



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

September 16, 2012

Pentecost 16

Sermon Text: [Acts 3:1-10](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 35:4-7a](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 146](#)

Second Lesson: [Acts 3:1-10](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 7:31-37](#)

### **Walk! Jump! Praise!**

In response to God's goodness

In ways that point people to God

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

I visit any number of people throughout my ministry that struggle with why they are here. What I mean is that they found their purpose in life in what they've done for others, what they've been able to do, and then as some disease or sickness or stroke or old age or something else comes along and they aren't able to do what they once could, they kind of question what their purpose is and what is their reason for existence. Why does God leave them here? Finding our self worth in only what we do really sets us up for a fall because in reality, the most important thing in the world that we need, we can't do, which is the forgiveness of sins. We can't do eternal life. So if we are going to set our self worth on what we do, we really are setting ourselves up for a fall because one truth is that if we live long enough, we won't be able to do what we once could.

As Christians, we have the opportunity to find our self worth in God. That's not an opportunity we always seize because of our sinful nature.

I can understand their struggles. I can understand the challenges that come with that. But think for a minute about that guy I read to you about from Acts 3. From birth he was crippled. He could never walk. He couldn't submit to an insurance company to get a scooter. He had to rely on someone to carry him to the gate called Beautiful so he could beg for stuff to live on. That's where we find him in what I read to you from Acts 3. They took him to the temple gate called Beautiful where he sat day after day. I suppose it beats sitting at the temple gate called Ugly, which they didn't really have, but that was his lot in life. Think about how he might have struggled with what his purpose was.

We found out later in Acts 3 that he was 40 years old. Life expectancy in first century Palestine wasn't a whole lot longer than 40 years old. For 40 years he had lived, unable to do anything. He never had the opportunity to find his self worth in what he could do for someone else. His entire life he was dependent on the kindness and the mercy of strangers. Tell me that wouldn't be frustrating from time to time. What a life. That had to be kind of tough.

The temple gate called Beautiful was one of the most used temple gates. It was on the East side of the temple. People would stream through there three times a day. No doubt this guy got pretty adept at listening I would think. I would think he knew something of this Jesus of Nazareth and heard about his triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He maybe even knew something about the turnaround and the mob crying "crucify him". We are told by the two Emmaus disciples that it was the talk of Jerusalem, so you have to think this guy had some knowledge of that. After all, he wasn't distracted by doing. He probably had plenty of opportunity to sit and listen.

One day when he sees these two guys coming in, Peter and John, and they say "Look at me." He looks at them. I don't know if he knew them or not. We aren't told any of that. But I have to think that after what happened that day he understood the name of Jesus and what it meant.

We are told it was 3:00 in the afternoon. If you were in Jerusalem, you were supposed to go to the temple three times a day for worship. For meditations, for times of singing when the temple singers would sing, and where you would reflect on God and his promises. The one at 3:00, the 9<sup>th</sup> hour, was actually called the Evening Sacrifice. If you ever come to Thursday Evening Worship when we use Evening Prayer, in Psalm 141, we sing "the lifting up of my hands to you as the evening sacrifice." That's what they were going there for, the Evening Sacrifice. So it was a busy, crowded time. This was probably prime begging time. The Evening Sacrifice had to do with removing the guilt of your sin, so maybe people reflecting on the guilt of their sin were moved to support those who couldn't support themselves.

When John and Peter say to him "Look at me," I have to think he looked intently thinking "this might be good." He had no idea, did he? Peter says to him, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Then this man sitting there by the gate Beautiful reaches up his right hand, Peter grabs it, Peter lifts him up to his feet, and we are told that immediately his ankles and his feet become strong. Think of all the rehabilitation that guy missed. Have you ever been through rehabilitation? Think of all the rehabilitation he missed. Immediately his ankles and his feet were made strong.

Peter and John tell the crowd that comes later, "This wasn't our doing. We didn't do this. We did it in the name of Jesus. This is Jesus' power. This is God's power. This is the One you crucified, but he is both Lord and Savior." It got them thrown into jail for that night for doing it, but they did it because this is how they served their God and this is how they served this man.

Now look at how this man served his God. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Here's a man that spent his whole life never able to walk, 40 years, and now he can walk. Here's a guy that found great joy no doubt in just walking. God had given him the gift of walking. So he walked to the glory of God. Maybe people even looked at this man during his life, like we looked at other places in the Gospel, and said "Who sinned,

this man or his father that he was born crippled?” It’s a common misconception that people have. God doesn’t punish us, because our sins were punished in Christ. But at times God allows difficulty in life so that he can lead us closer to him. At times, as in the case of this man, God allows difficulty in life so that God may show his glory and his power and his splendor in this healing.

One of the things we learn is that God has a purpose no matter what and that God does everything well. You and I don’t always see it because you and I are sinful human beings. You and I cannot wrap our head around God’s purposes and God’s designs. God said, as we saw this morning in Bible class, “let there be light” and there was light. You and I have to find a switch. God is so far above us we could never understand him fully. That’s why our God teaches us to trust that he will do everything well even when he allows difficulty and hardship into our lives. Our response at times is simply going to be to do what this man did, to walk, to keep walking, to do whatever God enables us to do to his glory, trusting that he is going to do all things well.

But this guy didn’t just walk, did he? We are told “he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.” Walking and jumping are two things he never could do before. Praising God he certainly could have done before, but now he could do it from a whole new perspective of one who had been touched by the goodness of God in a very personal and a very direct way. So he walked, he jumped, he praised God. His purpose now was to have others see how God had worked in his life.

God has touched you and me in a very personal and in a very direct way. It might not be that he made our ankles and our feet strong. It might not be that he heals us from a sickness or a disease. He doesn’t have to do that. That’s his choice in his grace and mercy to do it. But that doesn’t change the fact that he has touched us in a very personal and direct way. You and I could never stand next to or in front of God without bowing our heads in shame, because we are sinners. But he sent Christ to live and die in our place and take away our sins. He sent the Spirit to give us the gift of faith to trust that the God who saved us does all things well. That same Spirit leads us to believe that even in difficulty and hardship we want to walk, jump and praise God in whatever way we can because he has been good to us in so many different ways. If God does not choose to be good to you in the way you want him to be good to you, that’s not a God problem, that’s probably a “you” problem. There are a lot of things that I would love for the Lord to have done for me that he has not chosen to do. It doesn’t change that the Lord is good to me. It doesn’t change that he has given me an eternity in heaven. It’s the same for you.

In response to God’s goodness, you do what you can before God. You walk, you jump, you praise. You serve your God with the opportunities he gives you. This man’s vocation that day was to walk in a way that glorified God. Your vocation today might be a parent, a spouse, an employee, an employer, a neighbor, a citizen, it might be the person that is there to encourage someone who is straying from their God. That’s your vocation. Your walking, jumping and praising God is to carry out the task God has

given you in those areas to his glory because of the goodness he has shown to you. As you do it, you want to do the same thing that this guy did.

We are told that when all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him, at what God had done for him. This man was praising God, not Peter and John. He recognized where his help came from. He pointed people to God, not to God's messenger, to God. So our job is to connect people to God, not to the messengers, not to the place where the message is heard, but to God. To walk closer to our Savior is our goal.

As we walk, jump and praise in our life of thanking God for what he has done for us, one of the things that we can do is point people to God, not at the intermediary things, not to the school or to the congregation, but to God. God has given us the gift of his Word, and he wants us to share it. That's how we walk, we jump and we praise our God.

Our God gives us opportunities. Day after day he gives us opportunities. You and I day after day miss some of them. We fail. We neglect it for whatever reason and we sin against our God. The amazing truth is that our God forgives us in spite of our unfaithfulness. Our self worth before God is not in what we do for him because so often we fail to do for him. Our self worth before God is in the fact that he is gracious and forgiving and forgives us even when we have failed him. That moves us all the more to want to walk, jump and praise our God because his mercy and his love surrounds us. If that bores you, you have a problem. That's the most exciting news you could ever have. That's even better than having your ankles strengthened after 40 years of not having ankles. Amen.