**Holy Spirit Power Today**

Have someone read Acts 3:1-10

Show image of waves hitting rocks off Olympic Peninsula.

What you’re looking at are rocks off Olympic Peninsula west of Seattle. These rocks are more than 40 feet high depending on the tide. Kevin Wood shared this picture with me. Look how high the waves are. Let’s get an image of the scale. This ceiling is about 25 feet high so picture another 15 feet.

That’s pretty impressive. Big things tend to be awe-inspiring.

* When I visit a big city like Chicago, I look exactly like an Indiana rube, walking around staring up with my mouth agape.
* Those of you who have been on cruises, remember how impressed you were when you first saw the size of the ship? (I’ve never been on a cruise but I saw cruise ships in San Diego.
* When I was a kid, we would visit my brother in Denver. My Dad and I liked to park under the runway lights at Stapleton Airport. They used to allow that. When a 747 would fly over it took my breath away.

Josephus, a Jewish historian who was born in 37 AD and lived in the time of the New Testament, wrote about the Temple in Jerusalem, the one at which Peter and John went to pray at three in the afternoon. He had seen this building with his own eyes.

According to Luke, Peter and John approached the Beautiful Gate. Most scholars believe the Beautiful Gate was one known also as the Corinthian Gate. This gate separated the Court of Gentiles from the Court of Women.

Josephus wrote, *“…its height was fifty cubits (73’); and its doors were forty cubits (58’); and it was adorned after the most costly manner, as having much richer and thicker plates of silver and gold upon them than the other*.”

That had to be rather impressive. The Golden Dome of Notre Dame is nothing in comparison.

As the two Apostles prepared to pass from the Court of Gentiles, through the Court of Women to the Court of Israel, they came to the Beautiful Gate. Certainly they were impressed at the size and beauty of these massive doors. Before entering they saw a cripple begging for money.

This man is described as χωλος. I don’t have access to a lexicon of ancient Greet medicine. Lloyd John Ogilvie does. He wrote that χωλος is “*paralysis in the base or heels of the feet in the socket of the ankle*.”

Remember, Luke was a physician, certainly familiar with medical nomenclature. Hippocrates, of the Hippocratic Oath that doctors take, used this same terminology to describe just such a congenital condition.

We’ve all seen someone standing or sitting along the street, perhaps at the corner by Walmart or in downtown Chicago,

* Unshaven, wearing a worn and frayed coat
* His shoes are beat up and untied
* His pants have holes in the knees
* At his feet are several plastic bags hold his belongings
* He holds a cardboard sign reading, *Will work for food,* or maybe it says*, Homeless Veteran,* probably spelled wrong.

That’s quite a contrast sitting in front of an 80 story building covered with shining glass windows. Here was this man, sitting before these beautiful gigantic doors, begging for alms, ελεημοσυνη, charitable giving.

Peter looked intently at him. Ατενιζω means to lock your eyes on something. *Look at us* Peter said. I imagine the man, while calling out to Peter and John also was keeping his eyes moving in case someone else might come along from whom he could beg.

Having gained the man’s attention Peter said, *I have no silver or gold, but what I do have I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk*! Peter understood that the very name of Jesus unlocked the power of God.

Any time someone claimed to act in the name of Caesar it meant that the power of the Emperor and all his kingdom would be brought to bear on that particular situation. In his speech to the crowd that gathered Peter said, *By faith in the name of Jesus this man whom you see and know was made strong*, στερεοω. (Acts 3:16) (By the way, that’s the first record of Peter using the word faith.)

Luke, with his attention to detail, tells us Peter reached out and took the man’s right hand and lifted him up to his feel. His feet and ankles were strengthened, στερεοω. Leaping up the man stood and walked.

Leaping up is εξαλλομαι, again according to Lloyd John Ogilvie, this word is an ancient medical term for the socketing of the heel and ankle. If the doctors at South Bend Orthopedic did that surgery for you, you’d spend many months in braces and therapy.

You can be sure that this got people’s attention. They’ve seen this man for years, unable to stand let alone walk, Now he was walking and even jumping.

Have you ever seen an athlete who had surgery to repair a blown anterior cruciate ligament? He’s very careful and tentative when he first gets back on the court. Not this guy. He was enjoying his newfound ability to run and jump. He was also praising God. How could he not?

The people in the area saw this and knowing that this was the beggar they passed by every day, were filled with wonder θαμβος (astonishment), and εκστασις. We get our word ecstasy from that.

Peter seized the opportunity for another sermon. Ben preached about his first one, following the Pentecost event two weeks ago. The power of preaching is multiplied when combined with signs of God’s power at work.

* Followers of Jesus speaking, being heard in many different languages.
* A crippled man walking and leaping is certainly a good sign that God is active.

In a few minutes I’ll talk about how this applies to us because I don’t expect to see a lot of miraculous healing accompanying our worship services any time soon. For now let me ask, What good is preaching if it’s not connected with the power of God in some way?

Let’s consider the sermon Peter preached that day. I’m not going to read it to you. I’ll trust you to read it on your own. Peter emphasized that it was neither he nor John who healed this man*. Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?* Acts 3:12

*This was God’s doing*, he said. Then he launched into a message typical of early church preaching. This was about Jesus, who the Jews arranged to be killed by the Romans. This was probably the greatest crime in human history, this man who came as a servant and sacrifice, a man who never sinned in any way, punished with a horrible undeserved execution. The Jews just couldn’t get their heads around the idea that the Messiah must suffer and be killed.

As in all early Christian preaching Peter emphasized the vindication of the resurrection. *God glorified this man by raising Him from the dead*. Had Jesus not been raised, had the tomb not been empty, everything about Him would have ended at the cross. But God wasn’t finished. He raised Jesus. Peter and John were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus.

All of this was according to the prophets of Israel. The very prophets the Jews revered and honored had told of Jesus. Later in a letter to a bunch of churches Peter wrote this,

*Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.* *It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.* 1 Peter 1:1012

The prophets didn’t always understand the implications of their own preaching, but they were telling of Jesus, His death and resurrection. This has now come to fruition. This is the Gospel.

Peter’s sermon included a call to repentance, as well as a promise of the Second Coming of Christ.

Now let’s talk about this in the context of Agape Christian Church 2018. As I said a few minutes ago, The power of preaching is multiplied when combined with signs of God’s power at work.

Here in Acts 3 Peter’s sermon was combined with the power of God healing a crippled man. This was a consequence of the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit they came to Jerusalem to wait for as Jesus had told them; the Holy Spirit who came to them with the sound of rushing wind and *what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.* Acts 2:3

Ben talked last week about how when Peter concluded his first sermon in Acts 2 the people were moved and asked, *What must we do?* *Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”.* Acts 2:37f

When you became a Christian, you received the gift of the Holy Spirit. So, if we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit why aren’t we healing people today? Why aren’t we doing the miraculous things they did then?

If receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit doesn’t mean that we’ll do miraculous things, what does it mean?

To be clear, the miraculous things recorded of the Apostles really did happen. They’re not myths created by the church to support a narrative. Never forget, many of these men and women were killed for being Christians. They would never let that happen if it was just a narrative. But these men witnessed, they facilitated these proofs of Jesus’ power.

Two circumstances impacted this application of the Holy Spirit. One, there were Apostolic men present in the church at that time, men who walked with Jesus and talked with Jesus; men who had an unrepeatable personal intimacy with Jesus. We don’t have anyone like that today.

Second, there was an atmosphere of anticipation. People were ready to accept a movement of God. We don’t really have that today. Today there is an atmosphere of skepticism.

Miraculous healing doesn’t impress anybody in our culture. What do people think and say about someone who claims to have facilitated “faith healing”? They call him a phony, a charlatan. Nobody believes him.

Most of us here today are believers. Be honest, aren’t you a little bit skeptical when someone claims miraculous healing of some physical condition or illness? Even the stories I know of someone who seems to have experienced a miraculous healing, I have this little question mark in the back of my head.

William Barclay, former Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, an excellent student in his own right and a prolific commentator on the New Testament wrote,

*It is a simple fact that any doctor can now do things which in Apostolic times would have been regarded as miracles. It is the universal fact that God does not do for man what he can do for himself*. Commentary on Acts, page 29

God doesn’t need to heal paralysis of the feet and ankles today. You can just go to Dr. Yergler or Ratigan at South Bend Orthopedics.

After the book of Acts we don’t read much of miracles in the New Testament. The letter writers don’t speak of it. Neither Peter nor Paul, both of whom were conduits for God’s healing power and both of whom were known to have raised someone from the dead, wrote about specific miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit like this event in Acts 3.

Luke wrote about them because they were part of true history. Instead Peter, John, and Paul, wrote things like:

* …*He has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature.* 2 Peter 1:4
* *The anointing you received from Him remains in you.* 1 John 2:27
* *God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you...*Colossians 1:27

These men knew that what Jesus did for them He could do through them. In the aftermath of Pentecost they didn’t analyze what was happening. They simply went into all the world and preached the Gospel, letting the Holy Spirit do what He thought would serve the mission.

The Holy Spirit is not about magic to impress people into faith. If people are won to Christ through miracles, the Holy Spirit will have to provide a continuous parade of miracles to keep those same people. As Doc Strauss used to tell us in Seminary*, What you win people with is what you win people to*.

Well, if not to do miraculous things, what is the presence of the Holy Spirit? I believe there are two primary manifestations of the Holy Spirit that we can expect today.

One manifestation of the Holy Spirit in us is “*the fruit of the Spirit*”.

In Galatians 5 Paul wrote that what is at the core of our being shows itself in our lives. If sin still lives in us it manifests itself in things like, *sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness.* Galatians 5:19-21

Then he wrote that if the Holy Spirit lives in us He manifests Himself in *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.* Galatians 5:22f

These things are called “*the fruit of the Spirit*”. They’re the fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in our lives. When we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit this fruit should manifest itself in us.

Holy Spirit living will impress our culture much more than will miraculous events. Our culture is simply too cynical and skeptical to respond to miracles.

A second manifestation of the Holy Spirit in us is “*the Gifts of the Spirit*”, the charismata or spiritual gifts.

We read about them in 1 Corinthians 12-14. Therein is a list, not exhaustive or exclusive, of specific ways the Holy Spirit shows Himself in us. While there are a couple of gifts mentioned that are miraculous, most are improvements on our abilities and motivation: *wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits.*

Paul identified these as different kinds of service or workings or motivations (vv. 4f). He also said the *manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good* (vs. 7).

Lloyd John Ogilvie wrote, *The need before us brings forth the gift from the Spirit within us*. If the Holy Spirit thought that healing a crippled man today would serve the Kingdom, He would endow one of us with that power, and I’m certain that at times He does just that.

But as Paul wrote in chapter 13, the greatest manifestation of the Holy Spirit in us is love. Real Christ-like love will do more to promote the Gospel than any miracle.

The power that Jesus promised isn’t the power to rule over others, nor is it the power to do miracles at our pleasure. It’s the power to witness to the world that Jesus saves.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is the enabling power of God to live like Jesus and to serve like Jesus in order that we might make disciples.

If another preacher or another church wants to emphasize miraculous things as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit that’s up to them. But I believe that a congregation that truly allows the Holy Spirit to endow its people, rather than doing miraculous thing, such a congregation will live like Jesus and serve like Jesus, and in that we make disciples of Christ, followers of Jesus.

It will be a congregation that ministers to needs, bringing about spiritual, psychological, and physical healing.

The manifestation of the Holy Spirit that transforms us from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness is the connection between our preaching and the power of God.

The gift of the Holy Spirit generally isn’t about doing miracles. It will be when God knows it will seal the deal with people. The gift of the Holy Spirit is generally about enabling believers to be like Jesus.

Do you ever look at Facebook? Read a post from a Christian about some good work God is doing, then read the comments. Invariably there will be some troll who responds with a negative comment. Usually it’ll be something about Christians who don’t live up to that writer’s standard of what a Christian should be and do. You won’t see any criticism that the Christian didn’t show a miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

*The need before us brings forth the gift from the Spirit within us*. The need today more than ever is for Christians to reflect the character of Christ (the fruit of the Spirit) as we use our gifts to serve.

Wouldn’t it be great if we could get every member of our church active in some ministry? Think of the lives we could influence if we let the Holy Spirit empower us to serve.

* Women’s Care Center
* Frontline Foundation

We’re not doing this just to be nice people. Our purpose is to show the love of Jesus and make disciples. The Holy Spirit in us will enhance our testimony, probably not by miracles, but by bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit and by enabling us to serve.