

feels about you. Did God love that crippled man more after he healed him? Of course not! It was his great love that he already had for the man that led him to heal him. The world said, "There must be some mistake!" God said, "I love him just the way he is!" Jesus has done everything well—including you!

Maybe we could put it like this: Like is like being in a rock tumbler. I used to collect rocks when I was a little boy. Just what parents want, right? Big rock collections. I can remember as a seven-year-old finding some rough agates along the shores of Lake Itasca, and being excited to take them home. But then in a souvenir shop they had something better—smooth shiny agates that sure looked better than the ones I had found by the lake. What made the difference? A rock tumbler. Those stones had been bounced around over and over again in a tumbler with coarse sand until all the bumps had been worn off.

Life is a little like being in a rock tumbler. God's constantly refining us and changing us and molding us, and that doesn't always feel good! Oh sure, sometimes it stops, and life settles down for a little while. But then it soon starts bouncing us around again. Some troubles get smoothed out easily. Some are deep and stick around to the very end. But when life's all done—I don't know when that day is for you, but God does!—when it's all done, it's all going to come out perfect. God promises that, and he did miracles like this one to prove it.

In the meantime, don't let your "why me's?" blind you to all the blessings God has put in your life. At the end of our lesson, this man was walking and jumping and praising God as loudly as he could. Why? Because he could walk! So, how many of you can walk? Isn't it awesome? So how come we're not walking and jumping and praising God? Well, the pews are a little restrictive, aren't they? Jesus hasn't just taken our sins away and given us heaven—as if that were a small thing! He has filled our lives with blessings here on earth. It's good to have someone else remind just what a privilege it is to walk. It's more than we deserve!

So why me? I can't tell you why God has allowed the particular problems you face into your life. Maybe God is looking forward to having you in heaven soon. Maybe he's using your faith to teach others about him. Maybe he knows that this trial is what you need to grow closer to God. Some people say that "God won't give you more than you can handle." That's big fat lie. Every day brings more than we can handle. Here's what's true: "God won't give you more than *you and he can handle together!*" And know that one day, because of Jesus, you will be smiling as you look and feel the glory of heaven. And I bet this is what will be on your mind: "Why me!"

Acts 3:1-10
Pastor Nathan Nass

Pentecost 16
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One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now 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. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. ⁶Then 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." ⁷Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. ⁸He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰they 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.

Why Me?

"Why me?" That's what hundreds of families in Washington State are asking themselves as wildfires destroy their homes. Can you imagine the hopeless feeling? Watching a wall of fire creep toward your house—Why me? "Why me?" That's what the wife of the Illinois police officer must be thinking as the manhunt continues for the men who killed her husband. Doesn't your heart just go out to her? It had to have been a shock! Why did this happen? "Why me?"

But I don't think I really need to give you examples. I bet that's a question that you find yourself asking yourself all the time—"Why me?" There's no shortage of things that don't go our way in life. Why did I end up stuck with this job? Why did I end up stuck with this pain? Why did I end up stuck with this person? Why did I end up stuck with this sickness? Why did I end up stuck in this place? What's your "why me?" lately? You don't have to imagine the hopeless feeling, because you've felt it. Maybe you feel it now. When we look at our lives, there are always plenty of reasons for self-pity. There's plenty of suffering. And we often don't understand. "Why me?"

Today God gives us a story about someone who must have asked that very question. We meet a man who had been crippled from birth. He was over forty years old, and he had never walked. Can you imagine that? This is what that man's life consisted of: Every single day, he was carried to the temple. There were no wheelchairs, no light-weight crutches. And there at the temple he had to beg and beg—every person who walked by—just hoping to get enough to make it another day. Then he was carried back home, only to

do it all over again. How many times do you think he asked himself: “Why me?”

I think it’s hard for most of us to even begin to appreciate his suffering. He literally had nothing. I can’t imagine having nothing. Can you? We always have something! All he could hope for was to get food for another day. If you’ve been to a third world country and seen a real beggar—someone who really has no other option than to sit and beg—your heart goes out to them. But at the same time there’s a part of you that wants to look away. If we’re honest, we like to pretend that people like that don’t exist. If anybody had a reason to ask, “Why me?”, it was this guy!

What value do people place on a life like that? With modern medicine, his parents today would have known well in advance that their child would be crippled for life. What do you think they would have been advised to do? “Your son will never walk. Are you sure you want to go through with this pregnancy?” That’s the kind of baby that apparently some people today cut up and sell for parts. What’s behind that idea? The belief that this life is all there is. The value of someone’s life today is measured by the quality of that life. As though if someone isn’t going to have the quality of life they want, it would be better for them not to live. Well, there sat that crippled man day after day. Was it even worth being around? “Why me?” God must have made a mistake!

Except, God doesn’t make mistakes. I want you to remember that! God never told that crippled man why. He never explained his suffering. But God did have a plan! One day, Peter and John passed by the man on their way to the temple. He called out to them for money, just like he did to everyone else, and Peter did a strange thing. He looked at him. That’s not what this man was used to. Most people looked away! But Peter stopped to look him in the eye. Can you imagine the thoughts that must have raced through the man’s mind? This was going to be good. These two men must be rich!

Except, Peter didn’t have any money. He really didn’t. But Peter had something better: “*Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.*” That’s crazy! After 40 years, was he really going to walk? But, “*taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong.*” What a mighty God we have! Think of the long, drawn-out therapy people have to go through in order to walk again after a crippling accident. Months and months of rehab. God healed this man in an instant.

And that’s what God wants to do for you! If you just believe hard enough, God will heal you. At least that’s what I once heard a pastor say. He was preaching in front of thousands of people, and he confidently told them, “If you have cancer, look that cancer in the face and say, ‘You can’t beat me,’ and it will be gone. If your boss at work is driving you nuts, walk right up to him and say, ‘Your job will be mine,’ and you’ll be moving into his

office in no time. All you’ve got to do is believe. If you have faith, all your troubles will be gone. Just look at the crippled man!”

What do you think? What a lie! Sure, it sounds great, unless you actually have cancer, because you know that telling cancer “You can’t beat me” won’t make it go away! No-where does God promise miraculous healings or wealthy futures for those who follow him. That’s not what God wants to teach us. There is a false assumption in American Christianity that threatens people’s faith. It’s the idea that Jesus came to take all my problems away. People point to a story like this and say, “Look! If you just believe, God will heal you.”

That sounds nice, but think about it: If Jesus came to end suffering, he failed miserably! Just look around you. How many people are still sick? How many people are still sad? Accidents still happen. Sicknesses still eat away at our bodies. In fact, Jesus himself died a terrible death on the cross. Jesus did not come to take all my problems away. He does not promise that if you just believe hard enough, you will be healed. And when we believe that lie, then the impatience starts to set in—“Why me? Jesus should heal me. God should make things better.” It is a terrible thing to get wrapped up in our own self-pity. “Why isn’t Jesus doing what he’s supposed to do?”

He is! Jesus is doing just what he’s supposed to do. When Jesus healed the deaf man in our Gospel lesson today, he told the people not to tell anyone about it. Jesus didn’t come to be a miracle worker. He came to be our Savior. He doesn’t heal us by being a doctor and writing a prescription. Jesus healed us by becoming a patient like us. He took our sin—the sin that’s at the root of every selfish thought and every impatient deed and every complaint we bring against God—and he let it kill him, so it won’t kill us. God hasn’t promised to miraculously take away your troubles. He has promised that your sins are forgiven, that he will never leave you, and that everything will make sense in heaven.

So why did Jesus and his disciples sometimes heal people physically too—like this crippled man? We can’t always explain why, but God wants you to know three things for sure: God wants you to know that he cares about every part of you—body and soul. There’s no part of your life that isn’t important to God. God wants you to know that he does have the power to heal you, if he decides that’s what’s best for your eternal good. Your Savior is in absolute control of your life. God wants to give you a taste of what life will be like in heaven. Whatever pain you have, it’s going to be gone for good. Jesus is good for it—his miracles proved it time and time again!

In fact, Jesus “*has done everything well.*” That’s what the people said after Jesus healed the man who had been death and mute. You talk about an understatement! “*Jesus has done everything well.*” That means that God did well when he made you too. Your value has nothing to do with your quality of life on earth. Your value comes from the way God