

Keep The Change Msg a
The Right Change
Sermon preached by Dr. Rick Mandl
Eagle Rock Baptist Church
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Welcome

Happy New Year and welcome once again to ERBC.

I'm excited that you're here today for our first service of 2020.

We're kicking off a brand new teaching series looking at how God changes us.

Our series is called "Keep The Change"

And this evening we're looking at . . . **The Right Change**

If you've got your Bibles, or you Bible app, open up to Acts 3

Acts 3:1-16

And we'll look at a few things we can learn from this passage about change.

As we begin 2020 one of the things that on people's minds is New Year's resolutions.

And that because many of us, we've got these lists of things that we want to do better in 2020.

Things about ourselves that we're not happy with.

Big changes that we want to make in our lives.

But here's the thing about New Year's resolutions.

And you know this to be true.

It's just January 4th and already some of the resolutions we made just a couple of days ago, we're already giving up on, right?

Well in this series I want us to look at Change that we can keep.

And so as we begin with Acts 3 and verse 1 . . .

"Peter and John

These were two men who had made their living as fishermen.

One day they met Jesus.

He told them, ***"Lay down your nets, and come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."***

They had done just that.

They had spent the past three years walking and talking with Jesus.

They saw him arrested, nailed to a cross, and die.

And they had seen him after he rose from the dead.

They saw him in the 40 days following his resurrection

They saw him ascend to heaven.

Here we're told that they . . .

went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service." Acts 3:1

Three times during the day, there were **stated times of prayer** at the temple.

At 9 a.m., 12 noon, and 3 p.m.

The three o'clock time was the most popular, with many of the merchants closing down their businesses so they could walk to the temple for prayer.

The devout Jew knew that **prayer was effective wherever it was offered**; but they felt that it was doubly-effective when it was offered in the Temple courts.

So many would go there to pray their prayers.

"As (these two) they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth

This is a man who had not been able to walk his entire life.

In the next chapter we learn that he was more than 40 years old.

was being carried in.

This man had to be carried to the place where they found him, because there were no wheel chairs at this time.

We're told that . . .

Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate,

There were multiple gates that led into the Temple area.

He had been put beside the gate that they called ***"The Beautiful Gate"*** which in itself is ironic, because his life was anything but beautiful.

Why had he been put there?

He was put there . . .

so he could beg from the people going into the Temple.” Acts 3:2

It’s worth noting that when he was hoping to receive financial help from others, he didn’t ask his friends to **drop him outside the nearest Walmart.**

He didn’t ask them to drop him at the **gate of the richest man in town.**

Or at a **Highway offramp** where many would pass by.

He asked them to **drop him at the place where people were going to worship.**

He was thinking that **people who love God, will be the most likely** to be those who are most generous to their neighbor in need

And that’s the way it ought to be.

If we’re coming regularly to worship God, to express our love for God, and that experience doesn’t translate itself into a deeper love for people around us, particularly those in need, then you and I have real reason to question whether we really love God.

This guy was counting on the fact that the most generous people would most likely be the people who were worshipping God.

Verse three says . . .

“When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money.” Acts 3:3

“Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, ‘Look at us!’” Acts 3:4

When this happened, I’m sure he really got his hopes up.

Because in those days, like today, if you are passing by a beggar ,and you don't intend to give him anything . .

What do you do?

Well, **first of all** you generally avoid eye contact, so that you can pretend you didn't see him,

Secondly you certainly don't stop where he is,

If anything, you quicken your pace to try and get by him as quickly as possible,

And **thirdly** you certainly don't speak to him.

And so the fact that Peter and John stopped, looked him in the eye, and told him to look at them, must have caused this man to believe that he was about to receive a gift,

Verse 5 says as much...

“The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money.” Acts 3:5

You can just imagine him holding up his tin cup in anticipation of a coin or two being dropped in.

I'm sure that he didn't expect to receive much from Peter and John, after all they wore the clothes of poor fishermen, but certainly something.

Instead Peter spoke to him, and the first words out of his mouth must have caused the beggar's heart to sink....

“But Peter said, ‘I don’t have any silver or gold for you.

If that had been all that Peter had said, this man would have had good reason to be angry.

He would told Peter to leave him alone, to stop wasting his time.

After all, while Peter stood there talking to him, there were many other visitors to the temple passing by, and perhaps one of them might have stopped and said, "**I do have some silver or gold for you.**"

Thankfully, Peter didn't end his conversation with that information about his bank balance, instead he went on to say....

But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!” Acts 3:6

Now, I'm sure that this was not the first time that this beggar had heard that name -- "**Jesus Christ the Nazarene**"

For forty years he had sat outside this gate at the entrance to the temple begging.

You can bet that he knew what was going on in Jerusalem.

He knew that months before, that man whom Peter had just named had been crucified - a criminal's death.

Executed as a blasphemer, a false prophet, a phony messiah.

And now Peter tells this beggar that in the name of this criminal he should stand up and walk!

Was he serious?

You can just see this beggar beginning to look past Peter, hoping to spot a soft-hearted pilgrim with money.

But because this man was a beggar, he would have been positioned with his right hand outstretched.

In Eastern society they always begged with the right hand - that was the hand of blessing, the hand of greeting, the hand of friendship.

And so, he had his right hand outstretched in anticipation of blessing, in hope of a financial gift.

“Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up.

Maybe because the man wouldn't have gotten up on his own.

Luke the physician, the one who wrote this book of Acts records what happens next....

Look at what it says . . .

And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened.” Acts 3:7

Luke, the one who wrote this book is a doctor, and you can always count on him to **give us unnecessary medical information.**

He couldn't just say, “The man got up.”

He has to tell us, “**the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened.**”

It's interesting how you see the personalities of the different writers of the gospel, come out in the words they wrote.

Next week we're going to look at the story of a woman whose life was changed, through a miraculous healing.

All three gospel writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke record the miracle.

In telling the story of what happened to her, the gospel writer Mark tells us that . . .

“She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse.” Mark 5:26

Dr. Luke, when he records the story of that same healing, somehow **didn't feel it necessary to include the detail of how much she had spent on doctors, and that it was money wasted.**

He **only told us that she had suffered for years and couldn't find a cure.**

But in this case.

In this miracle we're looking at today we have the detail . . .

“the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened.”

“He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.” Acts 3:8

“All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God.” Acts 3:9

I'm sure they did!

“When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!” Acts 3:10

Not a little bit astounded, but absolutely astounded.

Verse 11 . . .

“They all rushed out in amazement to Solomon's Colonnade, where the man was holding tightly to Peter and John.” Acts 3:11

And you read on further and you find that . . .

12 Peter saw his opportunity

What opportunity did he see?

He saw the opportunity to preach a sermon.

And that's exactly what he did.

Peter . . .

. . . addressed the crowd. “People of Israel,” he said, “what is so surprising about this? And why stare at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or godliness?

Peter wanted to make sure to **give credit where credit was due.**

He tells them, it wasn't us . . .

For it is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God of all our ancestors—who has brought glory to his servant Jesus by doing this. This is the same Jesus whom you handed over and rejected before Pilate, despite Pilate’s decision to release him.

14 You rejected this holy, righteous one and instead demanded the release of a murderer.

15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact!

16 “Through faith in the name of Jesus, this man was healed—and you know how crippled he was before. Faith in Jesus’ name has healed him before your very eyes.”

This morning, and for next several weeks, we’ll be talking about change.

Today . . .

The Right Change

And change is something that many of us think more about at the start of a new year.

I think that New Year’s Resolutions are a good thing

I know I may be in the minority in this.

I know that some people diss them

They feel like for people to take an inventory of **what’s not going well in their lives**, and then **try to set some goals to do better in the New Year is a bad thing.**

I don’t know where they get that.

The idea that none of us should want to change or improve or grow.

I know that New Year’s resolutions get a bad rap because **80% of them are abandoned before the end of the month.**

But I’ve told some of you that I wouldn’t mind it if my tombstone said, “**At least he tried.**”

As opposed to “**He aimed at nothing and he hit it every time.**”

But we all know that **resolutions are easier made than kept.**

So as we begin to think about change, let me ask you a question.

And the question is this - -

What if part of the reason that our New Year’s Resolutions don’t lead to changes we can keep . . .

What if the problem, **isn’t that they were too big?**

What if the problem is that they were too small?

What if the problem wasn’t that we were too ambitious, but rather the problem is that we weren’t ambitious enough?

What if, instead of aiming too high, and asking too much, the problem is that we aimed too low, and asked too little?

Three observations from the story we’re looking at this morning.

Observation #1

And I want to call this . . .

The Big Idea

The big idea is this . . .

The Change You **WANT**

Might Not Be The Change You **NEED**

What do I mean by that, and how do you see that in this story?

We’ll think about it this way . . .

What was the change that this lame beggar **WANTED** when he came to the temple?

It’s not a trick question.

The answer is in verse 3.

He wanted some “**Spare change.**”

Verse 3 says, that as Peter and John were about to enter the temple, he asked them for what?

“Some money.”

You know, “**Alms for the poor**”

“Alms for the poor.”

If he had gotten what he wanted, **this would be a very different story.**

Peter and John went to pray.

They met a lame beggar

He asked for some money

They gave him the spare change they had.

Then they went to pray.
End of story.

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The Lame beggar wasn't aware of what he really needed, **which was to be able to walk.**

So he asked for what he wanted. . .

He wanted some money.

A side note here. . . .

This story would also read very differently if Peter and John, on their way to the Temple, **hadn't noticed the need** before them.

Like the two other travelers in the story of the Good Samaritan, Peter and John could have rationalized that **"If we stop to help this man, we'll be late for the 3 o'clock prayer meeting."**

"We'd love to help this guy, but we have eternal business to take care of. . ."

"We've got a prayer meeting to get to."

"Let someone else help him."

We see a miracle here, because these two guys noticed a need.

Which begs the question . . .

How many miracles, might we be missing, because we don't notice needs that are right in front of us?

The office worker in the cubicle next to us who is struggling?

That neighbor who is hurting and could really use someone to talk with....

You can't address a need that you don't notice.

Peter and John notice the need that was right in front of them.

I'm not saying that as you go through life, every need has your name on it . . .

But some do.

My question is . . .

Are we even asking God to help us to notice those that do?

Now, to take that a step further . . .

"What need do you need to notice inside yourself?"

Again, **remember that for this beggar, there was a difference between what he wanted and what he needed.**

What he actually needed, he didn't even notice any more.

Why?

Because he had lived with it, for so long.

From birth, and now for over 40 years, he had lived with this need.

He didn't wake up thinking, **"Maybe today is the day that I'll be able to walk."**

For his entire life this guy had been immobile.

So mobility was not something he was even thinking about.

So when he meets these two apostles, what does he ask them for?

Some spare change.

He was just **hoping to have a couple of coins** to rub together in his tin cup.

What if they had given him that money and walked on?

He would have had change, but change he couldn't have KEPT, he would have spent it.

What did God want to give him?

He wanted to give him mobility . . .

God didn't want to give him **SPARE** change

He wanted to give him **LIFE** change

He didn't want to give him a little bit of mobility.

He wanted to give him a miraculous healing that would change his life forever.

What this man was FOCUSED on was something he WANTED but it wasn't his GREATEST NEED.

So as we enter into a New Year, what **changes** are we focused on?

What areas are we focused on?

We can't focus on EVERYTHING, but we can focus on SOMETHING.

And is what we're focusing on a **NEED** or is it just a **WANT**?

If we're not careful we can aim too low and we **might settle for just a couple of coins**, when God has something much bigger that He may want to give us.

Maybe you've got some resolutions . . .

Not just to lose a couple of COINS, but a couple of pounds this year.

That's not a bad goal.

We should take care of our bodies.

And I would not want to steer you away from that

But what if you've got a bigger need that you're not noticing.

Maybe the issue isn't that you're a couple of pounds overweight, **maybe the issue is you're defined by your body.**

And **maybe if you do manage to get in shape** this year, you will have **traded a fixation on food** with an unhealthy fixation with fitness.

And so **instead of posting selfies of every meal** you're sitting down to eat at the restaurant, you're **posting selfies of yourself every time you're working out at the gym.**

You've just swapped idols.

Maybe for you it's not a few pounds . . .

Maybe for you it's **getting in shape financially.**

You want to **budget better**

You want to **spend money better**

You want to **get out of debt**

That's a good goal.

It's hard to say anything bad about that.

We offer a course here called

FPU

We've had over a hundred people go through it

It's a great class.

It starts in 5 weeks

We only offer it once a year so if you're thinking about doing it, **now's the time to sign up.**

It's one of the "I'd like to learn more about" next steps on the back of your connection card.

Right hand side, seventh step down . . .

What could be wrong with a resolution like getting your finances under control?

Most of the time nothing.

But, it comes down to motive.

Maybe the reason you want to get your finances under control is so that there will be more at the end of the month for you.

So that you'll have more to spend on you.

The truth is that there are greedy rich people and there are greedy poor people.

And if you're FOCUSED on money, when you don't have it, **you can be FOCUSED on money when you do**, so that may not be a big enough change for you.

Maybe, along with the tools to get your finances in shape, what you need is some change in your heart, in terms of the place that money occupies.

The change you **WANT**, might not be the change you **NEED**

You might be looking for **SPARE** change, and what God wants to give you is **LIFE** change

In the case of this man in the story . . .

What he wanted was **SPARE** change

What he **NEEDED** was life change

God gave him what he **NEEDED**

And the result is that he ultimately got what he **WANTED**

What do I mean?

What I mean is that once his legs worked, he didn't need to beg at the temple anymore.

He was able to get a job.

And once he had a job, because of his new-found ability to work, which he could not do before, he was able to get money.

The thing he wanted.

How did this all happen?

It happened in the midst of the ordinary.

I think that most of us would agree that the story we've read about this morning is something EXTRAORDINARY

It's something UNUSUAL.
 It's something ATYPICAL
 It's not the way that things usually work.
 HOWEVER, it happened against a background that was not unusual.
 What do I mean, what I mean is that verse 1 told us that . . .

“Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service.” Acts 3:1

This was something they did all the time.
 Every day.
 This miracle, started out super-normal.
 Going back to David in the O.T. who one time said . . .

“God you’re going to hear my voice, morning, noon and night.”

This became the custom to pray three times a day.

You see that Daniel did this in the book of Daniel.

He prayed, **“Morning, noon and night.”**

It became the custom

It became the habit.

And for John and Peter, this was their normal

They didn’t think about it

They just did it.

And then this one day, **something crazy** and **something awesome** and **something unexpected** happened.

How did it happen?

It happened in the midst of something that was **routine and normal** and **a part of their life that they had planned out.**

What am I saying?

What I’m saying is that . . .

Healthy Habits

Open you up to Holy Moments

The ROUTINE

The GRIND

The DISCIPLINE

These are the things that you put into place so that God can bless you with the extraordinary.

The problem is that . . .

But most of us don’t want to adopt the healthy habits.

Most of us are just hoping that God mails us a miracle.

But we’re not willing to go and pray three times a day.

That’s why at the start of each new year we ask you . . .

All of you to **recommit to some HEALTHY HABITS**

You see them there on your commitment card.

Make it commitment to be here for weekend worship.

BTW, I’ve got good news for you.

When it comes to Weekend Worship . . .

For all of you – right now – this year – you are at 100%

You haven’t missed a weekend.

There are other Healthy Habits you can commit to. . .

Give Examples. . .

(((FROM COMMITMENT CARD)))

We wouldn’t be reading the story we have looked at this morning of what happened through Peter and John **as they were going to pray**, if they had not been **“going to pray.”**

It was while they were involved in the ordinary that God interrupted their plans.

They never got to the prayer meeting that day.

I’m glad we have this story of what happened on this one day when Peter and John went to pray.

You know what we don’t have here?

We **don't have the record of the hundreds, maybe thousands** of times they went to pray at the temple where there was no miracle.

But I believe that if they had not been practicing this **HEALTHY HABIT**, they would not have experienced this **HOLY MOMENT**

Make the commitment to be here with us each weekend in worship, unless you're sick or unless you're out of town.

And if you're out of town, join us online, live-stream us.

You can't do that yet, but you can do it soon.

And you can usually access the archive of the service by about 3:00 on Sunday.

Make it your habit to be here when you're in town

Make it a part of the **rhythms of your life**.

And to take it a step further, I want you to make that your habit knowing that not every time does the lame man get healed.

There is always something powerful that happens when we come to worship, whether you see it or not

Whether it's you or not

Sometimes it's just doing the HEALTHY HABIT without know how God is going to use it.

You can read your Bible 50 days in a row, and there can be 49 when you're not sure what you got out of it, but then on that 50th time you come face to face with something that changes your life.

You can argue that the first 49 didn't matter

I'd disagree and tell you that all 50 were involved, in what you discovered on that final time.

And you wouldn't have gotten to that 50th if you hadn't laid the foundation through those first 49.

You have to practice the HEALTHY HABIT in order to get to the HOLY MOMENT

For some of us, all we want is HOLY MOMENTS

We want to go MOUNTAINTOP to MOUNTAINTOP to MOUNTAINTOP without ever walking through any valleys.

And it just doesn't work that way.

You ask an NBA player . . .

How do you make the game-winning shot in front of 10,000 people?

You do the shot by yourself 10,000 times.

And do you know what?

Even if you do the healthy habits and you don't see the miracle, it's still going to benefit you.

Harvard University conducted a 20 year-long study and the results were published in USA

Today

And what they found was that **those who attend church** regularly...

Will **outlive other people** – they will have a 20-30% lower mortality rate

Think about that

They will also have a higher quality of life – a **greater sense of meaning and purpose**.

The **Cleveland Clinic** found that **people who give money away** – giving to non-profits, giving to church, giving to charity – people who give money away . . .

Have lower blood pressure

Lower levels of depression

Lower levels of stress

And find that the giving becomes addictive.

And my point is that **even though you think** that what you're doing through these HEALTHY HABITS is that you're **setting things in place for some breakthrough moment down the road**, there are still benefits in what you're doing along the way - - on the journey.

Healthy Habits lead to Holy Moments.

I wish I could tell you that this story ends with the fairy tale ending that . . . **"They all lived happily ever after."**

But it doesn't

The Life Transformation that happened to this Lame Beggar didn't go unnoticed.

We already read that the people who witnessed it were "Amazed" and "Astounded" and "Astounded" and "Amazed."

The next chapter – Acts 4 tells us that the church grew from the 3,000 that had been added just a chapter earlier on the day of Pentecost, to 5,000 in Acts 4:4

And this miracle was the platform for Peter and John sharing that good news to so many.

But not everybody was excited about this man being healed.

And the same will happen to you

If you change like God wants you to change this year there will be people in your life who are going to say

“You’re not fun any more”

They will say, ***“You know what, You have changed.”***

And you can tell them, ***“You’re right, and you can too.”***

“What happened to me can happen to you.”

You have got to look differently on criticism.

Someone said it this way,

“Those who have given up on their dreams, will always resent you living out yours.”

There were people who liked you lying down, cuz they’re lying down too.

And if you get up they’ll resent that because it makes them feel bad about the fact that they are still lying down.

You’ve got to look at criticism differently.

Winston Churchill said it like this.

He said . . .

“You have enemies? Good that means you’ve stood up for something.”

Understand.

If you’re going to do what God calls you to do, there will be some who won’t like it.

There will be some who will say you’re different.

There will be some who will want the old you back so you can be just like them.

But that’s not God’s call for you and me.

That why our memory verse for this week says . . .

Memory Verse

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” Romans 12:2

That’s my prayer for each of us. - - Let’s pray together.