



The Reverend Emily Williams Guffey, Rector  
Third Sunday of Easter, Year B  
April 18, 2021  
Acts 3:1-19, Luke 24:36b-48

If you were listening and following along closely as Dick Householder so beautifully read the first reading (and the second reading), you may have noticed that the first reading, from Acts, picks up in the middle of a story. *Peter addresses the people, "Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" (3:12b)* Wonder at what? Made whom walk?

Let me start at the beginning of the story, which, oddly we never hear in our three-year schedule of Sunday readings, yet without which we cannot make sense of Peter's command at the end of today's portion, to *repent, walk back to the Lord, and be refreshed (3:19)*. It begins with a wound - a wound since birth, ignored, spurned, left for dead, yet able to be healed.

So, this is the beginning of Acts chapter 3, in a somewhat different translation and slightly paraphrased and abridged: *One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. 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.*

*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.**" Taking him by the right hand, he helped 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. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. 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 (Acts 3:1-11).*

And here our story begins. *When Peter saw this, he said to them: "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? 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. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead... Fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, turn around and walk back to God,*

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*so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord” (Acts 3:12-15a,17-19).*

Now our lectionary for some reason leaves out that last phrase, too, “that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,” and I do wonder why, for we long for refreshing from the Lord.

And it is this entire story that instructs us where it comes from.

It comes from first acknowledging our need and our ignorance, for like the one who was left at the gate of “beauty” to beg for dignity, we also are lame from birth for we have been born into systems, seen and unseen, that are unjust and evil. We have been born into cultures, spoken and unspoken, that open the door for the able, the “typical”, the cis, the hetero, and leave so many of us outside desperate for recognition and love. We have been born into a culture that favors light skin and fatally fears dark. We, then, are unable to walk, and to walk together - all of us, Christians, Americans, Michiganders, Detroiters and Metro Detroiters, with light skin and dark skin, newborn skin and wrinkled skin - because the culture of supremacy, white supremacy, shackles our ankles, targets our chests, and “others” our souls. We cannot breathe fully, nor walk far, where racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, fatphobia, or transphobia, to name a few, take hold.

That could be the end of the story. Many days, it looks like it--many days, as when someone like Adam Toledo dies, when someone like Daunte Wright dies, when someone like Elijah McClain dies, when someone like Breonna Taylor dies, when someone like Mike Brown dies, when someone like Jesus, tortured and bleeding for everyone to see, dies.

Yet even on the cross - the cross! - with nails in his feet and hands and bullets in his gut, his white t-shirt blooming red and his Mama on the phone, remember what he said? He said, “Forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

And his first word days later to Peter and others who'd had a hand or a say in killing him, intended or unintended, spoken or unspoken, was “Peace.”

“Peace.”

“Peace be with you.”

In the God who destroys death, is our peace.

We are witnesses of this, in our own bodies, minds, and hearts, when we mourn and are comforted; when we repent and are forgiven; when we acknowledge our ignorance and learn, and are renewed by the transforming of our minds. When, like Peter, who cowered in fear, made mistakes, mourned, repented, and - amazingly - was forgiven, we tell this story and speak this peace that truly passes all understanding, and heal one another and ourselves in Jesus’ Name.

When we turn, and turn, and turn again, and in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk: free, refreshed, and whole.