

## Acts 3

**Read Acts 3:1:** The theme of this chapter is mercy and redemption for a helpless man. I am not sure if this is ultimately a story about a lame man or if it is about his faithful friends. Once again, we are going to begin to ask clarifying questions. It says that Peter and John were going to the 3:00 time of prayer in the temple. Interestingly, Jesus was crucified at 3:00 PM.

**Question:** What are the daily times of prayer in the temple? *9:00 AM (the third hour of the day), 12:00 (the sixth hour of the day), and 3:00 (the 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day).*

**Question:** Does the 3:00 prayer time have special significance to this story? *The evening prayer time is specifically to acknowledge God's presence through the day and reflect on that and glorify him. The 9<sup>th</sup> hour of the day is also the time of the evening sacrifice. 3:00 PM is known as the hour of mercy and redemption. This is when Jesus was crucified.*

**Read Acts 3:2-6:** With a setting of mercy and redemption, we read about a man in need of help. He was lame from birth. We may not feel like we are helpless, but we are. It just depends if God reveals it to us. He was unable to meet his own needs; and he was highly dependent on the mercy of others. This chapter is about ministering to the broken. It's a blessing to have these people in our lives. We were made to serve not be served.

**Question:** Does this story resemble your rescue story in any way? This man was carried here and carried there. Has anyone troubled themselves enough to reach in and burden themselves to make your life better? I know that I was on auto pilot attending a denominational church living below the calling on my life when a friend reached out. He insisted that I attend his High School bible study; even though I felt like I had that covered elsewhere. That exposure to serious saints and in-depth Bible study was a game changer for me.

This lame man really had no means to support himself. These cripples and blind and diseased people survived off of alms and alms deeds. An Alm (money for the poor) or an Alms Deed (act of charity for the poor) come from the Greek word for mercy. There are a few examples of extremely merciful people in the Bible, and they are used as examples for us.

One example of an alms-deeds provider is from a man outside of the church. Cornelius the Roman centurion is recognized by God. He was not a Jew or a member of that society.

*At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup> He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. <sup>3</sup> One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!” <sup>4</sup> Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked. (Acts 10)*

Cornelius thought that he was being thankful and helping those in need. In the end, these alms-gifts turned into a massive blessing for his family and the whole world. He was the first example of a Gentile believing family. There are other good examples like The Good Samaritan.

The gate that this cripple was brought to was called the Beautiful Gate. It was the gateway to the temple area; specifically to the courtyard of women and Gentiles. It was known to be the place of hope and healing. In other words, it is fitting that the second-tier citizens have a place of recognition and help.

*<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. <sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ <sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ <sup>41</sup> “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger and you did not invite*

*me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’* <sup>44</sup> “*They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’* <sup>45</sup> “*He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’* (Matthew 25)

It's always better to give someone Jesus, instead of just money. There are drug addicts and panhandlers everywhere asking for money. Sometimes the physical needs do need to be met. In the end, the idea is to show them how to go direct to God for their needs. We need to be introducers, not just enablers. We need to get out of the way, unless God puts us there to help.

**Read Acts 3:7-16:** Luke transitions from mercy and redemption to Jesus specifically. They now have plain evidence of God’s power to change lives. Peter is quick to get out of the way and tie the healing to Jesus...not to himself. Peter specifically connects the dots to Jesus as our healer. This whole healing is another way for the apostles introduced people to the power of Jesus. Everything in scripture is ultimately about Jesus. Jesus is the sum total of God’s promises and his nature. He ties Jesus to the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To be saved in the Old Testament (before specific knowledge of Jesus) depended on trusting in God’s promises. Jesus is the sum total of God’s promises.

**Read Acts 3:17-26:** Peter notes that Jesus is the fulfillment of multiple prophecies.