

Such As I Have
Clairemont SDA Church
Sermon by: Pastor John Anderson
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Let us read together from the Word of God beginning in Acts 3:1. There's a particular phrase in this story (it comes later in verse 6) that I pray the Spirit will burn into our thinking today. "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour." Peter and John were good friends and were frequently grouped together in the story of the Gospels as well as the book of Acts. They were not brothers, but they had been partners in the fishing industry. Receiving the call to follow Christ, we find that their names are linked together on numerous occasions.

Along with James, the brother of John, they enjoyed a special relationship with their Lord. We hear about "Peter, James and John" on the Mount of Transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Peter, James and John" were privileged to be with Jesus in the room when He raised a young girl back to life. It was Peter and John who were sent to prepare the "upper room" in which the Passover would be celebrated just before Jesus' death. At the trial of Jesus, John, who was acquainted with the family of the high priest, brought Peter into the palace of the priest. Later in the story of Acts, Peter and John were sent to Samaria to approve and assist in the work that Philip was doing. Following that, they were sent to give approval to the work that Paul and Barnabas were doing among the Gentiles. So it is natural, in the unfolding of the story of Acts that these two would be together in going to the temple.

We're not told exactly what year this event took place, but it was probably soon after the ascension of our Lord and the happenings surrounding the Day of Pentecost, recorded just before in the second chapter of Acts. At that time believers didn't have their own houses of worship, so at the temple in Jerusalem or within the many synagogues of the different cities is where they worshiped. It was the "ninth hour," or about 3 p.m. when Peter and John approached the temple. Remember that they didn't have wrist watches like we have; they just started their day at sunup and counted the hours forward from that. Noon would be about the sixth hour; the ninth hour would be about 3 p.m. This would have been the time of the evening sacrifice, and considered a time of prayer for devout believers. Pious Jews and

dedicated Christians would have assembled in the courts of the temple to join in the sacrament of the evening service.

Let us continue reading in verse 2. "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 them that entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked an alms." Neither history nor archeology identifies this particular gate by name, but Josephus speaks of a gate, known as the Nicanor Gate, which was of outstanding beauty. He says, "One, that was outside the sanctuary, was of Corinthian bronze, and far exceeded in value those plated with silver and set in gold." (War, v. 5.3 {201}). The Mishnah agrees, stating, "All the original gates were changed for gates of gold except the gates of Nicanor, because a miracle was wrought to them; some say, however, it was because the copper of them gleamed (like gold)." Mishnah, Middah 2. 3, Soncino edition of the Talmud, pp. 7, 8. Within the temple, this gate probably separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Women.

This man was laid there expecting "alms," an old English word for charitable contributions. Because there were no "public" agencies of welfare, this man was left to beg for money, and no doubt obtained the assistance of helpers to position him strategically in the temple area, hoping that worshipers who came by would feel the tug of sympathy and share a shekel or two with him. We are told that he, now in his 40th year, had been a cripple from birth. Many people knew about this man's disability, a fact which contributed to the authenticity of the miracle about to happen.

Verses four and five read, "And Peter, fixing his eyes on him with John, said, 'Look on us.' And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them." The early church was a benevolent church. We are told at the close of the second chapter that, "All who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need." Acts 2:44, 45. One might wonder why, seeing this man "expecting to receive something of them," Peter and John didn't dip into the coffers of the church treasury to give him something. Evidently the Spirit impressed on their minds that there was something much better that God wanted to give him.

Here we come to the main text of our sermon today, verse 6. Please listen carefully, for we will draw some lessons from this verse as it pertained both to the lame man at the gate back then, and to us

today. "Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold have I none; but *such as I have give I thee*; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up; and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.'" Acts 3:6-9, KJV.

I remember from about 30 years ago or so singing a praise song that told this man's story. Do any of you remember that song? It had motions that went along with it as you sang. The words were,

"Peter and John went to pray, they met a lame man on the way
He stuck out his palm and asked for an alm
And this is what Peter did say.

"Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee
In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk

"He went walking and leaping and praising God,
Walking and leaping and praising God
In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk."

A nice song, one that helps fix the details of this wonderful story in our minds. I've had it in my head all week! "Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold have I none; but *such as I have give I thee*; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." As with many of the stories of the Bible, there are lessons to be learned from the story as it took place back then, but there is also a more relevant application of this story to us today.

This man's life changed that day forever. Little did he dream as his friends carried him to the spot where he hoped for a coin from sympathetic passersby that from that moment on he would be able to use his own legs; no longer would he need friends to carry him about, nor would he have to rely on the generosity of strangers to provide for his needs. He'd be able to work and live in a way he had never known before.

He was hoping for a coin or two; he received much more! Allow your imagination to focus on this scene, put it on "pause" for just a second and "freeze the frame" when Peter stated to him, "Silver and gold have I none." Are you at that moment of the story? If you could see the picture at that precise moment, perhaps this man's face fell in

disappointment. There go his shoulders, slumped down. He probably thought, "Oh just another person who's going into the temple but who doesn't have a mite to share with a person in need."

But in moments his face would be broken in smiles and laughter! How often God doesn't give to us what we think we need, but instead gives to us what we really need, but might have either been unaware of it or not confident enough to ask for it. There are lots of things we may think we "need," but God wants to give us much more.

This man represents us. Like this man, we are "crippled" spiritually. How long had this man suffered this disability? Since his birth. We may be "lame" in our walk and stumble often in our journey. We've been crippled spiritually since our birth, because the Scripture says that we were "born in sin." The Lord wants to give to us His glorious righteousness, that we might have a right standing before God in Him. He also wants to impart superhuman power to us, through the name of Christ, that we might stand and not fall; that we might walk and not stumble. Like this man, we've been afflicted with a spiritual paralysis "from birth," but that in no way means that there's not help through Jesus.

Was this miracle something that was generated by some super power that Peter had? Oh no! It is very clear from the story that it was in the "Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" that this man was healed. The story of Jesus "of Nazareth" had been spread through the account of His death and resurrection and the events of the Day of Pentecost, so it is very possible that this man had heard of Him. Perhaps he had heard of His healing miracles, even ones in the same category of his particular need. And yet, though many had received the Savior's healing touch and been restored to health, this man had not. Jesus had taught and healed often in the temple precincts. Was this man not present during those occasions? We're not told. He had probably given up on the prospect of being healed and concentrated on meeting his daily needs at the hands of those who pitied him.

But then, that day, a day he'd never forget! What he didn't expect; what he would never dare to dream had come true! A new life was his! He could walk! Imagine being 40 and never having had the opportunity to use your legs in a normal way. This man wasn't going to be deterred! He went walking and leaping and praising God! He couldn't be stopped in his exuberance in giving thanks to the Lord for helping him. Question: shouldn't we be as ready to give God praise for His power in our lives? What made this miracle special for this man was that he had not ever been able to walk before this, for his entire

life of 40 years. But I have been given the ability to walk all my life. Should I be less enthusiastic in my praise to God because He's given me this gift, and countless more, all my life?

Besides the physical blessings, He's given us new life, a spiritual life of peace in knowing that our sins are forgiven in Christ. He's given us a life that will last forever. Shouldn't that call forth our sincere and earnest praise?

And the Lord used this miracle, as we're told in the next two chapters, to help spread this "Name," the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, so that others were brought to a position of knowledge about the Savior, and many of them believed, though the leaders, unwilling to accept Jesus as the true Messiah, caused trouble for Peter and John.

Those are some of the lessons we see in this story as it pertained to this man's healing. But a while back this story and the memorable description of it as reported in the King James Bible flashed in my mind with a new application. I love the way God's Spirit brings new meaning to Bible stories! I know it was a thought from the Lord, since I was not at that time thinking about the story or anything having to do with the application that God's Spirit put into my mind. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." I saw that phrase in an entirely new light, one that I would like to share with you today.

It has to do with the uniqueness of our church and its message. God brought this church into existence at a particular time about 170 years ago and commissioned it with a special message to share with the world before Jesus comes back in the clouds. Take careful note, friends. *This church is not like any other on earth.* It has been given a message to share that is not like any other on earth. The message it has been privileged to receive is calculated to alert the world one final time and prepare a people to stand for Him and His truth at the end. It is a message of God's love that is like none other.

Someone might say, "Don't other churches teach about God's love? Don't other churches recite John 3:16?" Yes, that's true. But because of the unique insights given to the Seventh-day Adventist church, we have been privileged to understand the depth of God's love, in the context of the "Great Controversy" between Christ and Satan, in a way that has not been known before.

Allow me to share an example or two. We understand that the magnitude of the sin required a sacrifice even greater. The One Who

died on the cross was One greater than the law that was broken. The One Who gave His life at Calvary was the One Who "spoke and it was, He commanded and it stood fast." Psalm 33:6, 9. It was the Creator God who shed His blood that day for the sins of mankind. We understand that the death He experienced was much more than the common death that comes upon members of the human family. It was the "second death" that Christ experienced that day, as He carried the guilt of lost souls as well as His cross to Golgotha. I don't know that anyone else is teaching the depth of God's love in Christ dying the second death.

Right now we understand that Jesus is involved in a special ministry to shape our characters and change the way we think so that we can fit into heaven's society. We understand that His mission was to come and save us "from our sins," to actually give us His faith and His victory over the evil one, and that today, even in this wicked world, Christian character can resemble that of the Master. Remember! We're not saved by our works. How is it that our salvation is accomplished? Only through the blood of Jesus. That's true now, it will be true all the way to the end. Never think that what God wants to accomplish in us qualifies us for redemption. We're saved by grace through faith which works by love.

In that context we understand the beauty of God's holy day, the Sabbath, and lessons it teaches us of salvation by grace and not works, as we rest from our labors on the day He set aside. We understand the lesson it teaches that He can take us, as He took a world "without form and void" and make us "good." We understand the role that loyalty to His commandments will occupy in the last great conflict between good and evil.

Not for an instant were Peter and John embarrassed that they didn't possess what this man thought he wanted. Boldly and without hesitation Peter declared, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." We're going to allow this man to stand for all men and women who go looking for a church hoping to receive something. Where was this man? He was at the temple, wasn't he. He represents all who come to church. What was he doing there? He was hoping to receive something, wasn't he. Thus he represents all who go looking for a church hoping to find something. Some coin of value; some commodity that will make their life better.

We're going to take Peter's response and apply it to those things that people are hoping to find in church. It's not a perfect analogy;

illustrations are rarely perfect, as we'll see. But it has meaning. Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." The word "none" in our application isn't going to be perfectly accurate, because as we'll see we do offer many of the things that people are looking for in church life. It's just that these other "things" aren't the most important thing; they are not the focus of what we're about.

Why do people attend a church? Why do they show up at the temple as this man did in the story? Some are hoping for the coin of fellowship and friendship. They are lonely and are hoping that in an association within a church they will find that void filled. Is fellowship important? Is that a legitimate aspect of church life? Yes, and I pray that people who come to our church find fellowship and friendship here. Is it the main and only reason to belong to a church? No.

Some are hoping for the coin of beauty, whether in the facility, the music or the presentation. Some churches put on what you might call a "show" in their services. Attractive music, beautiful choirs, splendid architecture. Can these things enhance worship? Absolutely! I believe we have in our midst those who are gifted in music, and they bless us as we worship together. We are blessed with a comfortable sanctuary. I can remember when there weren't pews; there were hard folding chairs. I can remember when this church first opened its doors that the sound bounced all around and made hearing difficult, till we put up the panels that you see on the walls. God has blessed us with a comfortable facility and beautiful music. Are they the main reasons why we should belong to a church?

Some come to church hoping to receive the coin of prosperity and worldly gain. I heard of a dentist who was advised when he moved his practice to a certain city, "Find the largest church in town and become a member. It will increase your dental practice." Some go to a church because they preach there that you'll become wealthy if you practice the principles taught there. Does God bless us financially when we follow Him? Yes! Let your eye scan the parking lots of Adventist churches and you'll see that God has blessed His people. Is financial prosperity the right and main reason to belong to a church? No.

Some are at church for the coin of convenience. It's the closest to my house. It's the one I grew up in. My parents and grandparents all went to this church and it's convenient to keep my ties and friendships here. Some are at a church because the speaker is

eloquent and flashy. He's a popular speaker on TV. Is that the primary reason we should belong to a church?

Please note! We may not have the greatest music department in our church, though God is pleased when we sing praises to Him. We may not have the most extravagant building in which to worship, though God has blessed us with a comfortable church. Our children's department may not be the largest, though those who lead are doing a wonderful ministry. Your pastor is neither the most eloquent nor the most charismatic, not the youngest nor the brightest, and certainly not what you would call flashy or flamboyant, though he knows he was called of God to occupy this pulpit. The membership of this church may not even be a tithe of other churches in our community, though they are committed to God and to His will. We may not have all the activities and functions that others have, though our fellowship is sweet.

All of these things might be the elements that attract people to the churches of today, and there's nothing wrong with them in themselves, just as there's nothing wrong with "silver and gold" in themselves. It's just that that's not where the focus is. For Peter and John, there was "something much better" that they could give this man than coinage. In the same way, God has gifted *this* church with the precious gems of truth that are infinite value, worth much more than any other feature that another church might offer. "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

A large and wonderful choir; an elegant and expensive campus; a high-tech media ministry that captures your eye's attention; a program that is entertaining and captivating; a never-ending stream of functions and activities. The list could go on. Other churches might have all of those things and might attract many members. Again, there may be nothing wrong with those things, but our focus is different. Our appeal is not through the coinage of these other elements. With Peter we may say to the world, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

What we offer is a message that is designed to alert the world to Christ's coming and prepare people to stand in the last day. We're here to give a message similar to what was given to Adam and Eve in the Garden, with consequences just as crucial. Believe God; trust His Word, obey His command. That was the message in the Garden, and in a way it's no different from the message we've been called to give.

We're here to share the vital "Messages of the Three Angels" of Revelation 14.

We're not here to entertain; we're here to listen to the Spirit's voice that brings conviction. Read all the sermons given in the Bible; read the messages proclaimed in the book of Acts, the template of what the Christian church should be about. I don't think you will find what we might call "entertainment" in them. They weren't there to tickle the ears or stroke the fancy of their hearers. They were given to bring them to a point of decision on a life and death matter, whether or not to receive Christ as their personal Savior.

"Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee." What we have to share is knowledge of God's love and a unique perspective of life, one which you won't find anywhere else. To know that we are *now* living in the hour of His judgment; to know that Jesus is *now* preparing the bride for the great wedding; to understand the great issue of loyalty and allegiance in the setting of salvation by grace and the obedience of faith to all of God's commandments; these are worth more than any other feature that might attract the eye or the ear. Truth; present truth; saving truth; truth that gives us hope in His soon coming; I'd rather worship under a tree and hear God's truth spoken than in the grandest cathedral if it echoed errors. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth." I Timothy 3:15.

Peter challenged the lame man to "Look on us." This was not an egotistical demand. Peter had no intention that the man look at him for any personal reason. It was because of what God was going to do for the man through Peter. In the same way, it is right for us to invite attention, not to us personally, not in any way to uplift self, but to lift up Christ and give prominence and emphasis to the message we bear. The "angel" of Revelation 14 is seen flying in the midst of heaven giving the message with a "loud voice" ("mega" "phone") to every nation, tribe, tongue and people.

Hiding the light under a bushel, a bed or in a secret place is not carrying out the Great Commission. In the end, the man at the gate was benefited by Peter's invitation to "Look on us." We have no right to withhold God's truth that He's designed for this generation and keep these things to ourselves. The apostles spread the Word far and wide so that they were accused of "turning the world upside down." Paul told King Agrippa, "These things were not done in a corner." Acts 26:26.

Have we done as good a job as we could have in this regard? Are we saying, as Peter did with holy boldness, "Look on us"? It is somewhat disappointing to realize that the name "Seventh-day Adventist" is less known today than 120 years ago or so. There was a time when most of America had heard of Seventh-day Adventists, either through the preaching or the health message. That's not true today. Most people I ask if they've heard of our church say, "No, I don't think I've heard of you." That's sad! God forgive us for that! They might have heard of Loma Linda Hospital, they might have eaten corn flakes or peanut butter, but they haven't heard our message, the message God wants the world to hear before He returns.

Let us lift up the light higher than ever, in these last days. Never feel embarrassed or out-classed because our church is perhaps smaller or in some way perceived as inferior to another. The message we share, stenciled by the Spirit on our hearts, is the credential we bear. It's the message God wants the world to hear before He returns in glory. Well might we learn from the apostle who said, "Silver or gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee."

Someday friends, we'll be at another "gate called beautiful," at the "gate beautiful" made of pearl that leads to Paradise. On that day, freed from all earthly afflictions, like the man in our story, we'll be leaping and jumping and praising God. May that day be Soon! May He keep us faithful to that day!