

Beautiful

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[0 : 00] Chapter 3 of the book of Acts. Would you stand for the reading of God's word?

! And I begin in verse 1. Now Peter and John went up together. Oh, I love that word together. I do. Went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer.

It was at ninth hour. That would have been about three o'clock in the afternoon. And a certain man, lame from his mother's womb, was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple, which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple.

Who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. Fixing his eyes on him with John, Peter said, Look at us. So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

Then Peter said, Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.

[1 : 16] And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with him.

Walking, leaping, and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God. And they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the beautiful gate of the temple.

And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. Verse 11. Now as the lame man, who was now healed, held on to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the porch, which is called Solomon's, greatly a-wondering.

Now would you skip with me to verse 12 of chapter 4. This is a part of that incident. Paul's been preaching. Their opponents are there. They didn't like what was being done.

They crucified Jesus. And now they were after Peter and John and anyone else. But Peter preached to them there. And he left these words. Nor is there salvation in any other.

[2 : 22] Verse 12. There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved. Verse 13.

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men. They marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.

I want to emphasize one particular word as we bring this particular passage to light this morning, to our memory. The word is beautiful. Would you say that word with me?

Beautiful. I've heard it expressed already today. And some have observed the weather, the cool, the freshness of the day. And I've heard someone say, This sure is a beautiful day. Let's think about that word for a few moments.

Okay? Let's pray. Father God, thank you so much for loving us. Lying us to be here today in this worship service. We've been blessed with the Sunday school hours.

[3 : 22] We heard the word of God taught. And thank you, dear God, for those who teach. And those who minister in various ways throughout our church family. God bless them.

We bless those that are away on mission trips. Thank you for those that return safely. God, use the message, the emphasis, the ministry that was performed there. And bring them back safely.

And continue that good work around the world where our missionaries are. And other Christians.

We thank you for your witness throughout the world. And especially, I think, at this moment for your witness here in this place.

For in Jesus' name we pray. Amen and amen. You see, beautiful. An interesting word. It's not found many times in Scripture, but it is found a few times.

In the New Testament, it is found here to describe a gate. A beautiful gate it was called. By the way, it had other names. It was called by some the Eastern Gate.

[4 : 25] It was also called by others as the Golden Gate. So it had three names in that day. But the name that was commonly known for in that day, it appeared to be beautiful.

When they saw that gate as they approached the city. It was the entrance, by the way, into the temple of worship. Jesus entered that gate, by the way, that day that he entered in. And they welcomed him with open arms.

But soon they were to cry out, crucify him. One day he's going to enter those gates again. The gates have been permanently closed for many, many years. But it's going to be open again someday.

But it was called a beautiful gate. That was the common name. The word in the Greek is the word harios. Now, that word is the same word from which we get our word horticulture.

You know, working with flowers and living things to make them bloom and all that. And so the word beautiful is the word harios. The word in the Hebrew, by the way, and it's found in Ecclesiastes 3 and 11, the word beautiful.

[5 : 35] He has made everything beautiful in its time. The word beautiful there is the Hebrew word yaphe. And it means that which appeals to the senses, the sight, the smell.

Again, that which appears to us as beautiful in the Old Testament as well. I was pastor in New Mexico for a period of time.

And it was a wonderful time that we were there at church. I moved from Ramona to New Mexico. It was an exciting fellowship. And revival broke out the church.

And I was only there two years, but had the joy and privilege of baptizing 110 people, 60% of them adults. It was a refreshing time in my life. Although it was very brief.

It was one of those times in my ministry when God used it mightily. And I think back to that period of time and I say, oh God, do it again. But we were there on one Sunday night.

[6 : 32] I remember we had advertised a particular Billy Graham film. And we had made every effort we could to let the public know that we were going to show that evangelistic Billy Graham film. The house was filled with people.

And as we were getting ready to show the film that evening, I looked back and he opened the door. The door opened at the front door of the church. And in walked the fellow. And he just stopped. And he began to look around.

And he perceived there wasn't going to be any room for him. Well, I saw him there. And so I quickly moved from the platform down and greeted him. Now, let me describe this fellow. And I'm not judging. I understand.

I just want you to know how he did. And this was in the 60s, okay? He walked in and, well, he had long hair for one thing. It's okay. He had a t-shirt on.

I don't remember what it said on the t-shirt. But he had this big smile on his face. I remember that. I went back and I said, listen, I'm so sorry. It appears that everything, every seat is taken. But I've reserved a seat just for you.

[7 : 29] He replied to me, beautiful man, beautiful. And he grinned at me. I said, and I escorted him down to the front row. And said, well, he just sat there and smiled at us.

And then we showed the film. After it was over, you know, we had decisions. He didn't make a decision. But he still sat there and he was smiling. And all the time he had this smile on his face. And so I greeted him again as we were about to leave and thanked him for coming. And I said, man, we hope you come back again. And his reply was, beautiful, man, beautiful. I don't know how many times he said that. In fact, his vocabulary, however, severely limited was, refreshing to me because he had this big smile on his face.

He kept saying everything I said. Beautiful, man, beautiful. It was sort of a by word back in that period of time, I think. The flower children or whatever. But you know, there's something about that word that is refreshing in.

And this miracle that occurred, this opportunity to share Jesus occurred at a gate that was called beautiful. Why did they call it that?

[8 : 36] For one thing, it was very ornate. Josephus tells us about that gate. He described the gate in quite detail. It was so huge that shipped it across. By the way, it was manufactured in Corinth, I understand.

And he said they put it on vessels and shipped them across to the mainland and then however they got them to Jerusalem. But anyway, he said they were so massive that it required 20 strong men to

open and close them.

Big, huge gates. And very ornate, by the way, made of Corinthian brass. We were manufactured brass in that day and they were very efficient at it. And so you would imagine how, when it was polished or whatever, when the sun would hit it, how it would gleam and gave the appearance of gold.

That's the name golden gate. But most people just looked at it and they would say, isn't that a beautiful gate? And by the way, it was the entrance, as I already said, into the temple complex. So they called it a beautiful gate. But there was something that happened there that day that was more beautiful than a gate. That which happened there that day.

[9 : 43] We've read about it in the Scripture. A great miracle occurred at that gate. Dr. Luke tells us about that incident. Pretty well describes the condition of this man when he says they received strength in his feet and ankle bones.

Bible tells us he had been at that gate day in, day out, probably not every day, but most days he was to be found there outside the gate begging for us. He wanted some support.

That was his sole support. He didn't walk there. He had to be cared. There he was. He had been there for a long time. Others had seen him before. Some probably just sort of turned their head when he walked by.

May have flipped a coin into his cup or whatever, but gave him very little attention. This day was to be different. Peter and John, on their way to the temple, to the hour of prayer, they didn't have church buildings.

They met in their houses, but they still went to the temple because there they would have the opportunity to pray and to witness for Jesus. That was their intention. Little did they know that they would meet this man, but there they met him, and he was asking for support.

[10 : 55] Alms, alms for the poor, alms for the poor, alms for the poor. And Peter said to him, Silver and gold have I none, but what I have I'm going to give to you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk, and he took him by the hand and lifted him up, and suddenly that man was here.

Wow! What a miracle. You say, did it really happen? Oh yes, it did. This happened, I might say, just following Pentecost, when a great miracle occurred.

The gospel was presented in the languages of all the people that were there, and Luke, who wrote the gospel of Luke and also the book of Acts, said over 3,000 people were saved at Pentecost.

Now then, their numbers are going to grow again. Another growth spurt. They're going to grow. In fact, it tells us that there were, verse 4 of chapter 4, those that heard the word believed, and the number of the men, men, came to be about 5,000.

[12 : 01] Wow! There's only one word that fully, fully describes that event. We've said it before, and let's say it again.

Beautiful man. Beautiful. What a beautiful story. And it's absolutely true. What does it teach us about this story? What can we take with us today after we've read this story?

First thing I want you to notice about this story. It occurred on a beautiful day. But you know what? Every day is a beautiful day when you begin it with God.

Would you agree? Sometimes we get up, you know, oh man, another day. I've got all this to do. And we're just not very happy about it. We'd rather stay in bed.

For the believer, every day ought to be a beautiful day. Because a beautiful day is not determined by day. By the season of the year, the temperature, whether it's raining or not raining.

[13 : 05] The beauty of a day is determined when you begin that day with God. Dear friend of mine, his name was Hollis Epton. He's now in heaven.

I was with him in a summer camp one year. He was the camp pastor. I was the camp director. Lord, and one day he said, you know, I've just written a poem. I said, well, really, share it with me.

Well, he said, it's similar. I love the early morning hour. Dawn's quiet music still is heard above day's noise. When morning's page remains unscratched by human pen, morning's stone remains uncarved by human hand.

For it is then I best can pray. Lord, write upon this page the miracle of thy grace and carve upon this stone the image of your faith.

Every day ought to be a beautiful day for the believer. I believe it was so for Peter and John. They were excited. I mean, Jesus was raised from the dead and they were on the way to the temple

where they would worship God and pray with others and witness for the Lord and they were excited about that.

[14:16] Friend, I hope you never lose the excitement of being with God knowing that He's there with you. A beautiful day.

There's another, something else I see in this wonderful story. A beautiful team. Peter and John. So, okay, Peter and John.

Now think with me just for a moment. Now we know about Simon Peter. Peter, he was a bit obnoxious at times. He had the problem of a hoof and mouth disease occasionally.

He'd say things that, why did I say that? Jesus rebuked him on a few occasions. Well, he once said, he said, get behind me, Satan. It didn't mean that Peter was Satan.

He just sang to him and Satan's using you. I mean, Peter, bless his heart. One time, more than once, but at least one time he really said the right thing when Jesus said, whom do men say that I the son of man am.

[15:16] He replied, thou art the Christ, the son of the living God. And Jesus said, you said the right thing, Peter. But there was Peter. I think he kind of wanted one of those guys that liked to be in charge.

Okay. What about John? Oh, John's a disciple of love, right? A disciple of love. Was he always a disciple of love? Well, no, not in fact. The matter.

He had a brother named James and Jesus gave them names. You know what he called them?

Sons of thunder. You see, they had been up in the north and had gone through Samaria and people didn't love the Samaria.

They hated him, as a matter of fact, despised him. But Jesus went through there anyway on several occasions and one of the times that Jesus went there, they weren't very nice to Jesus. You know what John said?

John said, Lord, why don't you just call down fire and destroy these heathens? Paraphrase the bit. That's exactly what he asked God to do. Kill these people. If they won't be nice to us, get rid of them.

[16:16] That was John. He wasn't always a disciple of love. But here, something has happened to those people. What had happened to them? They met up with Jesus and Jesus, as their Savior and Lord, changed them completely.

When one becomes a Christian, old things pass away and all things become new, we're new creatures in Christ Jesus. Oh, we still have to deal with this flesh, these things that we ought not to have to think about.

But we do, and Satan will see to it that you're tempted in some of those areas, but they were changed men. And especially, I mentioned to you the word together. What happens usually when we get two strong-willed men together with their opinions and their ideas?

Sooner or later, they're going to clash, right? No more. No more. They're going together. It's a beautiful thing when God's people live, work, and walk together.

That's what a church ought to be, isn't it? I mean, folks, we're in this together. We need each other. And I think God is well-pleased when He, and probably mentions that to some of the angels when He looks down and sees us working together for the cause of Christ and for the common cause for the unity of the church.

[17:41] When I read the book of Acts and it says they're all together, they're all in prayer, they have all things in common. What's that saying? It is saying that God's people ought to be together. I served as Director of Missions for 14 years.

And I dreaded the times when I get this call sometimes late at the night and a preacher or someone in the church say, Preacher, you need, Brother Tom, you need to come help us. We're fighting. We're feuding. And it would break my heart to have to go and try to work through those situations. But a church, and it's a beautiful thing. It's a beautiful thing. When God's people, recognizing that we represent the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and He has called us to work together for His God.

They were together. Now there was a beautiful emphasis on that day. Did you hear it? Peter said, Silver and gold have I none.

What I have, I'm going to give to you. In the name, whose name? Say His Word. Jesus. Jesus.

[18 : 49] Oh, how sweet the name. Jesus. Every day the same. Jesus. Let all saints proclaim the precious name of Jesus.

Folks, it's not about me. It's not about you. It's about Jesus. He's the one that we represent. And when we understand that and begin to live that life out, folks are going to see Jesus in this. That ought to be your desire. Hey, your life's a book before their eyes. And they're reading it through and through. Say, does it point to the sky? Do others see Jesus in you? Is that a legitimate answer? A question to ask? I think so. And I ask it to myself. And sometimes I have to, Lord, forgive me. I didn't, I wish I hadn't done that.

I wish I hadn't said that. And He does. But His desire is that we understand that we're under His marching orders. He's our commander in chief.

[19 : 59] And we are to give Him our full obedience. But what a joy it is! I think about that word together and all that it implies. My wife and I have been married, we'll soon be married, 66 years.

They said it wouldn't last. We're still working on it. Okay. She didn't marry a preacher. I wasn't even saved. Her and the Lord conspired against me.

And I found the Lord as my Savior. And then I really pulled one on her two years later. I said, you know, I think God's called me to preach. And I'm going to quit my job and go to school. She said, okay.

And we made it. God's been so good to us. Some years ago, six years ago, we had a church. We were over in Missouri and I was asked to come over and preach at a church.

Just happened to be on Lake Cable Rock where I left to go fish. Well, I used to go fishing. I don't do much anymore. But I had a cabin over there, a friend, owned by a pastor and this church had asked me to come preach.

[21 : 03] I said, man, that's going to work out real good. I get to do the two things I like most of all. Go fishing and preach. And the 730 in the morning, my cell phone. It was dead zone most of the time, but that time, my cell phone rang.

And I answered it. And I said, yes, what is it we want? It was one of my children.

Finally, I recognized the boy. But a dad, Deidre, has been hit by a car. She was a precious teenager.

And she was down in Tulsa playing games, lock in, supposed to be in party, but they were outside. And she ran out into the street to catch a Frisbee.

And a car struck her and killed. When I got this call, she was on life support at St. John's Hospital. And, you know, I spoke to my wife.

[22 : 02] I said, what are we going to do? I'm supposed to preach here in a couple of hours. She said, well, isn't that why we're here? Yeah, yeah, I guess so.

So I did. It wasn't easy, but I did. At the close of the service, I told them what had happened. I said, I won't be back tonight. I was supposed to have been back. I said, I won't be back tonight.

We're on our way to Tulsa. Well, my granddaughter didn't survive that. But I tell you, Jesus was so real. I did her memorial service.

Take this whole world, but give me Jesus. Give me Jesus. I'm satisfied. I'm satisfied. How about you? Well, I'm talking about a relationship. A relationship that is so intimate that He walks with me and He talks with me and He tells me I am His own.

Sweetest name on earth. The name of Jesus. What a beautiful emphasis. And that, folks, is what we are all about. Maybe you're a visitor here today and you're wondering, what's this church about?

[23 : 15] It's about Jesus. It's about Jesus. And everything that this church tries to do and does well is to say to those that are here and around about that Jesus is the Lord and Savior of all who put their faith and trust in Him.

And their desire, your desire, is for others to know Him also. Do you recommend Jesus? Do you recommend Jesus to a lost world?

Amen. For Peter said it, there's no other name under heaven given by we must be saved. It is the name of Jesus Christ.

Well, what a beautiful result. This man was had two blessings. one, he was healed. Well, that was good, but something better came along.

He was saved. You say, how are you going to know that? Well, there are several verses in these two chapters. By the way, Luke goes to great detail talking about this, but one of the things that they spoke of in verse 11, as the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John, all the people

ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's Great and here's a man above 40 years of age who's never walked a day in his life.

[24 : 41] He's standing, been leaping, praising God. And Luke says he's holding on to Peter. Now, Peter and John were strong men. They had muscles. How do I know that?

They fished for a living and they drug an egg. And that required physical strength. This man had never walked a day in his life. but now he's standing holding on to Peter and John.

There's another thing that you need to know about. It wasn't a popular thing to identify yourself with Peter and John or any of the other Christians in that day. There was the crowd who rejected Jesus and they were opposed to Christ and all that he did and wanted, best they could, they wanted to destroy Christianity.

But they weren't successful then nor will they be successful in the future. Never. Holding on. What a beautiful result.

He was saved and he was healed. Now let me say to you, which is the greater miracle? Salvation or physical healing? What's the greater miracle? Huh?

[25 : 48] Salvation. Because you know, it could be possible. I remember several years ago this fellow that I had been witnessing to and he had a heart attack and I was, he was in this town over at the hospital and I went up to visit with him and he was, you know, he lost consciousness and his heart quit beating several times.

They'd revive him. I don't know, two, three times they'd come out and they'd tell me what they were doing. But you know, we prayed and God worked a miracle in his life. Doctors came out a little bit later and said, man, it's a miracle, they said.

He's going to survive this, we believe. Well, he did. Well, I went to see him again and talked to him and went to his home and shared with him and I said, Ben, why don't you give your heart to Jesus? We prayed and God's healed you and you would expect a man to be ready and respond. God had been so good to him, giving him life again and he said, no, no, don't take a will right now, maybe later.

I said, man, you're missing the greater miracle. Physical healing, that's great, but spiritual healing. I'm talking to a group of people this morning that may be, some of you, I don't know your heart, I don't know your life, but there may be someone here today struggling with the issues of life that appear to you to be hopeless.

[27 : 08] Let me reassure you that Jesus is in the business of saving people and giving to individuals new life altogether. Any man being Christ, he's a new creation.

Old things pass away, all things become new. Now, if you're seeking physical healing, I certainly would pray for you. The church does that and we pray believing that God will heal you, but I prayed for people before that did not get the healing.

Does that mean that God is changed, that He no longer has the power to heal? No, no, no. That doesn't mean that. It just means that God is sovereign and sometimes He has another matter in mind, something else in mind other than physical healing.

And if that person is a true believer when they leave this life, Brother Tom spoke of it so eloquently this morning in the blinking of an hour, instant, in an instant in time, and it's coming, but that moment, as Paul says, to be absent from the body, present with the Lord, that quick, can't even snap moving, that quick.

So, again, what's the greatest miracle? Salvation and being with Jesus. And that's what He wants to do for every one of us.

[28 : 23] I believe that with all of my heart. Jesus said, all that the Father gives me will come to me, the one that comes to me I will by no means cast out. Jesus said in John 5, 24, verily, verily, most assuredly I say to you, he that hears my word believes on him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

Perhaps you're here today and you may be struggling with life's issues. I recommend to you the Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

He will come into your life. He will do that. And He will help you with life's challenges. And you know what? He'll never leave you, never forsake you. I was talking to a couple, an individual a while back gone through a terrible divorce.

He said, I feel so forsaken. I said, well, there's one who will never forsake you and that's Jesus Christ. In the words of the Gospel Psalm, it is no secret what God can do.

Your life may be fouled up. No longer do you see beauty in your life. But what Jesus did for this lame man, He will do for you. Maybe you've lost the joy of your salvation.

[29 : 42] Remember what David wrote in Psalm 51. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation. Uphold me by your Spirit. And then, I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners shall be converted to you.

I like that old song, Something Beautiful. Something Good. All I had to offer Him was brokenness and strife.

But He, Jesus, made something beautiful in my life. Thank you.