

Peter and John Heal A Beggar (Acts 3)

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[0 : 00] Thank you so much for checking out our sermon this week. One word of explanation, this was more of a discussion-based sermon, so you're going to hear more voices than just Pastor Tanetta as we all collaborate on discovering the meaning of our text this week together. Thanks so much for listening in.

All right, so a couple of things that we'll do so you're tracking with us. We're going to move into our time of proclamation, which is going to be dialogic. We'll talk some about what that means a little bit later.

But to start off, I just want to say that I am deeply grateful to be in this space. I'm excited to come into this space that has felt like home for me and for several other folks over the last three years and to share it with you all. It feels like a deep privilege.

But I'll also note that I am coming off of probably one of the hardest weeks maybe ever in our family life in terms of interacting with COVID and all of that stuff. So I want to name that.

And I realized as I was working on this, particularly last night, I realized that I was thinking about this time and this space with a desire to dazzle.

[1 : 19] Like I wanted to give a sense of like, I want people to really understand what Res City is, and I want to do it in this way that feels impressive.

And I kind of caught myself, particularly because as I was looking at the passage we're going to talk about today, it's the exact opposite of that feeling in lots of ways.

I realized I had this desire to not expose my imperfections, to show up as invulnerable and closed, which is exactly the opposite of what it means to show up as people, I believe, to show up as people who are called together in community.

So I'll say that today, I hope this space can be about need and vulnerability. And in Res City's tradition, just about experimentation and risk taking and showing up fully as who we are.

So this is going to be a real space today, y'all. We're going to have some conversation in just a few minutes. If you are live streaming and if you are on the live stream and want to be a part of some of those conversations more fully, feel free to join.

[2 : 30] We'll also kind of telecast some of that conversation as well, but invite you to come into the Zoom room. So we're in this fifth week of this series called Together, and we're asking, what does it mean to be called together as the community of Jesus?

What does it mean to be the church? When I was thinking about this for today, I realized what came to mind for me was a values exercise that very early, March 2019, the Res City leaders of that time engaged in.

So if I can find this, I'm going to just quickly put this on screen. It may take some of you back to a certain time in our communal life.

So let me do that. All right, here we go.

So hopefully you can see that. This is literally at the beginning of Resurrection City. We've always been deeply collaborative. We started by sharing some values.

[3 : 43] And we ask these kind of questions. What do this church should feel like? What? Every Jesus community should be what?

I'm drawn to a God who is. Oh, that's Timitaya. Sorry, that's the wrong way.

This church does was another question that we asked. The essential personality of this church is. This church is for.

Who? Who? And then we did. We asked about Bible verses or stories that came to mind for the church that we want to be. And then from there, we started to brainstorm larger, larger values.

So I wanted to bring that up. And as the first part introduction to an exercise, we're going to start with. So I am going to invite you before I start to talk about our passage for today to join.
[4 : 56] And you can do this live stream. And you can do this live stream or in our breakout rooms here. But the ask is to, in your breakout room, or you can try to do this live stream, to give your name, your pronouns.

One thing that will help you feel seen in this space. Don't share too vulnerably if that's not right for you.

But what is one thing that will help you feel seen in this space? I stole that question from our retreat yesterday. Okay. And then just want to know what it means to you to be called together as church. So name, pronouns, one thing that will help you feel seen today. And then what does it mean to be called together as church? So we'll do that.

I think Anthony is masterminding the production. So if you could take us into the breakout rooms. Feel free if you want to come on camera at this point.

[6 : 02] I will start us off here. So, and we'll do this for about six minutes or so. So my name, again, is Toner. I use she, her pronouns.

And what I, yeah, just needed to say in this space is that my son is watching Frozen 2 over my shoulder. Because COVID has come to the house and we have needed to isolate and quarantine. And so you will hear him yell and scream. And I would like to be more together today. That is what I will say. My name is Anthony. He, him.

And yeah, we, our house is recovering from a week of COVID. So I've got a nice nasal congestion and fuzzy headedness. But I'm glad I'm here.

Shea. She, her pronouns. I will share that this week. I went to two different memorial services for childhood friends, folks that I went to junior high and high school with.

[7 : 10] They were memorializing their moms. And I think that it's just, you know, I'm, I am aware that I'm aging.

My friends are aging. And our families are, you know, as well. And I think I haven't found a lot of spaces to kind of like wrestle with what does that mean and how do you do it, you know, well and like all of that.

So it's just something that I'm thinking about. Yeah. Bacola, she, her pronouns. And yeah, I'm just struck this week, you know, as we battle COVID and I'm quarantine in the basement.

Yeah, I'm just struck by just the faithfulness of God. And there's so many things that I thought just wouldn't be possible if I were to get sick this week.

And yeah, just feeling like there's just a lot of grace, both from Tanetta and from just, you know, the way things are playing out, things that we've been hoping would come into, would fall into place or somehow managing to do it this week.

[8 : 30] And I'm like, there's no way, but there seems to be a way. And so, yeah, just really, that's what I'm wanting to share today is just feeling overwhelmed by the faithfulness of God.

Yeah, for me, I'll just name digging up this morning, those old butcher paper sheets and just remembering the diving into what are we doing here?

It does feel like deeply, I think about being in a pandemic. I think about being in kind of a, and I know some people have termed it like a post-Ferguson world.

I think about, and there's just so many layers to this, like the decline of the church in the West, probably for good reason. And the need to like revisit, like why we're doing this call together, like why are we together?

What is its meaning? I think just felt really like, oh yeah, this is, this is the elemental thing to be grounded in. So yeah, I'll talk a lot today, so I'll stop there.

[9 : 37] Yeah. What do y'all think it means to be called together? What comes up for you? For me, it means journeying together so that, you know, a lot of times like people are kind of grouped in terms of, you know, either their identity or, you know, how they grew up or their culture.

But I think for me, it's about being called together to find people to journey alongside you, no matter where your journey is taking you.

So it's not about coming to the same positions and all the theological issues or, you know, preferring the same kind of worship, but like journeying together because you've chosen to do so and you're committing to do so.

I love that so much, Bukola. And I think that's so powerful and it resonates with me a lot. I also think, when I think about journeying together and as I was like, just listening to the music this morning and feeling so much peace and also like, I don't know, just inspiration.

It was like, to me, coming together is like being able to use all of our giftings in service of each other and what we're doing.

[10:55] And I think like one of the things that has been so healing about Rice City is getting a chance to step into that as our full selves, right? Particularly for me, in comparison with being a part of a community for a really long time, that I was limited in being able to do that because of being queer and what their stances were.

And it stifles personal, like individual growth, but I think it also stifles the growth of the larger body, right? And how we can like truly reflect Christ to one another and grow in ourselves and what we're trying to do together as a collective.

So having a space to kind of show up fully, that's a lot of what coming together means to me. I got about 25 seconds before everybody joins back, but I'll just add for myself, and this is admittedly somewhat selfish this week, but called together has such an element of care.

Of, you know, when going through a hard time, when going through illness or whatever grief. It's been communities of called together people who have provided care for myself or my family or us to others.

And I love communities that can actually do that well. Okay, I think we're mostly back here. All right, I hope that you were able to share and at least reflect a little bit on what comes to mind for you when you think about being called together.

[12:27] I'm going to read our passage for today, which is from Acts 3, 1 through 10. Acts 3, 1 through 10. I'm going to read it slowly. I'm going to talk for probably seven minutes or so.

And then we're going to turn it back over and have some talk back time, which is what at Red City we traditionally call the space where we get to all proclaim to each other what the spirit might be saying, what we sense the spirit saying.

So I'm going to read this passage. I encourage you to sink down into it. I love the scriptures and the details that we get that really point us somewhere that I think is formational.

So Acts 3, 1 through 10. One day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer. At three o'clock in the afternoon, and a man lame from birth was being carried in.

People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms.

[13:36] Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk. And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. And they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to him.

So sit with that for a second. And I'm going to read it one more time. I want us to be, I was a history major. One of the best things I ever learned was to be grounded in narrative.

So I'm going to read it one more time. All right, verse one. One day, Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer at three o'clock in the afternoon.

[14:50] And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the beautiful gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, look at us. And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

Peter said, I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk. And he took him by the hand and raised him up.

And immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. Jumping up, he stood and began to walk.

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And they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the beautiful gate of the temple. And they were filled with wonder and astonishment at what had happened to them. Okay, so seven things to notice.

[15:51] And then we'll get into some talk back time. So number one, the context of this story. So this is the first healing story in the book of Acts.

When I introduced the series, I talked about how Acts focuses on succession. It's a succession narrative. It's essentially Jesus ascends at the very beginning in chapter one.

And then we see the church begin to do what Jesus did. So Peter here is essentially doing something that Jesus did many, many times.

The story of healing. Also, Jesus often centered his activity in Jerusalem in the temple. And so the first story you get about healing happens in and around the temple.

So that's important. I also just want to say it's in this section of Acts, if you're following along in this whole series and reading through the book, that you start to get a lot of conflicts in the story, both internal to the community and external to the community.

[16:56] And over and over, the apostles point the people back to their spiritual resources. They call them back to worship. They call them back to prayer.

And I just want to note that, particularly, you know, as we are, you know, a church and we talk well about justice and we talk well about liberation and flourishing.

And there's always this kind of rhythm to be talked about it. And this way in which we've got to always talk about how those things are undergirded by spiritual resources. So I want to name that too.

Number two, the story is about disruption. Peter and John are these pious people. They're painted as pious. They're described by the author as pious.

And then you have this man who's described as really the picture of need, the picture of salvation. It's a very specific idea that he has of what he needs and how that need can be met.

[17:59] But then something really unique happens when they interact, when Peter and John interact with this man. And I want to just note that Peter and John are utterly interrupted.

They are interrupted and they are made vulnerable in their experience with this man. And the story of the church, the story of being called together, the story of Christ following is always about disruption and interruption.

And I don't really like that, but it seems to be the case over and over again. The sense of being led where you don't want to go and led into a place of vulnerability.

We're going to come back to vulnerability. It's kind of the theme for today. Number three, there's both beauty and tension in the story around the importance of inclusion. I'm guessing that some of y'all already saw this, right?

On the one hand, there's this man who is healed. You know, the temple was supposed to admit anyone inside of it who was considered clean.

[19:04] That was about ritual, ritual practice, religious practice. And yet there's a sense in the text where this man probably is excluded from the temple, whether or not he's clean or not, considered religiously pure or not.

Because he's a person with a disability that is not considered whole. And so on one side of this, there's this way in which the disciples see this man, recognize him in a way that no one else is.

And on the other side, the tension in this story is that the man is still only allowed into the temple when he's healed. He still he goes in leaping and dancing once the healing occurs, but he's not allowed in until this sense of what it means to be to show up in a certain way is fulfilled.

And I want to name that because I think it's a tension often that we find even in inclusive spaces of how we allow people to show up and where the lines of that showing up fall.

How do we see people in our world that have disabilities as more than symbols and actually allow them fuller access beyond whatever standards we have set consciously or unconsciously?

[20:19] The story raises that question really deeply. What is radical inclusion? Number four, in this story, we can see the threads of a new economy. Charity is expected of these people going to the temple.

It's expected and it's supposed to be personal. It's looked upon as virtuous. I remember this thread also when I spent time in parts of the world that are mostly Muslim of this expectation that you walk

around.

This is one of the five pillars. You walk around and you give alms. You give money to people personally outside of a program or system in order to make sure that everybody has a social safety net.

Right. So there's this kind of new. Frozen 2 is really good. There's this kind of new economics that is taking place here that is deeply rooted in the personal.

And also you see the results in this story of this resurrection practice of sharing. Right. The community had all things in common. And therefore, when Peter and John come on the scene, they actually don't have anything they think of as just their own, which is fascinating to contemplate.

[21 : 34] It makes me think of a story in The Myth of the American Dream, which I referenced like two Sundays ago, of the author talking about buying a car. She bought this car.

It was like fuel efficient. It was small. She was super proud. It fit into all her like liberal values. And then one of her neighbors who was a refugee and had very recently come to the country said to her, did you not think of us when you bought this car?

Because her neighbor could have used that car to also like, you know, the author could have taken her neighbor to the store, you know, could have helped pick up groceries.

Because there are all these ways in which this car, if the author had thought of the car as beyond just her own, that the car would have served. It would have been thought about. So there's something about a new economics that is happening.

And then finally, in that too, there's something about the way in which possessions are clearly shown to be, yeah, are clearly shown to be, sorry, which spiritual resources are shown to be more important than spiritual possessions, right?

[22 : 43] In the story, there's a sense of money, you know, silver and gold we don't have, but what we have, we give you. And it's really important too. Our culture tells us the opposite, that possessions are so much more important.

Number five, in the story, and this is maybe one of the things I love about the story, there is what some have called an optical reciprocity. There's a mutual encounter that happens.

Hopefully when you heard me read this, you saw this. Peter looked intently at the man and said, look at us. And then the man fixes his attention. It's not a one-way thing.

There's this deep seeing that the community of faith is called to, that disciples are called to. And I would honestly say, this might be, this might come up in talkback time.

You could disagree with me. I would say, honestly, that I think one of the issues in terms of like Western values has been an inability to enter into this kind of mutuality.

[23 : 44] To want to always be the host without ever being the guest. Whereas as Christians, we know that there are examples throughout scriptures of God, both guesting and hosting.

Of God sitting at the table and receiving and giving. And I think this story shows that there's this, yes, we see you, but you can see us too.

You can encounter us too. Number six. Number six. I think it is critical that this story revolves around disability. I think disability brings to the fore issues of difference.

This is actually something in a book that's fascinating called Vulnerable Communion. A guy named Thomas Reynolds wrote that. His son had Tourette's. And because of that, he was essentially pushed out of church.

And so he reflects on that. And one of the things he says is that disability brings to the forefront issues of difference and normalcy and embodiment and community and redemption.

[24 : 46] There's something about thinking about what we consider disability that invites us to critique what we consider wholeness.

And whether what we consider wholeness is what God considers wholeness. How do we think about all of life as a gift?

Here's what Reynolds said. All of life comes to us as a gift, an endowment received in countless ways from others throughout our lifetime. When we acknowledge this, the line between giving and receiving, ability and disability begins to blur.

The difference between ability and disability is linked broadly to how the society views the difference between normality and abnormality. So when I say all that, I am not saying.

Certainly persons with disabilities face challenges that are systemic that I don't face. So I don't want to claim that. But I think that when we think about a story like this, we have to think about how do

we consider in our community what is normal?

[25 : 52] How do we bring that to the fore and talk about it as we talk about what it means to be called together? And then number seven is just that I do think being called together entails a critique of normalcy inside of our community and a leaning into vulnerability and need because we all have that.

Some of us do or just are able to hide it better than others are. So how do we lean into that? And as Anthony said in the breakout, like show care to each other by encountering one another in deep ways.

That's my desire for the community that we would do what these disciples are doing in terms of creating a new social relationship that is born from vulnerability.

And out of that vulnerability, they turn the world upside down. That's what the book of Acts says.

They turn the world upside down. So how do we become the kind of church that can do that?

Okay. Now, y'all might have some good old-fashioned pushback. Some just, this is your time. So I'm going to turn this over to Shay. So for the next like five or six minutes, Shay will guide us in reflecting.

[27 : 10] Thank you so much, Tanetta. What an incredible word this morning. Several words for me stood out. Good morning, church. I'm Shay Washington. Our pronouns are she and her.

It's really so great to be together, even virtually this morning, to gather together. So at Res City, this talkback time has become part of our DNA, part of our tradition, part of a way of resisting the narrative of colonization and white supremacy and patriarchy.

To really welcome communal wisdom into the space. And so we wanted to just have a time of getting a chance to reflect together, to hear what's landing, what's resonating in our hearts and minds.

As Tanetta said, that can include disagreement and pushback. It could include things that, you know, you felt you connected with. And I'll just start with this one prompt.

And then I'll open the floor. And if folks would like to come off of mute and speak, you're welcome to do that. If you want to use the reactions and raise your hand, I'm happy to call on people.

[28 : 25] And yes, we are live streaming. And so just a reminder that this is a public space. But as much as you feel comfortable sharing, you're welcome to do that. And also, you're welcome to turn your cameras on if you would like to.

So the prompt is just what emerged in you as you listened to the seven things and reflected on the story, the passage this morning. Anything sticking with you?

I don't think I'd ever seen the part about where Peter says, look at us. And the gentleman looks at them and they look at him.

Like, that place of being seen was something that I'd never noticed before. And so drawing attention to that and hearing that just really struck me. Thanks for saying that, Becky.

Yeah, same. Same for me, too. And my background is in the arts. So I'm always thinking in, like, theater or film, and I was, like, thinking about kind of directing that moment and what it would look like for them to be saying, look at us.

[29 : 35] And then, like, you know, like the camera and what's being communicated there between all of them really struck me, too. Thanks for saying that. Anybody else?

What emerged for you? I think just building on that, the thing that really resonated with me that Tanetta said was, and I wrote it down, led where you don't want to go into a place of vulnerability.

And that, to me, is just such a powerful word to think about and to reflect on. Thanks, Kim.

Yep. Anybody else? Hi, everyone.

This is Madison. She heard her announced. I was thinking about two things. One, every time I hear this story, I'm wondering about the friends that are referenced that keep bringing this man every day to this space.

[30 : 37] And, you know, I think we get, like, snippets of people's lives. But I'm always curious about the extent to which those folks are doing that out of love or, like, what is compelling them to do that.

And I just wish there was more of that. Because in our other breakout, Adam was saying, bringing up some good points about what leadership looks like and vulnerability.

And, like, I'm also thinking about, like, the taboos of being associated with someone who is viewed as, like, a social, like, dejected from society or looked down upon.

And what it looks like to be in community and partnership with people who have been kind of framed as, you know, being subhuman or less deserving. Which brings me to something else, Tanada, I really liked when you were talking about, like, defining brokenness and how I think it's easy to get fixated on the fact that, like, you know, just, like, with comparison and, like, constantly striving and not resting.

[31 : 42] It's, like, but if we're not seen as broken by the person who created us, like, what are we, like, what are we allowing society to tell us about our wholeness?

Yeah. So those kind of things are coming to mind for me. Super powerful. Thank you so much, Madison. Yeah. Yeah. If our creator isn't telling us we're broken, then, yeah.

There's a lot happening in the chat, too. Thanks, y'all. Cola said, in agreement with what Kim said earlier, same. Enneagram 8 in me says, what vulnerability?

I don't got those. Meg was agreeing with you, Madison, and having the same thought. And then more Enneagram from Kim.

My 5 says, that's not a space I'm comfortable in. And then from Michael, it says, threads of new economy got me thinking there is an opportunity for me to think more about my spiritual wealth and what I give slash have gained from my soul perspective versus focusing on material wealth.

[32 : 54] Thanks, y'all. My two strives for big eight energy. Yeah, I agree. My two, you know, we go to eight and stress.

Okay. Anyway. Last question. I think we just have time for one more. So I'm going to do question three. What are some ways that we as a community might structure vulnerability, take a deep breath if you need to, into our life together?

What are some ways that we as a community might structure vulnerability into our life together?

Any thoughts on that? I think one thought that comes to mind for me is the rotation of speakers or of centering.

When we see lots of different styles, different approaches, backgrounds, I think it normalizes a much wider spectrum of experiences, of ways of being, ways of doing.

And then there's less to fear about is the way I present, is there a gap between that and what's viewed as, you know, as good or as excellent, right?

[34 : 27] And so I think in providing a more open, accessible platform and, you know, Taneta mentioned this yesterday, but centering and de-centering, I think it provides a space for folks to really show up more how they are.

Thanks for that, Adam. Yeah, and I think that speaks also to that question of, like, normalcy, too, right? Like, if what is normal for us is that there isn't necessarily a normal or that normal is inclusive of, like, a lot of stuff that we're always kind of centering and showing, then, like, that becomes, like, how we kind of resist there being this, like, one narrative as well.

Any other thoughts this morning? I wonder if it would be helpful to center need as much as, you know, we might be naturally prone to center, like, success.

So, like, you know, when something to be celebrated in the community, it's spoken about from the front, but, like, sharing, you know, both from, you know, leaders like, you know, Anthony, Taneta, you know, sharing their need in, like, a given moment or their need for grace or their need for a provision.

But also just as a church, sharing the needs of the community and the ways in which, you know, we can enter into that and, like, support that and just be grateful for that, for our need.

[36 : 12] Our need is our, you know, humanity. So. Thanks a lot, Bacola. Yeah, our need is our humanity. And I think showing that is oftentimes really the way that folks, that we end up connecting to each other, right?

Sometimes, like, we can celebrate each other's successes and wins, and also sometimes that can create kind of a distance of just kind of, like, how we internalize that.

And oftentimes in being able to say, like, hey, I'm going through this thing, too, or I need this, too, it actually brings us closer together in some cases. So thanks for lifting that up.

Thank you all so much for participating this morning in our talkback time.