

CONVENTUAL FRANCISCANS

SAINT JOSEPH OF CUPERTINO PROVINCE

Worship as the Way of Discipleship

Acts 3: 1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple area for the three o'clock hour of prayer. 2 And a man crippled from birth was carried and placed at the gate of the temple called "the Beautiful Gate" every day to beg for alms from the people who entered the temple. 3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked for alms. 4 But Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 He paid attention to them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 Peter said, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, [rise and] walk." 7 Then Peter took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grew strong. 8 He leaped up, stood, and walked around, and went into the temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. 9 When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 they recognized him as the one who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, and they were filled with amazement and astonishment at what had happened to him.

In my reading of this passage from the Acts of the Apostles, I take the following to be the constitutive elements of this Lucan text:

1. The Temple precincts are the locus of this miraculous healing.
2. Peter and John's presence at this location revolves around the afternoon liturgy of the Temple.
3. Peter and John look intently at the cripple.
4. Peter subordinates material wealth to spiritual capital.
5. The transformative power of God, now embodied in the person of the man made whole, intrudes into the worship of the Temple.
6. The worshippers are "filled with amazement and astonishment," at the manifestation of God's power in their midst.

Elsewhere in Acts, the Temple appears prominently either in the worship and ministry of the Apostles themselves:

1. 3:11-26 – Peter preaches in Solomon's portico
2. 4:1-22 – Peter defends the Way of Jesus before the Jerusalem priesthood

or in their persecution:

3. 5:12-42 – Imprisonment, abuse and trial of the Apostles at the Temple
4. 6:7-15 – Martyrdom of Stephen (retaliation for the conversion of priests?)
5. 9:1-9 – Paul receives authorization from the High Priest to go to Damascus.

The event on the road to Damascus illustrates the importance and troubled nature of formal, liturgical worship to early discipleship. Where does it take place?

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