

## Owning the Disowned

### Acts 3:11-21 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. <sup>12</sup> When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" <sup>13</sup> The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. <sup>14</sup> You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. <sup>15</sup> You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. <sup>16</sup> By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. <sup>17</sup> "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. <sup>18</sup> But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. <sup>19</sup> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. <sup>21</sup> Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

What runs through your mind as you see the panhandlers outside of Walmart? Maybe there is a swell of pity because you feel for them being homeless. You don't know what happened to put them in this situation, anything from an economic downturn to a failed startup, medical expenses, conned out of their savings, or unjustly fired. You know you can't fix their situation. You also know it's quick and easy but also maybe not the best idea to just hand them money. Besides, you don't carry cash anymore. You also don't have the time to sit and learn their story, find out how to best serve them. So, you avert your eyes. You don't want to feel like this is your problem, that you should have to do something about this. Maybe a more callous part of you looks at them and judges them, that they are faking this, that they actually have plenty with a Benz around the corner. Or you think that this is their fault, that they aren't willing to work hard, take the jobs that they could get, and instead are trying to make their problem my problem. Maybe you view them as if God is judging them, has disowned them, turned his back on them, and that's why they are homeless.

Now imagine that same panhandler is here set up at the front doors of our church. Would any of your thoughts or actions change? That's the situation at the temple in Jerusalem not too long after Jesus died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples on the Day of Pentecost. The begging man situated at the temple entrance gate called Beautiful had been born unable to walk. As an adult, people continued to bring him to this temple entrance to beg from the people coming to worship.

The thoughts of the worshipers back in the first century were probably not dissimilar to what we think today. Maybe just like Jesus' disciples with the man born blind in John chapter 9 they looked at this this lame begging man as being punished for his sins or the sins of his parents. Maybe they averted their eyes because they didn't want his problems to be their problems and there was nothing that they could do to really change his situation. Maybe they thought God did not care about this man and that's why he remains in this terrible state unable to walk, suffering through begging every day. Maybe they thought God had disowned this man.

No wonder everyone is astonished and came running when they saw this man walking and jumping and praising God while he holds on to Peter and John in gratitude. What should they think now? Peter tells them. "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?" (verse 12) It's like you're so surprised because you thought God had disowned this man as evidenced by his paralyzed legs. No, God hadn't disowned this man. Actually, you disowned God.

"The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you." (verses 13-14) You didn't want someone who wasn't going to feed you everyday with what you wanted. You didn't want someone who wasn't going to instantly heal every single person and cure every single one of your diseases today. You didn't want a God who wasn't going to take on the Roman government. You didn't want a God who didn't teach and uphold your traditions. You disowned this Jesus and asked, no, demanded, that he be killed while letting a murderer go free.

When you hear Peter saying those words, do you feel like he's talking to you? Are you guilty of disowning God, of basically saying to God, of God, "I'm done with you"? But you're here. So, you can't be someone that disowns God, right? But you probably know someone who is done with God. And you have either had moments when you were done with God or at least thought about it.

Take your pick as to why people are done with God or why you've thought about it. Maybe it is seeing the homeless person and being angry that God doesn't provide for them. Shouldn't he? Isn't he loving and caring and provides everything we need? So why can't this person have a home? Maybe it's seeing a person with a birth defect, like being unable to walk. Why would God do this to this person? Does he not care about them? Why did he make their life unnecessarily hard? Maybe it's all the violence and the wars that exist in our world. I mean, there are more than 20 different wars going on right now, not just the ones that make it into our newsfeed. God, you can stop the violence, right? Do you not care that people are oppressed and bleeding and dying?

Then it gets to the more personal level. In spite of all your prayers, God didn't give you what you asked for, whether it was the home you wanted, that Lamborghini, or that dream job. Or you're devastated at the loss of a loved one, of your deteriorating health. What's worse is that you tried to live right. You tried to do good. You've given to others all the time, been selfless with your time and your money and your resources. What did I do to deserve this pain and suffering? I might be done with you, God.

You probably never intended on disowning God, much like the crowd that Peter was preaching to. "Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders." (verse 17) But this ignorance does not mean that we're not held accountable for when we disown God or even when we want to disown God. Peter had to own how he disowned Jesus. He had to look Jesus in the eyes again, remembering what he had done. Yes, he had disowned God. He was not going to pretend that that didn't happen on Good Friday and claim to be without sin. Peter is calling us to do the same. Own when we have disowned Jesus. Own when we have or have wanted to say to God that we are done with him.

But Peter wants us to own something else. "You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this... This is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord." (verses 15, 18-19) Own that you did an awful thing by disowning God or even thinking about it. Yet, God worked something good out of something so horrible as disowning Jesus.

Jesus said on the cross, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" This happened because Jesus's mission, being fully God and fully man, was to carry on himself all of our sins. God made him who had no sin be sin for us, and he disowned Jesus while he held all of our sins. This is how he wipes out our sin. Jesus' resurrection proves that all our sins, all our times disowning or wanting to disown God are paid for. Although we confess that have disowned God or wanted to, our sins are not held against us because Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia! And so we are refreshed because we are forgiven by what God disowning his Son for you, for your good.

God raising the Holy and Righteous One, Jesus, from the dead means that God does not and will not disown us here on earth, no matter what we're going through, no matter what health problems or birth defects we have, no matter whether our prayers are answered in the way we want them to be, no matter if we have a roof over our heads or not. This is proven by Jesus' resurrection. This is proven by the man walking and jumping before that temple crowd. Own this truth that because of what God has done for you with his life, death, and resurrection, God never disowns you. Amen.