearts. Praise is an "*Amen;*" worship is a personal affirmation of a truth.

This man was expressing the joy that was in his heart. Yes, he was jumping and turning summersaults because he'd been healed, but I believe this man also knew that it was the Lord who had brought this about, and he just had to let it out! He was outwardly responding to what he felt on the inside. So if you find yourself breathing in the majesty of God – if his glory and healing has taken place in your life – and it has, then don't hold your breath and be afraid to give Him praise. By all means let it out. You might think it's not appropriate around here because we don't get a lot of

“*amens!*” but if God is in it, it’s ok to just let it out! In fact, it’s better to let it out before you explode!

Well, what happened when this man began to celebrate? Vs. 9 and 10 says, *"All the people saw him...and 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."*

This man didn’t know it but he was being a witness for the Lord. His worship and praise let the world know that his life had been changed. And there’s a lesson for us. When we worship, it is directly related to our witness. In fact, when we witness to the goodness and mercy of Christ, we ARE worshipping! Our songs testify to the glory of God. Our prayers give utterance to our dependence upon God. We do have a reason to celebrate even if it is to only to be a witness for Christ.

This leads me to the next point. Why do we sing the songs and pray the prayers? Why do we give of our time and talents and treasures? Why do we do these things when we gather together?

2. Reasons for Celebration.

We do these things for the same reason the lame man jumped and praised God after his healing. We celebrate in worship because of what God has done, what He is doing and what He will do.

A. We Celebrate Because of Where We Were Yesterday.

This lame man was in a desperate condition before he encountered God’s grace. Think of what life was like for this man. He had never walked. He’d never run. He’d never played ball or

rode a bicycle. He was confined to one place and was absolutely dependent on others.

I really admire people like the man I told you about earlier or a man like Johnny Wilson who lost a leg in a car accident about 30 years ago, and was left for dead. But he overcome the limitations of his handicaps, and has lived a productive life for years. In fact, he even water skied on occasion. He tried to never let his handicap define who he was.

The man in our text never had many opportunities like that. He wasn’t merely confined to a wheelchair. He was confined to a miserable existence. So when He was set free, his worship was the result of being set free from misery.

But here’s the truth...we were in a far more desperate condition before we encountered God’s grace. Though we may not have been physically handicapped, we all were spiritually handicapped. What’s worse, we were spiritually dead. Look at **Ephesians 2:1-2a (NIV)** says, *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world...”*

Yesterday...before we were saved, we were in a bad place. We were slaves to sin and in a place of judgment and condemnation. We were in a place of despair, hopelessness and death. If Jesus had not intervened in our lives, we would be destined for a Christless eternity. But praise the Lord for **Col. 1:13 (NIV)** says, *"For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the*

kingdom of the Son He loves." How wonderful the grace of Jesus!

The lame man was one among many. Why was he healed and others not? Why have I been saved and others not? I don't know, but I will simply be eternally thankful for God's grace in my life. But not only do we celebrate because of where we were yesterday:

B. We Celebrate Because of Where We Are Today.

Today, because of Christ, we're in a much better place. It is not perfection, but it's better than where we were. We haven't made it to the goal because God is still working on the sin in our lives. Paul put it this way in **Phil.3:12 (NIV)**, "*Not that I have already attained all this, or have already been made perfect; but I press on, to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.*"

We are so blessed to be where are in Christ. We are part of God's family, His body, His church. We have His Spirit within us. We have His Word before us. We have His people around us. No matter what happens, we are richly blessed.

In **Psalms 1:1-3 (NIV)** this blessed life is described. *1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.* Folks, the storm may blow, but our roots are deep in Christ, and that is reason enough to praise the name of Jesus! So we celebrate because of where we were yesterday, because of where

we are today, and also:

C. We Celebrate Because of Where We Will Be Tomorrow.

Being a Christian is not just about the *here and now*. It is about the *there and then*. **1 John 3:2 (NIV)** says, "*Dear friends, now we are children of God; and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*"

Jesus talked about His father's house in **John 14:2-3 (NIV)** and He said, "*...I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*"

Ours is an eternity of joy in God's presence. Let's leap! Let's praise! We've got a reason to celebrate! Thank God we're not where we used to be, but praise God we're not where we're gonna be!