Acts Series Lesson 20

Acts 9:32-43

“Prioritize Helping for Hurting People”

Introduction: James said, “ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” James 2:15-16. In a world full of false promises and empty guarantees it is comforting to know that God’s promises and His guarantees will not fail. God is able to provide for all of humanity and sometimes He wants to use people for that provision. God had the power to heal people without anyone’s help, but in the passage this morning we will see that God wanted to use Peter to help a few individuals, and in doing so many lives were impacted.

1. As we go about our lives we will cross paths with others in need.

A. Peter's task as an apostle was to visit churches to encourage and teach them. As he went about he found himself encountering people who had real needs.

1. A man sick of the palsy in that day would not have been a contributor to his family or his society. He would have been seen as a burden, not having left his bed for 8 years.

2. Tabitha who been a great contributor in her community but was beyond hope within the limitations of man. Being a woman, she would not have been viewed as having the same importance as men in her society.

3. Simon the tanner would have been looked down upon by all those in the Jewish mindset. A tanner dealt with the hides of dead animals and would have been forced to live outside the city. Simon the tanner was seen as an unclean person. Under Jewish custom if a woman married someone who later became a tanner she had the right to divorce him.

B. There are people all throughout this church and in this community that are in need of help. We come into contact with needy people every day. Even if you did not go out of your way you are likely to cross paths with those who could use a helping hand.

1. Parents or spouse can use help with housework.

2. Children need time with their parents.

3. Neighbors and friends sometimes need help moving.

4. People who are grieving a loss need food cooked for them.

5. The elderly can be helped by a simple visit.

6. Visitors at Hillcrest need to see friendly faces that are happy to worship God.

C. It seems that people today are busier than ever. This is why it is important for us to remember that God has called us to a life of service. This passage does not advocate that Christians should go around trying to fix everyone's problems, but that we would be mindful of those around us.

Transition: Certainly there are more problems in this world than we can help with, but it does say something about the compassion and unselfishness that Christian lives ought to embody.

1. Christians should avail themselves to help others as God has enabled them.
2. In this passage Peter demonstrates supernatural powers. He was an apostle and therefore had been empowered by God to perform signs so that the lost would know that this was the true power of God.
3. In order to do these signs Peter crossed cultural boundaries.
4. Aeneas was a Greek name and would not have been seen as a likely recipient of the grace of God.
5. Tabitha was already dead.
6. Peter Stayed with Simon the tanner, which went against his Jewish upbringing.
7. Because God has inspired and preserved the Bible we no longer see these sign gifts nor apostles. This does not mean that we cannot have a significant impact in the lives of others.
8. When we live lives that honor God it is a testimony that proves the power of God's Word.
9. God has gifted us with diverse spiritual gifts. Some people are encouragers, teachers, preachers, helpers, merciful... all believers have been given gifts and abilities intended to be a blessing to others around them.

Transition: Preaching is a very important part of God's plan, but it is significant that this passage does not emphasize the preaching of Peter. What we are seeing is God's plan manifested through Peter to be a blessing to others.

1. God intends that Christians use their talents to be a blessing to others.
2. The miracles we see in this passage are done in the name of Christ.

1. v.34 Peter makes clear that it is Christ who made Aeneas whole.

2. v. 40 Peter knelt down and prayed to God who alone is able to bring the dead back to life. This was an act of submission and a demonstration of dependence on the power of Christ.

1. We do not need to do miraculous things, we just need to trust God to guide us and use us as we seek to be like Christ.
2. Peter did not plan on going to Joppa, he was called there by some disciples desiring his encouragement. So we will not always expect the needs of others but we should be willing to help when we are able.
3. You can make a difference in someone's life by engaging in ministry:
   * 1. Donating food to the food pantry is a help to those in the community.
     2. Going out on visitation Saturday mornings can make a big difference in people's lives.
     3. Setting money aside to be a blessing to someone in need is something that God delights in and will bless.
     4. You can help someone looking for a church feel at home when they visit Hillcrest as part of the hospitality ministry.
     5. Moving out of your comfort zone to shake people's hands is one way to shine the light of Christ in this place.
     6. Thinking of others first will manifest itself in many other ways than these in many seemingly insignificant ways.
4. Our nature constantly tells us to think of ourselves first, but that is not in line with the example that Christ left us on the cross of calvary.

Transition: God's plan for His children is not in vain. When God's people invest in the lives of others it has an impact.

1. When Christians commit themselves to lives of compassion the power of the gospel will affect the lives of the lost.

A. 35, v. 42 People in these two cities saw of the mighty ways in which these people's lives were touched and they turned to Christ.

B. This may not seem like it translates to today but it really does.

1. When people see the generosity and unselfish character of Christians it will affect them.
2. The life that Christ calls us to is contrary to that of the world.
3. Biblical love is manifested in the willingness to sacrifice something for the benefit of another.
   1. Christ manifested His love for God and man on the cross.
   2. How has your love toward others been manifested?
   3. When was the last time you gave something up to be a blessing to someone else?
4. We do not preach a social gospel here at Hillcrest Baptist Church. We believe that God is primarily concerned with the spiritual needs of others. We are told to seek the kingdom of God first and that God will take care of our physical needs. We do however recognize that when we are willing to help others it only complements the message of God's love.

Conclusion: This is a challenge to live unselfishly in a world that caters to selfish desires. We do not value the physical or temporal need of others above their spiritual needs. The greatest way that we can help someone is to introduce them to Christ. This is done with our words, but backed up by the way that we live. When we begin to think almost exclusively about ourselves is when things like depression can gain a foothold in our lives. As you go about this next week make an effort to be available to help those around you with more than just your words. Will you commit to follow Christ's example of compassion for others?

*"Goodness is love in action, love with its hand to the plow, love with the burden on its back, love following his footsteps who went about continually doing good."- James Hamilton*