



From the Upper Room to the Temple

An address for the Healing Service ● 19th June 2008 ● Rev Kate

Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at that gate of the temple which is called Beautiful to ask alms of those who entered the temple. Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms.

And Peter directed his gaze at him, with John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention upon them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. And leaping up he stood and walked and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God, and recognized him as the one who sat for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Acts 3:1-10

This is the first miracle after Pentecost. It is a story filled with power, surprise and joy. We see Peter and John no longer tucked up safely in the upper room in Jerusalem but out amongst the people at three o'clock doing a very ordinary thing, going to the temple to pray, along with most of the other men in the town.

The event centres around the temple, and we know that the temple is a symbol for our bodies. "Your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit," says St. Paul. It is a symbol of our external being, that which perceives and is seen and heard, that which is concerned with expression and movement and action - in this case a very ordinary action which leads to the healing.

I want to go back a bit to the upper room - a very different symbol, a very different place. The symbol of our inner life.

As the Apostles had experienced the inner room, so have we experienced the inner room as we have followed Christ through the events that culminated in the coming of the Holy Spirit, for their power goes on working in us and we continue to express them.

I want to recall the associations of the upper room. It is a little while since we had those celebrations, but as I recall them I ask you to make it a personal encounter, not just thoughts on an historic event. They are experiences that lead us to a mystical union with him.

Firstly, it is the place of the Last Supper, a place of the revelation of divine love, when Christ gave us the Eucharist, his body and blood.

It is also the place of the revelation of human weakness and betrayal, as Judas left his master and betrayed him.

It is the place where the disciples experienced sadness, anger, shame, doubt and fear.

It is the place of great healing and joy, where the risen Christ appeared to them and restored their knowledge and faith in him.

Then finally it is the place of the Holy Wind and the Sacred Flames of fire and the mighty moving of the Spirit.

Now the thing to wonder about is that as we have lived the mystery of Golgotha with Christ and his Apostles, then that upper room is within us. It's not a ground floor; it is an upper room - the place of our consciousness, which has been raised, and which has been and is ever changing in us.

In tonight's story, all that richness of experience, fear, betrayal, repentance, intense love, longing, healing, faith, joy and exultation burst forth from Peter and John, if you think about them, you must know that the experience was very raw and intense in them and this immediacy created passionate energy and power, but also great love and compassion.

Let's go back to the text and hear what Peter said to the lame man - "Look at us", and he did. He fixed his attention on them, and what he saw was the new temple of God.

Here he was before the great temple of Solomon, signifying the presence of God among his people, but before him was the new temple, the physical embodiment of the presence of God and the Spirit of Christ.

These first encounters of people with the Apostles are precious first-time moments of this new wondrous state. Let us not take this moment for granted or rush on quickly. This is the lame man's first encounter with Christ.

Now listen to Peter's words: "Silver and gold have I none, but I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

I think silver and gold are very interesting symbols here. Why did he not say, "I have no shekels on me to give to you"? Would anyone normally give silver and gold to a beggar?

Might this be about the choice that we have when Christ has given us his resurrection power and the gift of his Spirit? We can look at them just for ourselves. There is a classic picture of what people do with silver and gold. They hoard it, put it in a safe place and guard it against robbers. They hold on to it for the future. Maybe today's image is a Swiss Bank account!!

Our choice must be to let it overflow freely and with love.

The lame man's response is to use his freedom and new-found power. I was so delighted when the music group sang the chorus "Silver and gold have I none" on Sunday. I thought that the power of this story must be in the consciousness around us. So let's sing the chorus now and enjoy the energy of this healing...

I thought this story was a good lead into St John's Tide, from the celebration of the Holy Spirit to the effect on the human spirit.

We see the human spirit of Peter and John fired up and ready for anything.

There were lots of beggars at the Beautiful Gate. What did Peter and John see as this particular man returned their gaze? They saw someone who was open, ready and able to move on with the new impulse.

Another important thing about this story is that healing can take place in the ordinary everyday events where we encounter people, for truly Christ is in us, and the exciting thing is

that we give the unique and individual expression of the life of Christ in us to others. We are not allowed to hoard it.

It flows out of our upper room and through the temple of our being.

Peter said, "Look at us." So let us do that: look with the internal eyes of faith and love. These powers work together to open us to Christ's healing love.

Take a few minutes now in the silence to consider what holds you back. What keeps you emotionally or mentally lame?

Maybe there are some riches in the upper room you are not tapping into. Do you have physical needs?

What do you need to let go of that prevents you being fresh and immediate in response to Christ? Just be open and ready in faith and love and you will know.

So shall it be.

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