

**April 18, 2021**  
**Third of Easter**

**Meditation:** “Don’t be witless....be a witness!”

Are there any Monty Python fans here? Have any of you even heard of Monty Python? Monty Python are a group of four or five very smart, very well educated British men who decided that they wanted to act like idiots and get paid for it. They did exceedingly well.... at both. They created a television show, Monty Python’s Flying Circus. They created vinyl records, remember those, including the famous three-sided record titled, ‘Matching Tie and Handkerchief.’ There were actually two tracks cut into one side of the record, thus making it truly a three sided record. The group also made some full-length movies, including ‘The Life of Brian.’

The Life of Brian was a satirical take off on the life and ministry of Jesus. In it there is a scene where Brian comes upon a lame man who is begging, just like the lame man begging outside the temple in this morning’s reading from the book of Acts. Anyway, Brian comes up to the man and instead of giving him the alms he is asking for, Brian heals him. The lame man responds, “Now look what you’ve gone and done. You’ve destroyed my livelihood. How am I supposed to beg if I’m not lame anymore?” And that’s the question, isn’t it? What are we supposed to do now that our lives have been touched by Jesus?

Like the lame man, we all have things in our lives that paralyze us, that prevent us from living the lives that God hopes for us. Those things that paralyze us are our sins, or the sins of others as they impact us. Some may be specific, individual sins, like when one person says or does something to hurt another person’s feelings, or they may be corporate sins, like systemic racism. The point is that we are all paralyzed in one way or another, and then we meet Jesus and, by the grace of God, the sin is overcome; we are healed and our lives are forever changed. But then what? How are we supposed to live with our new reality? Our mindsets are still stuck in the previous reality and we don’t know how to live these new lives.

Indwell supplies affordable and supportive housing for people who are homeless or hard to house. Often that means they supply affordable and supportive housing for people with addiction and or mental health issues. They know that when people’s lives change suddenly and radically that they need help learning to live a new way. People who have been homeless are now housed. They are now responsible for rent payments, and possibly for cooking their own meals. They can’t just show up at a shelter and get a meal and a place to rest for the night. If they trash the place, it is themselves that they hurt. They need to learn the skills they need to budget, make a meal plan, shop, cook, launder clothes....you know, all the things that most of us take for granted. They also need help dealing with addiction and or mental health issues.

That's all fine and good for those who Indwell helps, but what about us? How are we to live? Well, in short, there is an instruction manual about how we are supposed to live. It also tells us how radically wrong things can go if we don't live that way; Acts 3:15b and Luke 24:48 say that those who have had their lives changed by Christ are witnesses. I know what that is. A witness is someone who saw or heard or maybe even experienced something; right? Actually, that is correct. As a noun, a witness is someone who saw or heard something. But witness can also be a verb, an action word. One can be a witness; one can also witness. What do witnesses do in a courtroom? They witness; they testify to what they know. Jesus tells the disciples that they saw the Messiah suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, just as the prophets prophesied; and they are to proclaim God's grace to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. The disciples are witnesses, and they are to witness. Peter, speaking in Solomon's portico, tells the crowd gathered around him that he and John are witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. He means not only that they saw how Jesus lived and the things that he did, but also that they are testifying to it; they are telling others what they saw. And not just that they are telling others, but that they are living the same way that Jesus lived.

Remember that lame man, sitting in the gate called Beautiful? Peter and John stood in front of him, and healed him. They took him by the right hand, and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong, so that he not only could walk, but he could leap and dance. And then he did something else. That lame man witnessed. He went walking and leaping into the temple for the first time in his life. He had been banned from the temple because he was not perfect, he was therefore not pure. And when he walked and leapt his way into the temple, he witnessed; he praised God; he gave thanks to God for God's grace.

Can you think of others who witness to God's grace? One who comes to my mind is a young man whose grandparents were members of one of the congregations I previously served. He had been addicted to cocaine. He found help with his addiction and started coming to church with his grandparents. He formed a local chapter of CA – Cocaine Anonymous..... just like AA, only for cocaine addicts. He spoke to the board of the church about his experience and about CA. In the end, the church decided to support people suffering with addiction to cocaine by offering the group a safe place to hold their meetings, at no cost. That group helped many in the community. Many more than any of us had thought existed. That young man found healing in that group, and self-acceptance. He learned to love himself, which is the very base of loving God and others. He eventually found love with another, married, and started a new job in a new community.

That is what we are to do. When we meet Christ, and are healed of the wounds caused by our sins and the sins of others, wounds that paralyze us, we are then to be witnesses. We are to share with others how we have been healed; how we have been set free from that which bound us. We do it by sharing how our lives have been changed by Christ. We do it by praising God. More importantly, we do it by offering healing to others who are paralyzed by fear or shame or pride or arrogance or disease or poverty or whatever it is that paralyzes them. We do it by sitting with those who mourn, visiting those who are institutionalized, feeding, clothing, and educating those who can't feed, or clothe, or educate themselves, and we do it by helping organizations like Indwell create affordable supportive housing for those in need of it.

God loves us. God gave us life. God sent Christ and his disciples to forgive our sins; to cure us of that which paralyzes us; to free us from that which binds us. We are healed, we are freed, we are risen to new life. Praise God. Go, and don't be witless, be a witness.