

SERMON NOTES: JUNE 2ND
SCRIPTURE READING...John 21: 15-19, Acts 3: 1-10

AN INTERRUPTION OUTSIDE TEMPLE...almost inside Temple, Peter/John are intercepted by an invalid begging for their help. Beggars collected in high traffic areas, blocking the path of worshipers who threaded their way through the needy people to get inside. He'd been begging there so long that he blended into the scenery. His routine was predictable. Each day he baked in the sun, collected coins, then got carried home. Each day he heard lovely songs coming from Temple but sitting outside was as close as he'd ever get to God. Or so he thought! We see needy people daily, not just those living on the streets, but also those who live within our circle of influence. Do we even stop to notice them?

JESUS IN DISGUISE...Peter was starting to see like Jesus, to love as Christ loved, and to notice those who needed him. Staring at the man, he said "look at us". The word stare means "to fix his attention". It wasn't a disinterested glance or cynical dismissal. Peter didn't just see him; he saw through him. Seeing needy people up close isn't easy on the eyes. Yet, as Mother Teresa once put it, "in the sick/dying, I meet Jesus in one of his distressing disguises". How would our lives change if we saw the world that way?

WHAT WE HAVE...Peter/John had no silver/gold, but what they had was more vital than what they lacked: the Holy Spirit. Peter tells the man to rise and walk. He asked for alms, but he got new legs. He begged for money but what if he needed more than money? What if he needed hope and God's love even more than what he thought he needed?

STOPPING AT THE GATE...let's be people who stop at the gate; who notice the hurting long enough to hurt with them. No rushing past or looking away! This will require our time, our attention, and our compassion. Christ-like love is always up close/personal. We can't wire love, e-mail compassion, or pay others to care for us. When did you last do a totally unselfish act, an unexpected deed and it cost you dearly of your time, your energy, your money, or whatever was needed? Maybe we ought to pause long enough to reconsider one of the last things that Jesus ever said to his Disciples:

"Inasmuch as you do it to the LEAST OF THESE, YOU DO IT TO HIM"