

January 17-23, 2021

# Week of Laity



Where Are  
**YOU?**

written by  
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# WEEK OF LAITY

## INTRODUCTION

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.*

**1 Peter 2:9**

We experienced a year that was brimming with change and moments of unpredictability. Regardless of how much our lives and habits have changed, what remains the same is the presence and power of our God. Though all that comes before us, we are still challenged and loved by a God who calls us out of comfort. We are still chosen by a God who sees in us what we often cannot see in ourselves. We are still called by a God who affirms that there is value in all of humanity regardless of the “otherness” that some of us may feel at times.

This week, if welcomed, God will journey with you as you explore the text, share time in prayer and raise your voice in praise or lament.

### **BIBLE STUDY MATERIALS**

#### **WORSHIP RESOURCES**

- Call to Worship
- Prayer
- Children's Moment
- Sermon Resource
- Suggestions for Communion
- Benediction
- Music Suggestions



## REACHING OUT WHEN WE CAN'T TOUCH

<sup>46</sup>Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, <sup>47</sup>praising God and having favor with all the people And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. <sup>1</sup>Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer. <sup>2</sup>And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple. <sup>3</sup>When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms. <sup>4</sup>But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup>And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup>But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene-walk!" <sup>7</sup>And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened. <sup>8</sup>With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup>And all the people saw him walking and praising God; <sup>10</sup>and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

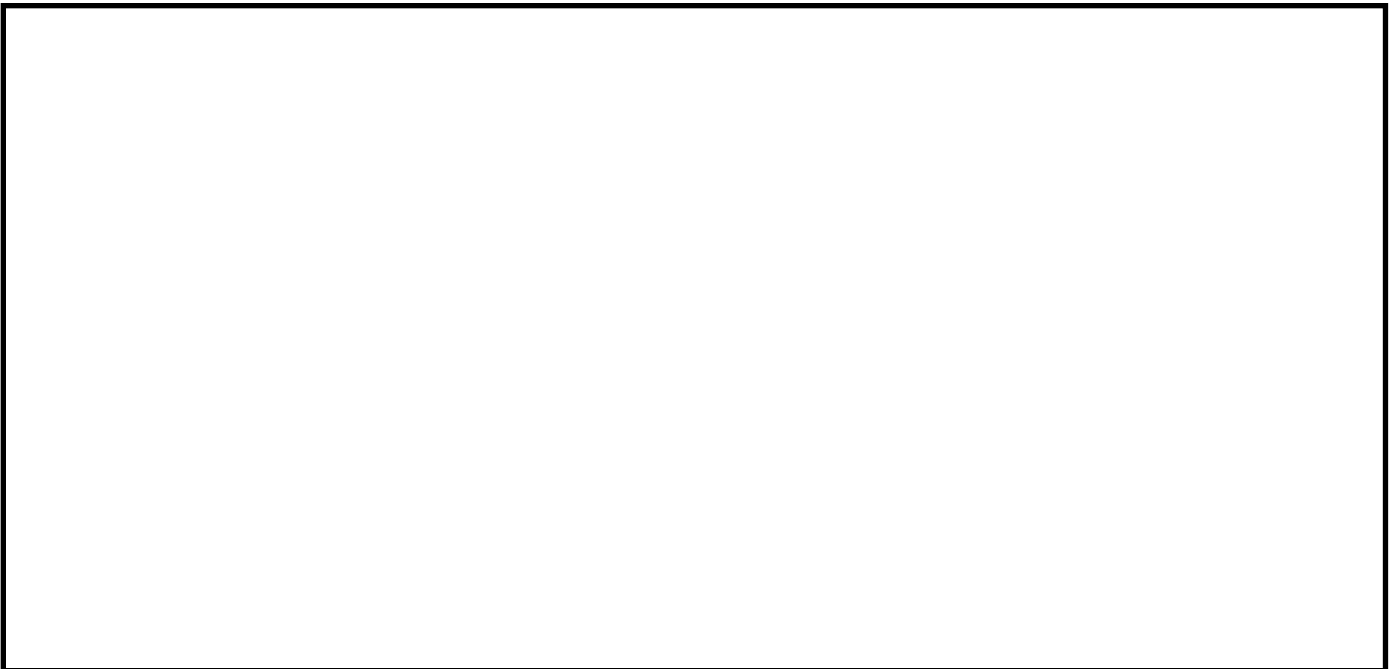
**Acts 2:46-3:10**

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*“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” – Coretta Scott King*

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Read the scripture passage several times. What do you imagine it looked like? Sketch what you see in your imagination. Afterwards, you can share.



Did you sketch from the perspective of the man? Did you sketch from the perspective of Peter or John? Did you draw the scene from the viewpoint of a passerby?

During this time, many of us are looking for ways to stay connected, Zoom calls, driveby birthday parades, watch parties and online game nights have become new ways of staying in community. The lame man was in the center of community but was not fully connected.

Who in your community do you need to reach out to?

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# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## ACTS 2:46-3:10

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*Who are you?*



## CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Thank You for continuing to see us.  
P: Help us to see the least amongst us.  
L: Thank You for hearing our pleas.  
P: Help us to hear the needs of others.  
L: Thank You for being present with us.  
P: Help us to be present with others.  
A: Lead our worship. Draw us near to each other event if we cannot worship in the same room.

## PRAYER

Disturb us, O Lord  
(Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu)

Disturb us, O Lord  
when we are too well-pleased with  
ourselves  
when our dreams have come true because  
we dreamed too little,  
because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord  
when with the abundance of things  
we possess,  
we have lost our thirst for the water of life  
when, having fallen in love with time,  
we have ceased to dream of eternity  
and in our efforts to build a new earth,  
we have allowed our vision of Heaven  
to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord  
to dare more boldly, to venture  
into wider seas  
where storms show Thy mastery,  
where losing sight of land, we shall  
find the stars.

In the name of Him who pushed back  
the horizons of our hopes  
and invited the brave to follow. Amen.

## CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Illustrated reading of Peter and John  
Healing the Lame Man  
[https://youtu.be/JNfe\\_I7OMJg](https://youtu.be/JNfe_I7OMJg)

## CHILDREN'S REVIEW QUESTIONS

Who do you know who has to be carried?

What was the man doing while sitting by the gate?

What did Peter and John give the man?

After he was healed, what did the man do?



SERMON RESOURCE

## WHERE ARE YOU?

Acts 2:46-3:10

“Where’s Waldo? Better yet, where are you?” I would like us to journey through this passage together noting the perspectives of the key players. Can you imagine it? Thousands of people pouring down the narrow streets of Jerusalem for the celebration of the harvest, Pentecost. Most of them had been there since Passover. Pilgrims from all over the Roman world swarmed the temple along with Jerusalem’s 10,000 clergy members. Like clockwork these two very faithful men carried a third ‘certain man’ from his home miles up to the temple navigating through the crowds, animals to be sacrificed, merchants and children taking their first journey to the celebration. Can you imagine them trying not to bump into people as they adjusted their carrying method to get him up the stairs? Once the men made it near the gate called Beautiful they laid the “lame” man on the steps in the midst of the foot traffic. Are you the carriers?

### **The Carriers**

This gate was beyond the Court of the Gentiles but before the Court of Israel where the men went to worship. He was stuck literally paralyzed among the maimed, unclean and lame— a mere fifteen steps away from the court, which led to the sanctuary. Far enough away that he would be incapable of seeing the inside but close enough for him to smell the incense being burned in the Holy of Holies. Every day on the way home, he listened as his carriers talked about the happenings of the Court of Israel. What the Rabbi taught. Experiencing God’s presence. Sacrificing unblemished animals. Praying for God’s

blessings on next year's harvest. What could he offer to the conversation?

"Once you guys left a boy of twelve ran past with his father. He gave me a shekel. His were the only eyes I looked into all day." Or maybe he complained about merchants who did not clean up the waste of their animals. After all he was the one on the ground. If it smelled to passersby, how much more to one who could not pass? Did anyone ever step on him or trip over him when they could not see him amongst the movement? What was it like when people stopped to have a conversation with their backs turned to him? How lonely were those steps even in the midst of masses as he sat with his arms outstretched to those who came near hoping that they would give him a little on which to live. He witnessed people come in excited and leave unburdened. He had never been able to go inside for prayer, offer sacrifices or worship with the community. Could you imagine never filling the relief of prayer? Working was a dream he would surely never attain even though his mind was sharp that opportunity was just as elusive as walking into the sanctuary on that day. For some today, a relationship with God is this unattainable. Being lame disqualified a person from participating fully in a society. It was considered a sin or punishment from God. The lame were essentially imprisoned, shackled to the mercy of others. Who are 'our' lame? Are you this "certain lame man?" Is this lame man your neighbor?

### **Peter and John**

The Messiah had been gone for a while now and the promised Spirit of God had empowered the disciples, who had been given charge to spread the Gospel as they were "going." Two of whom were Peter and John. They had witnessed the power of the Holy Spirit when Peter preached before the pilgrims and local worshipers bringing over 3,000 to faith. Since then they had been journeying to the temple daily for prayer. Though they had taken this route day after day that afternoon they paused to pick up a friend. Peter and John unlike the others, who passed by or stepped over him had no money to offer him.



When he saw them, he may have thought, They are heading in my direction maybe they will pause to give me a little assistance. Maybe a shekel or two.

As they approached the Gate called Beautiful, a man who had been there every day sat with his eyes averted toward the ground staring at his lifeless legs. His voice raised with his eyes lowered when Peter said, "Look at us." He was accustomed to peering at his pain, which simultaneously prevented him from looking at anyone or anything else including the eyes of others. How often do people get stuck looking at their pain and missing the possibility of progress from it?

He expected to receive a few coins until Peter shared. "I do not possess silver and gold but in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene -walk!" Peter then touched the man, grabbed him by the arm, lifted him and the bones of his legs and feet, which had never been exercised through use were strengthened, so much so that he leapt with excitement and walked for the first time in his life into the temple with Peter and John. He was so loud and thankful that people noticed him coming. They knew him as the one who begged at the Gate and surely Peter and John were pleased to add at least one more to the number that day. They had again witnessed the move of God. As the man shared his healing there were more men and women, Jew and Gentiles to teach. Are you Peter and John?

## **Roles**

There are many more roles in this account that has become quite familiar but there is still much to be gleaned. Carriers of the lame, the lame or healers of the lame. We have all been in each of these roles at some point in our lives but who are we today. Where do we as individuals find ourselves today? Where is our community or our country? Are we carriers of the lame in our society bearing their burdens faithfully and joyously but not quite getting them to the door? Are we the healers of the lame, placing our faith in God to the point where we believe that the lame can truly be healed? Are we so convinced of this Gospel that it permeates our beings and we could witness to the needs of others with three words "Look at us"? Look at our faith. Look at our joy. Look at who God.

(Briefly share how you were once lame. Not in a testimonial but an example. My example was: "I was once lame actually believing that my life was mine to live and God would have to fit into my plans.")

The lame in our society will not necessarily be the woman or man, who was born without the ability to walk.

The lame could be that person who just lost their jobs but still have a mortgage to pay.

The lame could be that person who grew up impoverished and never thought a good paying job was an option. Let alone the chance to go to college.

The lame is the child growing up in foster care.

The lame is the homeless family who call the park home.

The lame is the person who cannot see the house of God because her stack of bills block her vision.

The lame are those who spend a lifetime with their heads down trapped by their infirmity or stature in life.

The lame are those who have, yet to know God as the solution to all of their problems.

The lame are those who have all the world could offer but possess no compassion.

We were once lame.

We are sometimes lame.

We are surrounded by the lame.

Will you and I carry them just before the Beautiful gate listening to their woes along the journey? Will you and I listen to their woes? Share jokes with them. Contribute to their collection of alms with the fruits of our labor like blankets, shawls and money but neglect to carry them the last few steps? Or will we say "I hear you. I see your problems, but look at us".

Maybe they will lash out and angrily proclaim "I don't want your help—your pity— your God!" Or just maybe—maybe us seeing them beyond their infirmity (pause), poverty (pause), and general lack (pause) will build within them HOPE. Hope that will strengthen their bones. Hope that they may stand. Healing gave the lame man a new life—physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. He could now work, worship, travel, have

children, offer sacrifices, dance, go to the bathroom without assistance. He received his dignity. He was no longer enslaved to his circumstance. They healed his legs but in doing so, Peter and John healed his whole being. This is Hope restored. His life was never the same and as we reach out to the lame in our world, (pause)neither will ours.

### **CONCLUSION**

The joy of this man caused amazement. This amazement broke through the routine of the worshipers. They were filled with wonder and amazement in God as Peter and John accompanied him into the temple. Faith is contagious. Let us not leave our lame outside the walls. The temple is a place for us to gather, not a fortress to keep others out or a prison to keep us inside the gate. There are people out there who need us and we need them that we may stay amazed and filled with God's wonder. We might not have gold or silver to give, but we do have in our faith is immeasurably valuable. In this story, where am I? Where are you?



## COMMUNION

### *Note for Worship Planners*

The center of worship is the moment when we gather around the table of Christ to remember the most graceful act ever done for us. The bread represents the body of Christ. The cup represents the blood of Christ. Invite everyone to prepare their hearts and minds for the sharing of Holy Communion. For those who are at home, encourage them to use elements that they have at home such as bread or crackers with juice. Remind them of our togetherness even as we come to the table of the Lord from many different places.

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## BENEDICTION

### *Let us pray.*

The steps leading up to the inner court of Herod's Temple may have had gates and prescribed sections of which only certain people could enter but through the life, death and resurrection of Christ the veil was torn. God was no longer limited to the people of Israel. The invitation of being God's people has been extended to all of humanity— generation to generation. With that truth in our hearts, let us go carrying hope to all who need it.

## MUSIC SELECTIONS

Chalice Hymnal

Processional or Opening Hymn:  
Come, thou fount of every blessing  
This is the Day

Communion Hymn:

Let Us Break Bread Together - 265

Discipleship Hymn or Contemporary Song:

Great is Thy faithfulness

Beautiful, Beautiful- Francesca Battistelli

Opening Song:

How Great Thou Art

This is A Move- Tasha Cobbs Leonard

Discipleship Song:

Pass me not, O gentle Savior

Hills & Valleys- Tauren Wells

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**To act in the Name  
of Jesus, therefore,  
means to act from the  
place where we are  
united with Jesus in  
love.**

**Henri Nouwen**

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