

Title: Never Enough?**[Slide 1]****Text: Acts 3:1-10****Beggar at the Gate****A familiar scene:**

It was scene that had been acted out every afternoon for years: Two men carrying a crippled man up the stairs to one of the gates of the Temple. They would time their arrival to coincide with the hundreds of worshipers who were coming for afternoon prayers. Each day, at 3:00 p.m., they deposited the lame man at the entrance to the gate so that he could beg for pennies from the throngs of people streaming into the Temple.

Luke tells us that the lame man's chosen place to beg was at a gate named "Beautiful." A beautiful, gracious entrance to the most sacred and wonderful place on earth: the place where God had chosen to dwell with people. But for the lame man it may as well have been a stone wall. He was destined to sit *at* the gate, not go *through* it, like a starving man forever begging crumbs in front of a world-famous restaurant.

At the same time, two of Jesus' followers, Peter and John, were making their way up the stairs to enter the Temple, just like they did every day. They came to the Beautiful Gate just as the lame man was settling in for an afternoon of begging:

[Slide 2]*Acts 3:3-5 NIV*

When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

Beggar at the gate:

What did it feel like to be standing at the doorway of the Temple that afternoon with a beggar at your feet? They came to celebrate the God who

had begun the restoration of His world in the resurrection of Jesus. But here at the entrance to the place where Heaven and Earth were thought to intersect, was stark evidence of everything that was wrong with the world: a man lame from birth. A mother's worst nightmare years ago. Now, a grown man who needed to be carried everywhere. There he sat, part of the gauntlet of needy people lining the way into the Temple.

In a way, he represented all the hopes and dreams that get left at the door to blessing and wholeness. In a place that was supposed to be filled with hope, he was a hopeless case.

Old World/New Lord

A new gift:

So what happens when the old world collides with God's New Creation? The lame man was about to find out!

[Slide 3]

Acts 3:6 NIV

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk."

Peter didn't have the failed resources of the old world to offer the lame man. He had something far better. After all, a few coins would help keep the beggar alive to beg another day. Instead, Peter offered the man a gift that only Jesus could provide: a radical healing that would put him on his feet.

A helping hand:

But Peter did more than give the man the command to walk. He offered him a helping hand:

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Acts 3:7-8 NIV [amended]

*Taking him by the right hand, he **raised** him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.*

Peter not only believed that Jesus could heal the man; he reached down and raised him to his feet. Luke uses the same word here that he uses to describe the resurrection of Jesus:

Acts 3:15 NIV

*"You killed the author of life, but God **raised** him from the dead."*

The healing of this lame man is nothing less than an act of New Creation by the same Creator God who raised Jesus from the dead. And it happened through a helping hand.

Never Enough?

Never Enough?

Moms know better than anyone else that there's "never enough." Never enough time to get everything done. Never enough hugs for all the hurt in the world. Never enough precautions to prevent a skinned knee or a broken heart. Moms pour themselves out every day, all day long to meet the needs that come with living in our old world.

Sometimes I'll bet you feel like Peter and John on their way to church. All you want is a few minutes to get refreshed and ready for the next round of motherly tasks. And you find another immediate need sitting by the Beautiful Gate you were hoping to walk through.

Maybe it's a child who just had a nightmare – on the evening when you desperately hoped to get to bed early! Maybe it's the teen who waited too long to finish (start?) that science fair project. Maybe it's driving to your umpteenth game of the season when you have a houseful of stuff to do.

Never enough!

The Beautiful Gate:

When those times come and your pockets are empty, you can do what Peter and John did on the steps to the Temple. Invite Jesus into the middle of the neediness. Let Him show you what *He wants to do* in the situation.

That's what Peter dared to do. Peter saw a hopeless situation. Jesus saw a man running around with new legs. So Peter let Jesus be in charge. The result? New Creation. As Peter explained moments later:

[Slide 5]

Acts 3:12, 16 NIV

"Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

"By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see."

All Peter had to do was offer a helping hand. When he did, the gate and its name finally fit together: it became a Beautiful Gate into God's love and healing.

What God did through Peter and John, He promises to do through you and me, regardless of how hopeless things may seem. He's in the business of making gates *beautiful*.