

Immanuel Lutheran Mail Ministry



Acts 3:1-11 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3 Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4 And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" 7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 11 While he clung to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astounded, ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's.

If you walked into a store and tried to pay for some goods with an ordinary piece of paper, you'd be laughed off the premises. But if that paper was slightly green-tinged and had the face of a long-dead US President on it, the cashier would accept it—no questions asked. What's the difference between those two pieces of paper that causes one to have value whereas the other does not? It all has to do with the name it wears.

In the United States, and in every other country in the world, the fiat system of currency is used. Basically, that means there is no underlying value of money, it's not backed by gold or anything like that. Your dollar bills have value simply because of the name that is stamped across the top: "The United States of America." That name has value in this country and tremendous value around the world, and for that reason, you can take those green pieces of paper and pay for all manner of goods and services with them.

The name of The United States of America might carry a lot of value around the world, but it pales in comparison to the value of the most valuable name. That's the name of Jesus. His is a name which is above every name, valuable both to men and before God. The theme we'll be considering today is:

Jesus! Name of Priceless Worth

- I. Worth more than silver and gold
- II. Worthy of our worship and praise

Here at our church, we're no strangers to people asking us for money. Through the years that I've been here, we've received lots of calls for help—people asking for money to help with rent or groceries or gas or medical bills. And when I get those calls, I always approach them the same way. I say, "We don't have the funds to pay for your rent; I *can* help you a *little* bit with some groceries, but I'd really like to meet with you first and sit down and share some comfort from God's Word." I've been taken up on that deal maybe half a dozen times. But most of the time they will say, "No, that's ok." And in those cases, I'll usually tell them that I'm unable to help them at this time, but I will keep them in my prayers and ask the Lord to turn their situation around. Usually they'll politely thank me

and hang up. I always wonder how much of a disappointment it is to them when I say that I'll pray for them instead of paying for them. And I must confess, sometimes I feel pretty foolish offering my prayers or a devotion, simply because I usually assume that is just not what they want to hear at all. I really should not feel ashamed to offer the Word of God or prayers instead of money, because the truth is: **Jesus is a Name of Priceless Worth. It's worth far more than silver and gold.**

We see this truth brought to fruition in our text this morning. There was a man who was lame from birth, unable to work for a living, so he had resorted to begging. Two of Jesus' disciples passed by, and as the man did with every passer-by, he asked them for some help as well. Peter responded, **"Look at us."** I'm sure the man immediately perked up with some measure of hopefulness after a stranger finally responded to him. And then I imagine his hopes were pretty quickly dashed when the first words out of Peter's mouth were, **"I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I offer you."**

I remember growing up when I'd ask my mom if I could have a snack, and sometimes she'd say, "Sure! You can have an apple or a banana." An apple or a banana?! I was thinking a pop-tart or a cookie! And of course, as disappointing as that response would be, I now realize that an apple or a banana would be much better than what I was asking for. And the same could be said of the situation in our text. The man asks for money, Peter says, "I don't have money, but I have something much better." **"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk! And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong."**

Now that was a gift that was certainly better than silver or gold. In a brief but memorable moment, this man's life had completely changed. No longer crippled but strong for the first time ever. No longer impoverished by necessity, but instead he could walk away from there that day and find gainful employment. This was a miracle gift from God.

And Peter doesn't hide the fact that this was from God. Notice that he didn't say, **"I say to you, rise up and walk"**—he said, **"In the name of Jesus, rise up and walk."** Peter knew that **"Jesus" was a name of priceless worth.** A couple of years before that day, Jesus had given him and the other disciples the authority from God to heal the sick. That's recorded for us in the book of Luke: **"He called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal."** (Luke 9:1-2) They had a two-fold mission, to spread the name of Jesus around both by healing people as they did here in our text, and also by preaching the good news of Jesus Christ crucified, as they would do immediately following our text as we see the crowd that gathered in our final verses.

Now, although they were given the authority to heal, we have not been. The point of these miracles was to establish the ministries of the Apostles after Jesus' Ascension into heaven. Peter would say as much to the crowd immediately after this, **"Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well."** (Acts 4:10) The point of these miracles was never to heal every Christian, but simply to establish that the Apostles were speaking from God.

And evidently healings petered out from there. For one thing, in His earliest letter, which we now call 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul listed off gifts of healing as one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:9). In his later letters, like Romans and Ephesians, he speaks again about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, but he doesn't include gifts of healing or speaking in tongues. And whereas early in his ministry, Paul did heal a young Christian who had fallen out of a window (cf. Acts 20:9-12), later on he

did not heal a number of people whom he loved that were sick. The purpose of speaking in tongues on Pentecost, the purpose of the healing miracles, it was always to point to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ and establish the Apostle's ministry. Eventually God let the Word stand on its own.

So, dear friends in Christ, you may not have been given the power to perform miracle healings like the Apostles were given. Nor were you commanded to do so. But you've still been given the name of Jesus, which is far more precious than silver and gold. God has given you each the command to go and spread His name wherever you go. This is how lives are changed, in much greater ways than the man who was born lame and then could walk. For by comforting with the Word of God, the Lord can use you to take those who were spiritually blind and give them sight. The Lord can use you to find those who are dead in unbelief and raise them to life with God through faith. God has still given you the precious name of Jesus and His Word, and every time a lost sinner is led to repent—that's a miracle.

And by the way, you can use the name of Jesus in another important way as well. No, maybe you can't invoke God's name like the Apostles did to heal, and you shouldn't be doing that. God's name is not a magic wand for us to wield. But He has given us the ability to pray in Jesus' name. God tells us in His Word that ***"The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."*** (James 5:16) We're told in the book of James how Elijah simply prayed that God would stop the rain for a time, and God did. Then Elijah prayed that God would send the rain and God did. And in that section James declares, ***"Elijah was a man with a nature just like ours."*** (James 5:17) He was just like you and me. Yet his prayer was powerful, and effective, not because of who He was, but because of the One who was listening to His prayer. And so we can pray in the name of Jesus, and leave it in God's hands. He is still powerful and effective today, and He declares, ***"The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry."*** (Psalm 34:15) He invites us to cast all our cares on Him in Jesus' name.

Therefore, it's a pretty shameful thing when I have downplayed the value of praying for people or having a devotion with them. Maybe you too have felt like you're making empty condolences when you offer your prayers on behalf of someone else. But none of these things are empty. There's tremendous value to them. God has given you the name of Jesus to use in these ways. **Jesus! A Name of Priceless Worth.** Truly, it is far more valuable than any money we can give, **worth more than silver and gold.** And the name of Jesus is truly **Worthy of our worship and praise.**

Did you ever notice how often we Lutherans speak about "the name of God"? We began our service today, *"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* We end our prayers, *"in Jesus' name we pray."* When we baptize, it's also *"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."* So what's the big deal about the name of God that we talk about it so much? The answer to that revolves around who God is and what He does.

Throughout our service today, we've heard lots about the power of God to heal. In our Old Testament reading we read, ***"Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my praise."*** (Jeremiah 17:14) In the pre-service Psalm, you might have read, ***"Bless the Lord, O my soul. . . Who heals all your diseases."*** (Psalm 103:2-3) Our Gospel reading was an account of Jesus healing a man who was crippled, and then of course we have this healing in our sermon text.

There are people within our church family who are sick, those who are battling long-term illnesses and other conditions. Many of us have other loved ones who are nearing the hour of their death. And we know that God is the One who can heal them if it is His will, so we pray for such healing. But even if God does not decide to give them physical healing, the most important healing that any of us need,

God has already provided. He has taken the festering wounds of our sin, and he binds them up through His wounds. He takes the guilt which leaves us crippled in despair and He lifts it from our shoulders assuring that forgiveness has been given to us! He takes us from the grave of unbelief and raises us to life through faith in Him. As Paul writes to the Ephesians, **“God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved.”** (Ephesians 2:4) Now that is a complete healing.

And when Christ rose, guaranteeing that we too will rise after our deaths—God says that He has **“bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** (Philippians 2:8-11) The name of Jesus is the most glorious name which we can ever have on our lips. And the truly beautiful thing about this name that is above every name—it’s one we also wear on our hearts.

When you were brought to the waters of baptism, God took this glorious name of priceless worth and applied it to you. Now you wear the name of Jesus, meaning that your value before God is tied directly to Christ’s value. God now invites you to approach His throne to find grace to help you in your time of need because you wear the name of Christ in your heart! By His name, you have been given access to God and eternal life. That truly is a name of priceless worth, worthy of our worship and praise.

The man who had been healed in our text, he realized the same thing. I love the description of the man’s response: **“Leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.”** Twice, Luke mentions the fact that he was leaping. That’s an amazing fact because this man was lame since birth—never before had he felt the rush of being airborne. But now, he couldn’t help himself but jump for joy. His life was forever changed! How could he do anything else!

And how can we do anything else other than go about our lives constantly leaping for joy in the name of Jesus, continually offering Him our worship and praise? For He’s also completely reversed our lives. He’s removed our natural terror of God and replaced it with peace before God. He’s responded to the nagging questions our guilty consciences ask by assuring us of His forgiveness and love. And so even in spite of whatever might threaten us, we can jump for joy. Even in the face of cancer or other illnesses, we can jump for joy at the salvation we have in our Savior. Even as global pandemic and civil unrest seize the world around us, we can praise God and show that we have nothing to fear, because we have the peace which passes all understanding.

Dear Christians, Jesus is a name of Priceless Worth. That’s a name that truly has value. Yes, there are other valuable names, like the name of our nation. That’s a name that can take ordinary pieces of paper and give value to them, with which many things can be bought. But the name of Jesus is much more valuable. With it, God takes ordinary sinners, and turns them into saints. You have been given the name of Jesus to use, and also to have and to hold. With the name of Jesus, you have the entrance price into the God’s mansion in the sky. Now that is a truly valuable name; thanks be to God that He’s given it to us. Amen.

Pastor Sam Rodebaugh
Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity
September 13, 2020

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:7) Amen.