

Easter 3

Acts 3:11-20

A Needed Miracle

My brothers and my sisters in Christ. One of the most legendary ideas in the history of psychology is located in an unassuming triangle divided into 5 sections referred to simply as 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs'. Produced in 1943, the pyramid was Maslow's attempt to discover what could make life, his included, meaningful. In the process, he discovered that until certain needs are met, others are not even in consideration. Without boring you to tears, the hierarchy says that if you don't have your most fundamental needs of food, water, and shelter met, it's almost impossible to work through the idea of, or meet the need of self esteem and pursuing respect from others. If you don't have stability and physical safety, it's all but impossible to set goals for your future, and work on personal growth plans. In short, he found out that certain needs, are more important than others.

We see a somewhat similar idea to this pyramid in our text from the book of Acts, that follows shortly after the resurrection of the Savior. The text we read, follows a series of events in the first verses of the chapter.

Peter and John are going to the temple for the time of prayer. And as they walk, they see a man at the gate who has never been able to walk. He comes there everyday to beg for money. The man sees the disciples and asks them for money, to which Peter responds: **“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”** The man is healed. And he demonstrates by running and jumping and praising God.

Predictably, this draws some attention. **“While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade.”**

Crowded around Peter and John, we have two different groups with a mistaken sense of need. Similar to, but far more consequential, a starving man thinking his need at the moment is to be considering about how he might become the best artist that he could be. The lame man, was thoroughly convinced he needed something, a few coins from the pair of disciples. How else is he going to buy bread? How else can he purchase water?

The crowds gathered around because they wanted to see a miracle worker. If someone was able to make this man, lame from birth, to jump. What else could be possible for them to do? What else might we see? What could he maybe do for me?

I think that we are familiar with this. We see it all the time in the Gospels when Jesus or others perform miracles. However, we are not so quick to see how frequently we can be guilty of disordered need, of a pyramid turned upside down. How often do we come to the house of worship, hoping to address a certain kind of daily concern? How often do we go to our Lord in prayer, with supplications primarily, for the less than important? What I really need Lord, is a fix for my physical ailments, or financial burdens, or the weight of my relationships.

Peter, in bold fashion, reestablishes the true need of his audience. He takes the pyramid and turns it back to where it must be. With his speech, his sermon rather, he provides the foundation of the pyramid of needs that has always been, and always will be. He addresses the needs of this impromptu congregation, by pointing to a greater miracle, that healed a far greater need.

The miracle is the precursor to the the real healing. You think you need to walk, you think you need money, you think you need a magician, you don't. You need your Savior. You need forgiveness. Your real problem is sin. **“The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has**

glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go.”

Peter cuts in the way only the Law can. We have a God. You disobeyed this God. You handed him over to be killed. You denied him. You ended the life of the one who created life. Even a heathen saw that you acted immorally. You are sinners. You sinned against our God.

But as they quake in their shoes, Peter follows: **"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord"** This same God whom you sinned against, both in willing defiance, and ignorance, he forgives you. Your sins, whatever they are, have been blotted out from the record by faith in his name. It is faith in the name of Jesus, that forgives sins, it is faith in Jesus that gave the power to make this man walk, it is faith in Jesus that grants eternal life.

What is their greatest need? What has to be filled first, before anything else? What is the priority for Peter that he establishes for his congregation? It is the miracle of salvation. It is the message of Law and Gospel. It is the wonder of sin and grace. It is the story of crucifixion and resurrection.

That priority, that need, that Peter addressed, is the same for you and I. That same sermon is preached to us in a way whenever we gather. This priority is placed at the forefront. We hear the message of utmost painful importance that we are sinful. We killed the Son of God by our acts of willful defiance as well as ignorance. We have a God whom we have disobeyed and ignored. But as we are cut and wounded, there always comes the welcome refreshment from the Lord. Your sins are forgiven. Your sins, whatever they may be have been blotted out. Through faith in that Jesus, sins are forgiven, it is faith in that Jesus that gives strength to all who dwell here below, it is faith in that Jesus which grants a resurrection to life.

We don't come to church for the silver and gold. We come for forgiveness. We don't go to the Scriptures primarily for physical relief, go to hear how the Savior saved a sinner like us. We don't worship a God who gives us everything you want on this earth, we worship a God who gives us an inheritance of heavenly glory.

Dear Christians, we live in a world of people who are full of needs. With the variety of needs that swirl around, human beings will always try to prioritize and fulfill these needs in the ways that seem best. For the unbelieving world, many of them do not realize what their greatest need is, and how it has been met.

You as a Christian, are able to be a tool of God, to meet that need. You may feel that you vastly unqualified, or not in the right place, or the right time, but look at what happened here. Peter, a man who was a sinner, who had denied his Lord in his presence. Peter a man who just happened to have a group of people gather around him, people who had murdered his teacher not that long ago, and were capable of doing the same to him. Peter was a participant in the work of the Lord. Simply by sharing the message of sin and grace.

Peter, a sinful man, to a crowd of people unreceptive, preached that we are sinners and we are forgiven. Jesus was promised, Jesus died, and Jesus rose. That's what was needed. And through that message, the Spirit worked. The Spirit worked a greater miracle than making a man walk. It worked the miracle of faith in the hearts of those who heard. In the next chapter: **"many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand."**

You might stumble into a scenario where you are able to be a tool of the Lord, just like Peter. It might be with people you don't know. It might be with people who don't even seem receptive. But you have everything that is required to meet the greatest need of anyone you meet. You have the same message of sin and grace. You have the same Gospel that Peter preached. You have the same Savior who forgives sins. You have the same Spirit who can work in the hearts of those who hear.

So, my brothers and sisters in Christ, as you go from this place, be mindful of the need of those around you. A need greater than all others—the need for a Savior. May we be bold in sharing the message of sin and grace. May we be confident in the power of the Gospel to change hearts and lives. May we be a servant of Jesus, bringing healing and hope to a world in desperate need of a miracle. Amen.