

## **Sermon by the Revd Ish Smale, Cathedral Deacon**

### **Acts 3 v 1-10**

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I'll never be short of friends, WHY? because Facebook has found me thousands of friends from all over the world ...the trouble is, I have no idea who most of these friends are!

In truth, most of us have very few really close friends.

*I love this quote.*

***A true friend is someone who knows the song in your heart, and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words.***

Peter and John were close friends.

They, along with John's brother James were the inner circle of the Lords apostles, being the only ones at the transfiguration, the raising of Jairus's daughter, and watching Jesus suffering agony in Gethsemene.

And post resurrection, it was Peter and John who first ran to Jesus tomb, John being the fitter got there first, Peter being the braver, went in first.

Like all close friends I guess they would have had the odd fall out. There's a good chance that Peter would be one of the furious disciples who objected to James and John privately trying to bag the best seats next to Jesus in Heaven.

Peter also may not have been too happy had he ever found out that only John told the world that it was him who chopped off the high priest's servant's ear in Gethsemane. Matthew, Mark and Luke sensitively omitted naming him!

But they remained friends and in our reading we find them heading for the hour of incense or the evening sacrifice service

in the Temple. At this service people stood outside praying whilst the priest offered the sacrifice and burnt the incense. Although Jesus had released them from Jewish religious traditions, the apostles still chose to visit the Temple. Probably going to meet friends but certainly going looking for opportunities to evangelise other Jews present.

They approached the huge 75 foot high, 60 foot wide beautiful gate that was made of Corinthian brass, beautifully ornamented with gold and silver platelets.

Everyone approaching it would have been transfixed by this gate, so much so that very few would have even noticed a lame beggar sitting near it. Some translations use the word cripple, but that word nowadays is branded offensive.

Although the lame man could see, speak, hear and move his upper body, his legs had no strength in them and he had not been able to walk since the day he was born.

As a child he'd have just sat and watched the other children running and leaping and dancing.

He was looked upon as an oddity, a social outcast.

He would never be employed because there was no-one to teach the disabled how they could still serve society by doing skilled work with their hands.

His disability condemned him to a life of begging. He would be totally dependant on the generosity of others for his survival.

As Peter and John approached he begged them for some money without even looking at them.

It's highly likely that this guy had no self-esteem and worth. He knew that he was just an ugly distraction sitting by a beautiful gate.

**Ignoring the gate**, Peter looked straight at him and said look at us!

The beggars hopes now would have risen. Two people had not just noticed him, they were actually talking to him.

He may have been disappointed to hear Peter's initial sentence silver or gold have I none, but when Peter grabbed his right hand and raised him up saying in the name of Jesus, get up and walk...he suddenly would have experienced a strange feeling in his numb legs that he had never experienced before.

Life was entering a part of his body that had been dead for 40 years.

He then he did three things he'd never been able to do before. First He stood up and didn't fall over. Second he went through the beautiful gate that he'd stared at for years and entered the temple for the first time. As a disabled person he had been excluded from entering into this Holy place.

And then..to the amazement of all around he started walking and leaping and praising God for the miracle that had taken place.

*Someone quipped the beggar who was asking for alms ended up getting legs!*

Now he could find employment, now he could live a normal life, now..he had an identity.

*There is a story of a humble Monk walking with a Roman Catholic Cardinal in the middle ages when the Roman Church was at it's zeneth of power, prestige and wealth.*

*The Cardinal pointed to the opulant surroundings and said to the Monk 'we no longer have to say silver and gold have I none' the Monk replied but neither can you say In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazereth rise up and walk.*

It's interesting Peter never instructed the lame man that repentance from sin must come before healing.

It's even more interesting that Peter never told him before or after his healing that he needed to believe in Jesus.

Peter didn't need to...because the beggar knew that it was through the name and power of Jesus of Nazareth that he had been healed!

Today we may not have the inspiration, boldness or faith to walk up to someone in the street and utter Peter's words but we still believe in praying for the sick. Thankfully answered prayer is not reliant on our little faith, answered prayer will always because there is power in the name of Jesus.

Finally, I can in a small way relate to the lame man as it was coming up to 11 years ago that I was told that Leukaemia could not only stop me ministering but it could also stop me living.

But today I am so grateful to God that He has given me the strength and energy to return to my Missioner Deacon calling. I am now once again able to travel around the country singing, speaking and sharing that there is still power in the name of Jesus!

As I regularly walk into this beautiful Cathedral I too often feel like leaping and dancing and praising God.... But some will be relieved to hear that... as an over 70 year old...I am now speaking metaphorically!

Nowadays, the leaping and dancing goes on in my heart, not with my feet!