

**God helps by seeing, speaking and acting**  
12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Feast of the Holy Trinity  
Acts 3:1 – 10

*The Lame Beggar Healed*

*1Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. 2And a man lame from birth was being carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple that is called the Beautiful Gate to ask alms of those entering the temple. 3Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. 4And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" 7And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8And leaping up, he stood and began to walk, and entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. 9And all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10and recognized him as the one who sat at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, asking for alms. And they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.*



His jacket was at least three sizes too big. It was also dirty and torn. Under his arm he carried an oversized footstool and a large bag filled with shoe polish and a brush. But this boy, who was barely 10 years old, certainly didn't lack self-confidence. He shouted unabashedly to passersby: "Shoeshine!" "Who wants their shoes' shined?" He was very good at shining shoes. He shined the policemen's shoes for free, which kept him out of trouble with the law. Besides, he wanted to prove that he alone was the best shoe-shiner in all of Ecuador. Our Ecuadorian guidebook clearly stated that you shouldn't give money to beggars because it's degrading. However, if someone was willing to offer a service, you could help someone without them losing face. Although, the guidebook mentioned nothing about how to treat children. Children should be in school, anyway. And what about the policemen not having to pay? If one really wanted to help, one should perhaps take a completely different approach and ask where this boy came from and why he had to earn his daily bread like this. Perhaps then one could really help him... where the need is greatest. This brings us to the point that many Christians have been concerned with for centuries. It's about helping the people who are placed in our path. The parable of the Good Samaritan shows the way. We can't simply look away and move on. But throwing a coin into a bowl to satisfy our conscience is almost the same as doing that and doesn't really help. In the history of the Christian church, trillions of Euros and Dollars have been thrown away in the name of Jesus and in this way. More people are asking whether it really makes sense if the money is misappropriated anyway. But doing nothing is not an option either. The apostles Peter and John encountered this very question on their way to the temple. There they encountered a beggar. At first, this beggar wanted nothing more than money. But what he needed was more than just money. His request for money was just one of many needs. At that time, people didn't carry certificates of disability. So, of course, they did not receive state care, either. They weren't allowed to participate in normal social life. Above all, such people weren't even allowed to enter the temple. The man there in front of the temple had no rights at all. What's worse, this excluded him from hearing about God's love, care, and forgiveness. His only right was to beg. He was reluctantly granted this, and they also reluctantly gave him a little of their abundance.

There have always been people like this beggar and there will surely always be until the end of time. In the first instance, such people are placed on our path because they need money. But the question of money is only superficial and usually conceals a much deeper need and a much greater challenge for us. What do we do with such people among us? Even in Germany, the need is greater and deeper than the apparent poverty. People who have been in prison, for example, or who have otherwise been in trouble find it almost impossible to find housing and a job. The only reason is because they have an "unclean history"... a file, as they say today. Such people also pose a challenge to us. What do we do when such people are placed in our path? Simply look away and move on. "We have more than enough problems of our own, and after all, we can't save the whole world." This is how we talk ourselves out of it.

Peter and John show us how we can truly help. Since they still clearly remember Jesus' words about the Good Samaritan, as well as other words of Jesus, they couldn't simply march into the temple and pray while their

neighbor was outside suffering. From the very first word, the beggar must have noticed that these two were in a completely different mood. "Look at us!" is Peter's first remark. That itself was very unusual. Normally the beggar would have to hide his face in shame. The giver, perhaps just as ashamed, looks away and gives the beggar a coin. The call to "Look" is unusual and gives us the hint that Peter wants to give much more here. Throwing a coin into the plate is one thing. Giving someone attention is usually much more valuable. With money, he gets a loaf of bread for the day. With attention, the beggar gets a tiny bit of dignity back. Here is someone who can really see me, who wants to talk to me, who truly takes me seriously in all my suffering. When it comes to the poor and the downtrodden in our society, this attentiveness would be the first order of business. Having an eye for these people doesn't just mean seeing them but also taking notice of them. Perhaps not just seeing them as criminals, drug addicts, and those who have fallen from grace, but as what they truly are: God's children! And because they are, we can maybe understand a little better how they ended up in this situation. Of course, this can cost much more than the coin in the plate. But an attentive look alone isn't enough. We can also talk to one another. Next Peter speaks openly. This isn't just about pleasant conversation. It's not just about comfort or compassion. Peter speaks openly, and what he says, he says in the power of the Holy Spirit. "In the name of Jesus!" says Peter. And that is the key and pivotal point of all the events surrounding the temple in Jerusalem. Peter and John have no silver or gold. Indeed, nothing else to give except to speak in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus. The beggar at the gate in Jerusalem was to discover what that means. To speak in the name of Jesus means to speak with His authority, that is with the authority of the Good Shepherd, who knows exactly what each person needs. In the beggar's case, it wasn't just about getting new feet. Literally translated, the Bible tells us here: He was concerned with gaining a new foundation. So, here too, it was about more than just strengthening weak joints. It was about the foundation for his entire life! And as the story progresses, it becomes clear what that means. The man is not only supposed to be able to walk again—he is supposed to become fully human again. He is supposed to be a joyfully dancing member of human society again, and so much more. He is supposed to be and remain a child of God. His illness would surely return in one form or another. Otherwise, he would still be among us today.

All the healings in the Bible are only on the surface about the healing of the body. The real miracle of this healing isn't that the man receives a foundation for his feet, but a foundation for his entire life—for eternal life. That's always what it's about. And we can only pass that on if we rely on the words of Jesus and speak in His power and authority. Especially in our time, we are so often prevented from speaking these words. Sometimes we even feel like we have to apologize for wanting to say something about Jesus to someone. If we as a Church are socially active in any way, we are tolerated...just barely. But if we say something about Jesus, we are immediately shoved into the corner of cults and fundamentalists. This problem has even misled many Christians, so that the idea is spreading among Christians: "The main thing is that we do something good, then God will be pleased with us." We say that so we don't have to talk about Jesus. Thus, Satan silences us, and help will never reach anyone. Peter and John show us the way. It's essentially about speaking in the Name of Jesus and with His authority. When we meet here Sunday after Sunday, that's all it's about. Here we are nothing but beggars ourselves and Jesus' Word is spoken to us: "In the Name of Jesus, your sins are forgiven!" And when that is said, each person is helped precisely where the pain is greatest and where help truly matters. Speaking in Jesus' authority also means saying what is needed, where the need is greatest. Since these words have been spoken to us, we can also pass them on.

We don't always see how Jesus is working among us, but sometimes God allows us to see, speak, and feel. This brings us to the final point of our sermon. It almost goes unnoticed, but Peter and John don't just see, they speak. They don't just speak, they act. Peter extends his hand to the sick person. Only then, Luke reports, do his ankles become strong and he can run, jump, and dance. The movement in this account is very clear: seeing, speaking and acting. This beggar is given a gift in three ways: caught by the gaze, strengthened by the Word, and lifted by the hand. Often, we need this threefold help. The gaze alone is not enough. The Word must be added with a grasp of the hand. Many people we encounter have lost their foundation for life. We have seen them. Perhaps we have even spoken with them and shared a bit of our faith with them. In the Name and authority of our Lord Jesus, we may draw nearer. We may stand by them and give them a firm handshake. We may show them a new path that strengthens their ankles. All of this can happen because it is in the Name and authority of our Lord Jesus. Amen.