*Ascribe to the Lord, O heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory of His name; worship the Lord in holy splendor. The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon skip like a calf and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl and strips the forest bare, and in His Temple all say: “Glory!” The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as King forever. May the Lord give strength to His people! May the Lord bless His people with peace!* Psalm 29

*One day Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, at three o’clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the Temple called the* *Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the Temple, he asked them for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said: “Look at us.” And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said: “I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.” And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the Temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to him.*

Acts 3:1-10

*A grandson was visiting his grama one day when he asked, "Grandma, do you know how you and God are alike?"*

*The old lady polished mentally her halo while she asked, "No, how are we alike?"*

*You're both old," the boy replied.*

(This is not necessarily what we like to hear, do we?)

The Power to Stand

1. For Peter and John this was just another day of worship, but this time something extraordinary happened. As they approached the Temple, a man sitting at the *“Beautiful Gate,”* asked them for money.It was not unusual to see people asking for financial support at the entrance to the Temple, and this man was not an exception. After all, for centuries, before and after this story occurred, the places of worship served as the best places to beg. On that day however, this crippled man received more than he expected, something he did not think possible. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter heals that man, offering him not what he wanted, but what he needed. Instead of the money, to be able to go through another day, he received a gift that transformed his life. Instead of the handout, he received mobility, his crippled legs were restored. An incredible response and an incredible solution. But how does this story apply to us today, two thousand years later, one may ask?

2. This man approached Peter and John the same way as he did for many years. He was well known by the regular worshippers because this was *“his spot”* where every day he asked for money to be able to survive another day. Because he was crippled, this was the only way he could sustain himself and maybe even a family, we do not know this for certain. In his condition this was the only means of support to maintain his existence. He did not even dare to think that there is something else he could ask for, and his request was perfectly natural. In our society we too have people with similar needs, although we may have a much more effective welfare system than the people of the days past, but even today many people do not dare to think there could be something more they could ask for. In reality, people always thought that getting money would solve all their problems, this was true in the past and this is true today.

3. People ask for help but often they do not really know what they need. They ask for help in the same way we often ask God in our prayers for the solution to a dilemma we face, wanting Him to reply in the way we expect Him to respond. God however often takes a very different approach to solving the issues we face. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit Peter tells the man: *“Look at us! - we are not just another two passersby, we have something special to offer, something that will really help you. In the name of Jesus Christ, stand up and walk!””* We as the Church too, have something special to offer to the world. We are not simply just yet another charitable organization that feeds the hungry, we have the response that will change people’s life, but they must hear and acceptwhat we have to offer. The true Church offers the answer to the painful problems of the world because the Church is Jesus’ *“Bride.”* This however must be the Church which conforms to God’s will rather than the men’s.

4. *“I do not have any money,”* said Peter *“but I have something else, something that will help you much more than a few coins.”* The *“money”* will not solve the problems of the world. The *“equality”* will not solve the problems of the world. The *“magic bullets”* of the pharmaceutical industry will not solve the world’s problems. The *“socialist”* system which so many want to embrace today promised equality to all people, where money would not be an issue because all were supposed to have according to their needs and where a free *“medicare”* would be offered to all. These were wonderful promises, but just promises, even if they sometimes sounded very *“biblical.”* There was one major problem implementing these promises. This entire ideology did not included in the equation the human ego, and when not transformed by the grace of God, the human “ego” will always take over and suppress everything else. I grew up in that system and I have seen it collapse. Our *“humanistic,” “woke”* society removed God from all aspects of life believing that changing a terminology and switching the words to call things something else would solve the basic and fundamental problems humanity faces. In fact however, without Jesus, the society will fail, because only God can transform human *“ego”* and replace *“human pride”* with humility. The only way we may create a just and a truly equal society, is through the transformation of the human heart by the grace of God. Unfortunately God that has the power to do so is not the part of the *“equation”* today anymore.

5. *“Silver and gold I have not,”* and I will not offer you just a bandage solution because your deep wounds require stitches, so, I offer you something that will truly help and make your live worth living. I offer you Jesus Christ; He will take care of all your needs, and He will solve all your problems if you let Him. *“Stand up and walk!”* While working on this message the old saying was popping in my head: *“Give a man a fish and you’ll feed him for a day. Teach the man to fish and you’ll feed him for life.”* This is what Peter does with the man sitting at the *“Beautiful Gate”* of the Temple. The same is true about the Church. Without Jesus Christ we will achieve nothing. If He is not working through us we will not help people to be transformed. The Church may try to solve the problems of the world but these problems if solved by the people rather than by God will come back and will *“bite us with the vengeance.”* The modern society needs God just as this man needed mobility. Without God we are as crippled and impotent as he was, until Peter introduced him to his Savior Jesus.

6. That man was healed not because Peter had special powers but because Jesus Christ’s response was channeled through Peter. When Jesus Christ is channeled through the Church the miracles happen, the people are being transformed and the healing begins. The Church is empowered by the Holy Spirit, but only the true Church, the one that embraces Christ over any other ideology. However, as the Church we must realize that God does not necessary changes people’s heart in the *“grandiose”* occurrences, but does it often in small, but truly meaningful ways. A few years ago I came across a true story I would like to share with you today: *“Mark was walking home from school one day when he noticed the boy ahead of him had tripped and dropped all of the books he was carrying, along with two sweaters, a baseball bat, a glove, and a small tape recorder.*

*Mark knelt down and helped the boy pick up the scattered articles. Since they were going the same way, he helped to carry part of the burden. As they walked Mark discovered the boy’s name was Bill, that he loved video games, baseball, and history, and that he was having lots of trouble with his other subjects and that he had just broken up with his girlfriend.*

*They arrived at Bill’s home first and Mark was invited in for a Coke and to watch some television. The afternoon passed pleasantly with a few laughs and some shared small talk, then Mark went home. They continued to see each other around school, had lunch together once or twice, then both graduated from junior high school.*

*They ended up in the same high school where they had brief contacts over the years. Finally the long awaited senior year came and three weeks before graduation, Bill asked Mark if they could talk.*

*Bill reminded him of the day years ago when they had first met. “Did you ever wonder why I was carrying so many things home that day?” asked Bill.*

*“You see, I cleaned out my locker because I didn’t want to leave a mess for anyone else. I had stored away some of my mother’s sleeping pills and I was going home to commit suicide. But after we spent some time together talking and laughing, I realized that if I had killed myself, I would have missed that time and so many others that might follow. So you see, Mark, when you picked up those books that day, you did a lot more, you saved my life.””* God indeed works miracles through our actions.

7. When the Church becomes a *“wishy-washy”* entity, and when the church stands on the ground that anything goes, as it often happens today, the Church loses influence and cannot transform people’s lives because the Spirit of God is quenched. Without the presence of God and the power of Jesus Christ the Church becomes a meaningless social club or a party that reminds me of the amusement parks which in the name of a *“good time,”* draw the crowds for a time of *“fun.”* This however is but only a *“fantasy.”* It is not real; it offers a temporary satisfaction but eventually people must leave these parks and re-enter the *“real world.”* Offering the form of and *“entertainment,”* or *“fun,”* is not the role of the Church. We can use the elements of it, but it cannot be a substitute for a true worship and the presence of God in it. I enjoy our choir because I can *“hear”* the presence of the Spirit in their voices. The music might be considered a form of entertainment, but here is so much more in what you do, there is a true *“praise”* in your singing.We do not need amusement in the church, we need the spiritual nourishment, we need to be strengthened, we need to mature in our worship, we need to draw closer to God, and this is what the true Church offers.

8. The beggar who asked for the money of those coming to the Temple, so he could survive one more day, received the transforming gift, he got his life back. He was not *“entertained”* for a day, he was changed forever. The power of Christ still transforms people, but this happens only when the Church replies to His call and when the Church truly allows Him to be channeled through us, because we are His Church. We have the great gift - His presence, in our life. We have the great opportunity to say to others: *“In the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, come and walk,”* because we are the “Church of Jesus Christ,” and we have the power to channel Him to the people, so they too may be transformed. Today’s world needs that transformation and we, just as Peter and John, have the same opportunity to bring health back to the wounded, the forgotten, the neglected and to those who suffer. We. Christ’s Church have the gift because He is with us. This is the lesson we learn from this brief encounter between Peter and John, and the crippled beggar, sitting at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple.