*To You, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in You I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for You be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know Your ways, O Lord; teach me Your paths. Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; for You I wait all day long. Be mindful of Your mercy, O Lord, and of Your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to Your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of Your goodness, O Lord! Good and upright is the Lord; therefore, He instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble His way. All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep His covenant and His decrees.* Psalm 25:1-10

*One day Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the time of prayer, at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled 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 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.* **Acts 3:1-10**

 ***An elderly lady was amazed at how nice the young man was next door. Every day he would help her gather things from her car or help her in her yard. One day the old lady finally asked the young man, “Son, how did you become such a fine young man?"***

 ***The young man replied, “Well, when I was a boy, I had a drug problem.”***

 ***The old lady was shocked, “I can’t believe that.”***

 ***The young man replied: “It’s true, my parents drug me to the church on Sunday morning, drug me to the church on Sunday night, and drug me to the church on Wednesday night.***

What Do We Have to Offer?

1. For us this might be just another Sunday, just as it was yet another day of worship in the Temple for Peter and John. Yet, on this particular day something incredible happened, seeing a lame beggar asking for alms, Peter responds to his request, but instead of giving the man the money he expected, Peter offers him something else. Instead of giving the man what he wants, Peter offers him what he needs. The lame man asked for a monetary support, because this was what in his mind and heart, he expected to be able to sustain himself and maybe even his family, for just another day, yet instead, Peter offered him God’s grace and a physical healing, a physical mobility. An incredible response, and an incredible solution to his life’s problem.Someone may ask how does this story impacts us today? What is so significant about this miracle? We may know that nothing is impossible for God, but we so seldom have seen these sort of miraculous healings today, so, how then does this story apply to us, and what is so important that we focus on it? Is there any significant application of this healing story for the modern, 21st century man?

2. Asking for the money was the natural way for this beggar to be able to sustain his life. As a matter of fact, asking for money at the entrance to the place of worship was not that uncommon, and as matter of fact it still is not, even today. The place of worship was the place where people used to go regularly, and there was always a crowd there, willing to give something to a begging person. I have seen people panhandling near the major shopping centers today, because these are the places the crowds gather every day. This lame man tried to maintain his existence, but he did not even dare to think or even to dream about a possibility of doing something else. Being crippled placed him in the category of the *“undesirables”* of the society, because only the wealthy could have be taken care of by their families, if they were born crippled, or became crippled later on in life. For the beggar at the Temple’s gate, this was the only way of life he could ever imagine, and asking for the money was perfectly normalfor him. Looking at his story, we may only be made aware that even today, there is nothing different the society of this man’s days.

3. Seeing a human tragedy personified in this crippled beggar, unable to move by himself since childhood, Peter could not ignore it, but to respond. Notice his words: *"What I have I am going to give you now: ‘in the name of Jesus, the Messiah from Nazareth, stand up and walk!’”* It was only a few days ago that Peter received the powers of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and now, he is using this newly received powers, to glorify not himself, but Jesus Christ: *“In the name of Jesus from Nazareth, stand up and walk!”* He does not try to attribute this power to himself, he boldly says, that what is happening, is happening in the name of the One who, just a few weeks ago, was crucified, in the very same city, on the hill called Golgotha. I would not be surprised if the beggar from the Temple’s *"Beautiful"* gate, have himself also witnessed the death of Jesus, after all, His crucifixion rocked the entire Jerusalem.

4. Peter's action here shows us something else, by reaching out to this man, he offered him something beyond the physical healing. He offered him the opportunity to acknowledge Jesus as His Messiah also. According to Luke’s account, many people, upon witnessing this miracle, accepted Christ that day: *“and the number of men grew to about five thousand.”* (Acts 4:4) We have an old saying that states: *“the power corrupts,”* and we see this often today, especially in the lives of our politicians and those who have power to control others, yet, Peter and John, as well as the other disciples, upon receiving this incredible powers from the Holy Spirit, used them boldly, but only to serve the Lord. They did not abuse what they were given, and they did not use it to get even with their enemies, not even to defend themselves while facing persecution, or even death. According to the Scriptures, and to what we know from the annals of history, all the disciples, except John, died as martyrs. They died for the sake of Jesus Christ and His message. They never used their gifts to free themselves from the imprisonment or the persecution. Entrusted with an incredible power, they never abused it.

5. As the Church of Jesus Christ, we too have something special to offer. We still however must know that the Church is not just an another charitable, social or political organization, that focuses on the feeding of the hungry, and offering the *“alms,”* so to speak, to those who seemed in need, but the Church is charged with offering the people the One, who can truly transform their lives. It is easy to run *“charitable”* programs, to call them *“justice, peace and equality,”* but it is much more difficult to reach out to the people whose lives are empty, or ruined, because they turned away from Jesus, for whatever reasons. When I visited the church in Miami two weeks ago, the pastor in his message shared the story I have heard before: *A 4-years old boy saw his neighbor, and elderly man, whose wife recently died, sitting outside of his house crying. The little boy went to this neighbor and sat on his laps for a while. When he returned home his mother asked him what he’d say to the old man. The boy replied:* *“Nothing, I just helped him cry.”* Peter responded to the man saying: “*Silver or gold I do not have,* *but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, stand up and walk!”* He saw the need, he saw the opportunity, and he responded. Yet, his response was possible only because he had something to offer. The crippled man was begging, he wanted money so he could survive for another day, but what he received was worth much more. We all have probably heard this: *“Offer the hungry a fish and you will feed him for a day, teach him to fish, and you will feed him for life.”* Knowing Jesus Christ transforms an individual forever. God heals not only a human body, but a human soul. Peter and John reached out to the multitude of people in the Temple that day, they reached out to the society itself, and the society, the crowd in the Temple needed that message so badly, just as our society still does.

6. We must realize that in our world of plenty, in our world of self-sufficiency, in our world of secularism, people are in a great need to hear the message of hope and salvation. Our society needs to hear the Gospel, because our society does not have a clue what to do and where to turn for help when they feel any form of distress. The modern society, in its arrogance and sophistication, does not have a clue, or an idea of how to solve the problems we face today as humanity. The modern, enlightened and complex society does not know how to solve the problems of so overwhelming and so eminent immorality, violence, diversity, racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, and the list goes on and on. We are surrounded by neighbors who share their weight of tragic stories and unmet personal needs, even though they may have beautiful homes, brand new cars in their garages or driveways. Yet, in the final account these are only the façade, for inwardly they are hurting, suffering and have no idea where to turn for help. *“Silver and gold I do not have...”* Peter said, *“but what I have, I will give you. In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk.”* Money will not solve the problems of the world, no matter how much people may believe they would. Equality will not solve the problems of the world, although on a surface it sounds it may. I grew up in the political system that on a surface was to champion the “equal rights” to everyone, something I see today being so widely and forcibly promoted in this country today: *“free medical care, the social net safety, everyone according to their needs.”* These were wonderful promises, even biblical promises, but unfortunately, they were just that, the promises, because no one was willing and able to transform the human *“ego.”*

7. In the end, the modern man replaced God with the *"man made gods,"* and nobody wants to admit that in doing so, the humanity is lost without God and His guidance. There is only one way to get out of the *“maze of the humanistic approach to life”* we have created, but first we must admit that we are lost, drifting aimlessly, and need help, not a handout, but the true help and the true guidance, and this could be offered only by Jesus Christ. *“There is a story said about Thomas Aquinas who visited the Pope Innocent the II. While in his chambers, Thomas Aquinas found the Pope counting a large sum of money. ‘Ah, Thomas,’ the Pope said: ‘the church can no longer say: silver and gold have I none.’ To which Thomas responded: ‘that is true, Your Holiness, but then, neither can it now say, ‘Arise and walk.’"* Human tragedy is all around us, just as it was for the lame man in Jerusalem, who went to the Temple every day hoping that he will get enough to survive for another day, but although there, near the *“sacred ground,”* he never past the gate, never went in, and it seems there was nothing for him there. He was crippled, unable to walk, and this was all that mattered. He was like many people today, they would ask anyone for help, they would rely on the *“handouts,”* but will not turn to the One that truly may help. Consequently, it was Peter and John who reached out to the man and offered him what he needed, because they they had it. They had Jesus Christ on their side and in their hearts.

8. Because Peter and John met this man's needs, he was healed. The Scripture says, *"He went with them into the Temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God."* (Acts 3:8) Someone cared enough to reach out to him, and his life has been changed. Because someone reached out to him, he was transformed in the name of Jesus Christ. Someone cared and he became a new man. Today people still need Jesus, but because of the “propaganda of the enlightenment” offered by the society, by the media, by the educational system, they just do not know this. People need Jesus, but Jesus was eradicated from our society. Granted, many do not want to hear *“religion,”* but unfortunately, the modern Church often offers *“religion”* instead of Jesus. People need to see Christ and His power emanating from us, His Church. However, if the church becomes *“wishy-washy,”* as more and more we may see it today, as we see the Church standing on the ground that anything goes, and as the humanity *“we know it better,”* then the Church is in the real trouble, and no wonder, the Church lost her influence. Without the presence and the power of Jesus Christ, the Church becomes just another social club. We are the Church of Jesus Christ, and we have His power, so, let us truly use it, and let us channel Christ and His message, so the people we interact with may be transformed by Him.