

**GET UP AND WALK**  
**Acts 3:11-26**  
**Preached by Dr. Cahill**  
**Babcock Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, October 18, 2015**

This morning we continue our study of the Book of Acts of the Apostles or as one commentator called it, the Book of the Acts of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind Peter, James, John and Paul could not have acted as apostles without the Holy Spirit's empowerment and guidance. At the same time the Holy Spirit's empowerment was effective only because the Apostles submitted to God's will before performing those fantastic acts recorded in this New Testament book.

That explains why it's essential to know and learn from these stories if we're serious about being inspired and encouraged to go and do likewise.

It's also important to know that after Pentecost the once twelve self-centered disciples experienced a radical transformation. After three years of fumbling around, often disappointing Jesus because they just didn't get it, they finally straightened up. Of course it took the horror of Good Friday followed by the glory of Easter morning plus the explosive experience of Pentecost before they got to this point. And it wasn't easy. There were painful, even shameful, made missteps along the way but you have to give them their due. Despite their doubts and shortcomings they stuck it out. They never quit because they knew there was nowhere else to go and no one else to count on except Jesus.

Maybe this is the place you find yourself in today. You know that only Jesus saves but you're not exactly sure what if anything you should be doing to bring Christ's Kingdom into the world. You may not even be inclined to help bring Christ's Kingdom into the world.

If this is the case, you're not alone. All of us have these reservations, even the great personalities in the biblical narrative, like Moses, didn't want to stick their necks out. But, like them, we're given a choice: either continue to deny God's calling to do our part or submit and embrace God's purpose for our lives and for our church. If you do submit, I promise you once you get beyond your discomfort and reservations you'll be glad you did. Why? Because you'll be beginning the next chapter and greatest adventure of your life. You will be living out your purpose because you are finally doing what God expects of you.

What exactly does God expect of you? Jesus spelled it out just before his glorious return to heaven. He said, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and then all over the world."

"You will be my witnesses." What does that mean? I suggest we turn back to this morning's scripture to find out.

Last Sunday we learned Peter and John had gone to the temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, the traditional time of corporate prayer in the temple. As they headed for Solomon's Portico, a roofed cloister in the temple where the people gathered to pray together, they met that crippled beggar. He asked them for a handout but, Peter replied, "I have no silver or gold to give you, but what I do have I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

This brief exchange tells us everything we need to know about being witnesses to Christ's Gospel.

First, money isn't everything. We have been holding ourselves back from committing communal acts of kindness and love because we're convinced we lack the resources. But Peter and John didn't have a trust fund backing them up. They had something better, the Holy Spirit.

Andrew Carnegie, one of the robber barons of the late nineteenth century and the founder of United States Steel once boasted, "Take away all my assets, my factories and mines but leave me my organization (the people who worked for him) and in five years I will reestablish myself."

Carnegie realized people power is the primary essential for building a business. His employees' willpower, focused on a common goal, was his most powerful asset. Taking it a step further, Peter and John realized people, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are the primary asset for building the Kingdom of God.

Second, now empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter chose of his own free will to be obedient to God's will and acted accordingly. Empowered by the Spirit, Peter was now enabled and willing to trust Jesus' promise to make him and the others, witnesses of Christ and his gospel, first in Jerusalem, then Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth. Being so empowered, for the first time in his life Peter was so in control of himself that he could finally could be obedient and trust the promise that Christ had already overcome the world.

Think about that for a minute, Peter and the others were now operating under the assumption that the tiny seed Jesus spoke about in the Parable of the Seed was already growing into the Kingdom of God. Very soon Christ's Kingdom would be challenging Caesar's Empire, without any resource except the power of the Holy Spirit! Game over. As Rick Warren wrote in *The Purpose Driven Life*, "When God is all you got, God is all you need."

That's a lesson we need to learn and relearn as we begin our New Beginnings here at Babcock. If we are serious about letting it happen, the Holy Spirit will empower us, encourage us and enable us to do whatever we discern God is calling us to do to bring Christ to the people in our neighborhood.

As Luke reports, after Peter said to the lame beggar to get up and walk, he immediately started leaping around and praising God. Not surprisingly, after recognizing him, the people were filled with wonder and amazement.

When Peter saw the astonished look on their faces he asked them why they were so amazed and astonished but also why were they staring at him and John. So there wouldn't be any misunderstanding Peter denied any credit for the beggar's healing. "It wasn't me who did this it was God through Christ, the same Christ you crucified!"

Peter didn't mince his words when he reminded the people they handed Jesus over to the Gentiles after they rejected Pilate's judgment that Jesus was innocent. Peter was bold to the extreme in his indictment but his harsh judgment was quickly by divine mercy.

He continued, "And now friends (or in the Greek, brothers) I know you acted in ignorance...In this way God fulfilled what was foretold through all the prophets that his Messiah (or Anointed One) would suffer. Repent therefore and turn to God so your sins might be wiped out."

This was Peter's testimony to his brother Jews who had not yet accepted Christ as their Messiah. He called on them to repent and accept their calling, through Abraham, to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

This morning our task is to wonder what would Peter say to us? As Abraham's descendants, what should we be doing here and now to prepare ourselves to be a blessing to all the families in our neighborhoods?

Before answering that question, let's first remind each other that our faith and friendship with Christ is a gift. We did nothing to merit this gift. Our faith isn't a reward for simply being good. Remember the lame beggar? He is us. He did nothing, in fact he expected nothing yet God chose to heal him. God also chose to heal us. Shouldn't we be leaping and praising God, especially when we realize our sins have been blotted out on Good Friday and we were raised to new life on Easter morning. Where is our gratitude, or do we take it all for granted?

If we take it for granted God loves us, God cannot use us to be Christ's witnesses through our words and acts. The scriptures make it clear, the Acts of the Apostles didn't end when the last one died a martyr's death. Every generation of believers have been called out to carry on and act out God's purpose. And some day Christ will ask all of us, "What did you do with your life, what did you do for me when you encountered the least of my brothers and sisters?"

I'm not suggesting that your salvation will be on the line but standing there before God and all the heavenly hosts, there's the risk of disappointing God and yourself if you could have done more for Jesus and the least of these who live in our neighborhoods.

Tonight at seven o'clock there will be a second prayer service here in the sanctuary. I encourage you to attend. Why is it so important for you to show up? Isn't it good enough if you stay home and pray by yourself?

I'm not saying solitary prayer isn't powerful but the Book of Acts shows us that solitary prayer should be balanced with corporate prayer, just as private worship should be balanced with corporate worship. In both cases coming together brings about a sense of team work. By praying together we are being prepared to be a team of mission minded disciples with a common purpose.

Again, look to the first church members in the Jerusalem Church. They prayed together all the time, not as an end, but for a means to an end. By praying together they were being formed into a team of missionaries. It's ironic that 2,000 years later the Church finds itself right back where it started from: being a missionary outpost determined to reach out with Good News.

I'll ask you again. Unless you have a good reason not to be here this evening, come and pray with me so we can be together when we become aware of God's enveloping presence bringing sufficient grace and abundant love through the power of the Holy Spirit.